

**THE GREAT SOCIETY**  
**Interview #6**  
**Tuesday, March 22, 1983**

**MCCLURE:** I haven't talked about the Dirksen Building much, but the point of this story is that its design was made in 1943. [Allen] Ellender was chairman of the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee and he never would allow a nickel to be spent in upgrading the plans. So when they built it in the '50s they were using wartime plans, with all the constraints of material and conceptual approaches. Whatever was in vogue was prolonged over into the late '50s, and they gave not one thought to staff and the relationships of people to people, and visitors, and phones, and all of that. The phones were in channels under the floor, and that told you where you could have a desk, and where you couldn't have one, because there was a lump on the floor for the plug.

Well, Senator [John] Stennis was a member of the Building Commission who had a good staff. They took a good look at this place, before the room walls were installed between the separate offices. They insisted--and he, therefore, did--that his office at least would have a little room for each staff member, with half a window--the partition was set so that the wide window went half to one side and half to the other--and inside was room for a staff man's desk, and his secretary, and all their files, which is the way it ought to

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be. Each staff member needs his own space, of course. But that was the only office that had that. Then afterwards, of course, we put in all these partitions and everybody started trying to do the same thing, but Stennis' office started out that way. It was built into the floor and went to the ceiling. We were all very envious of the staff of Senator Stennis because they had it the way it ought to be, and none of us ever did. No matter how many partitions, there was always a lot of noise. They couldn't run the partitions to the ceiling because of the air conditioning. In fact, Stennis had the wall of the partition go right up to the ceiling so the air conditioning split to each side. It was all very cleverly done, and could have been done everywhere, but it wasn't.

Of course, there are only two things important up here--it's not the money, because that never was important--parking and your office space. These are the keys to happiness. Morale in the Senate, and the House, too, I'm sure, depends on those two things. In a sense the parking aspect is even more critical, because these lots which have no numbered spaces--first come first served--require all the secretaries to come in at eight o'clock, even if they don't start work till nine, to get places for their cars. I'm sure some of them use the Metro now, but even so, there are a lot who come from Virginia and Maryland. If you can't get to your office on time you're not likely to keep your job, so parking is highly

critical. Then all day you're sitting in a buzz of noise and traffic, and other

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people, and phones ringing, that distract you from whatever you're doing, unless you have a well-planned structure. Of course, when they started this institution back in the eighteenth century they didn't have any staff. Nobody had ever heard the word. It meant a stick that you walked with.

**RITCHIE:** I remember from interviewing Featherstone Reid that he gave great value to what he called "real estate," it was a bargaining chip, and a senator who controlled real estate had power.

**MCCLURE:** Yes. Oh, yes. Never give it up either, never give it up. The Labor Committee, for example, quickly ran out of storage space; everyone did. We had numerous lengthy hearings and hundreds of printed volumes. What do you do with them? Well, in the Russell Building they have attic space, cages. They have the same in the "New" Senate Office Building [Dirksen]; the seventh floor is really not a floor. It's big walk-in cages. Well, we filled one of those immediately. Then we got a whole room in the sub-basement. It goes back in and you can get a ladder and crawl into a sort of an underground mezzanine and put stuff back in there. And God help the committee if Paul Pinson, the printing clerk who handles all that stuff, ever leaves. I don't think they'll ever be able to find anything, because he knows where it all is. No one just ever foresaw what was going to happen.

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**RITCHIE:** Well, the Dirksen Building was built in the days when the staff of a committee might be fifteen people or so.

**MCCLURE:** Oh, yes, sure. I asked the other day, and I think they have ninety-six now, and so does the House Committee on Labor and Education. That's about maybe a third more than they really need. I'm not sure about that.

**RITCHIE:** Well, some of the subcommittees now have staffs about the size that the full committee had when you first came on. They have their own chief clerks now.

**MCCLURE:** That's right. Well, a whole rationalization of this place is overdue. I don't mean by some outside management firm. They might be helpful, but somebody who knows how the place operates,

someone who's been in the Secretary's office for years, or the Sergeant-at -Arms, or the Superintendent's office, somebody who knows how the place really functions should be detailed for a year at least to rethink the structure, the planning, the staffing, the pay, and everything else within this institution. It's just chaos at this point. Too much of everything. Too much staff, too much legislation, too many amendments, too many meetings. The United States got along even in the hectic years during and after the war--when we did expand the government--and we didn't need a hundred staff people on a committee. I don't think they do now. But I don't have enough facts to go on, and I'm sure everybody can justify his job--it's not too

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difficult--but in terms of their real contributions, an independent look could be profitable, I think. But then, who's going to take the time even to think about that? They're so busy keeping up with today and tomorrow.

**RITCHIE:** This might be a good point to go back and to take a look at the 1960s, because that seems to be the period when the real take-off occurred in terms of the number of staff members and the activities going on here. The 89th Congress seems to be the pivotal point.

**MCCLURE:** What years were those?

**RITCHIE:** That was 1965 and 1966. That's when the Great Society program was rolling down at full force. I looked at a list of principal bills that went through the Labor Committee in 1965 and '66. It included the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; the Economic Opportunity Act; the Mine Safety Act; Heart Disease, Cancer, and Stroke Act; Higher Education Act; Manpower Act; National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities Act; Older Americans Act; the Cold War GI Bill--and that's just the main ones. The committee calendar had a whole page of major legislation that it sponsored in the 89th Congress.

**MCCLURE:** And that passed! Much of it.

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**RITCHIE:** Yes, it all came out. How did the committee handle this incredible increase in work, and all these major pieces of legislation that all came along at the same time?

**MCCLURE:** Well, you know the favorite device for reducing staff is attrition, as it's called. Now, what is the opposite of attrition? Accretion, I guess it is. It didn't happen over night. It just grew out of necessity, I think, in our case. After a while there is some empire-building added to it, of course, but in the beginning a senator would be assigned a subcommittee and a big blob of educational bills or some kind of bills would be referred to him and he had one person trying to handle it all. He'd just come to the chairman and say, "I can't do it, Lister, I can't do it. Please give me another staff man and a secretary." OK, that's reasonable, and that would happen. Six months later the volume again had increased, the pressure was tremendous, and the staff was working fourteen, and so forth, hours a day. So it wasn't a plan, it wasn't empire-building in the beginning, it was a response to the tremendous activity that Johnson sponsored downtown and that came up here to be acted upon.

We didn't handle it in any schematic way, or in any planned way; it just was a response to demand. While I'm sure in the later years, when the heat from the administration had declined, and Johnson was no longer there--and Nixon was not noted for visionary new

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programs--by then every senator had gotten the feel of having a subcommittee and running something, and he had staff, who had been hired during the big time, to keep on, so a lot of manufactured work, not really essential stuff was brought into being in order to maintain staff, and in order to maintain a subcommittee, and in order to maintain a chairmanship. Then we see the results: there ' s a great lot of fat, people who just aren't as busy as they were in the '60s. In those years everybody worked all the time. There was no question about it.

I should say, in preparation for your request last time, that we talk about the poverty programs, I spent some time with Donald Baker, who is now the chief clerk and staff director of the House Committee on Education and Labor, and who was the staff man on the poverty program on this side. Well, Don is an extremely able, experienced man. He's a lawyer who came here with Congressman James O'Hara of Michigan, and when O'Hara was defeated he came over here with Senator Pat McNamara of Michigan. Then to jump ahead, when the poverty program was established in the Office of Economic Opportunity under Sergeant Shriver, he became the general counsel of the agency, and later on in '69 he came back to the House under the present chairman, Carl Perkins, as chief clerk and counsel. So he I s had great experience on both sides and downtown. So I wanted to find out from him his recollections of the beginnings of the War on Poverty, and I have taped it, too.

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In substance, he reports that John Kennedy in about 1962 had asked some staff people to look into the extent of poverty in the United States, the dimensions of it, how many people, where are they, and to bring him a report. Which they did in early '64. They brought it to Johnson in '64. They worked on it in '63, and when Kennedy was assassinated and Johnson became president the report then landed on Johnson's desk. He was greatly interested in it and established a task force, mainly of government people although not entirely, headed by Sergeant Shriver, who had been the head of the Peace Corps under Kennedy. They raked people in from Justice, Labor, HEW, Agriculture, even Defense, several guys from the Defense Department, Robert McNamara people. They did a thorough review not only of this report and other documentation, but set out to develop a program to deal with it, and in as short a time as March 14, Johnson sent up a message. Now this was fast work. A message to the Congress outlining this concept, new programs, so forth. The next month they had a bill written, and of course, it came to the Labor Committees in the Senate and the House.

Senator Hill, the chairman, must have done some extremely careful investigative work about the implications of this program for him as a senator from Alabama. He decided to stay as far away from it as he could while still being chairman of the committee that was considering it. Well, he came up with a marvelous device. He created a subcommittee consisting of all the members of the committee

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but himself. The ranking Democrat, who was Pat McNamara, became chairman of this super subcommittee. McNamara had hired Don Baker to be the counsel to the subcommittee on Labor, which is a standing subcommittee. So when this new huge package arrived from the White House, he told Don that he was going to have to handle it, too, and they just put aside the Labor subcommittee business for a while.

Well, Pat never liked to hold public hearings. He thought they were a waste of time. He told Don Baker, "Now, let's keep this short. We're in a hurry. Let the House act and we'll take care of it." So they had four days of hearings on this enormous program, which involved as you recall such things as Headstart, and Upward Bound, and Community Action, and the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and a dozen others which I don't recall, involving health and education and income, food, nutrition, and so forth. Well, the bill had been well-drafted and there wasn't much the committee needed to do with it, really. McNamara said, "Well, why do we need all these administration witnesses? Get Sergeant Shriver up here." Then there was a lot of pressure from downtown, and they admitted Willard Wirtz, the Secretary of Labor, and that was it. McNamara said, "They've all testified on the House

side," and he instructed Baker to just incorporate in the Senate hearings all the testimony from the House hearings. Don't have any duplication; save time.

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Then they went into executive session, and twelve days after the hearings--including the July 4th weekend--twelve calendar days, not legislative days, the subcommittee had a meeting and McNamara said to Baker, "I want to keep this short." Held heard that Lyndon Johnson in some off-hand remark had complained about the Senate "stalling" on his bill, and McNamara wasn't about to take that! So he was going to act yesterday. "Don't want any amendments. The president doesn't want any amendments. Don, you cut off all these amendments." McNamara, seeking to demonstrate his concern for rapid action, didn't say anything in the meeting. Don was left to cope with Javits and Williams and various other people who had amendments, beat them down, or turn them aside, or do something.

The most outstanding ones were five or six bills affecting migratory labor which Senator Harrison Williams had perfected over a number of years in his subcommittee on migratory labor, and which had passed the Senate in several Congresses but had died in the House. Such things as education and day care for children, and feeding and housing, and health, sanitation for migratory and other seasonal or part-time workers. Well, Williams, of course, tried to put this in the poverty bill, which seemed a very good place for it. Here was poor Don Baker resisting. He wanted them, too, but he was under orders. Finally Senator Javits, always the great compromiser, came up with the simple suggestion that they authorize the director of OEO to conduct programs in health, education, day care centers, nutrition

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centers for migrants and other seasonal workers, putting it all in about twelve or fifteen words which were in six long bills. Williams accepted that, and it worked just as well; in fact it's the only way they would ever have gotten into law, I suspect. The opponents to migratory workers were very powerful, but they couldn't do a thing if it was part of this poverty program.

Since Lister Hill had withdrawn from participating in anything to do with this bill, the general counsel, Mr. Forsythe, was not present. The subcommittee on migratory labor counsel, Frederick Blackwell, was in an antagonistic position, and only another staff man, of whom I've not spoken but should, Edward Friedman was of any help to Don Baker in handling this monumental product. Ed was at that

time working with Senator Joseph Clark on a subcommittee on manpower, and he helped Don write language that dealt with manpower, and retraining, and that sort of thing. So they had a two-hour executive session and the only amendment was this abbreviated, chopped-up form of migratory labor law. The Republicans couldn't do much to stop it. Goldwater and Tower wrote ferocious--well, Mike Bernstein, their counsel, wrote--a ferocious minority report denouncing the whole thing. One other Republican from Idaho, Len Jordan, who was there just a short time, didn't put up much struggle either. And [Winston] Prouty, who was still alive, and Javits supported it.

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So it was reported to the full committee and the same day it flipped through there in one minute flat, and was on the floor, and passed the Senate, I think by August 14. The House didn't want a conference and accepted the Senate amendment, and the bill became law in a very short time. It could be September or October. Then there was a question of appropriations, of course, so the agency didn't really start to function till about mid-October, though they had borrowed people from all over the government on a temporary basis to get started. But that was a remarkable process. I suppose normally it takes ten years for a new idea to seep through this institution. This went through in less than six months, with almost no organized opposition. That was the power and influence of Lyndon Johnson in that first year after Kennedy's death. God, you could have done anything. We did! We did anything.

**RITCHIE:** I wanted to ask you about the "Johnson treatment." I always hear about that. I wondered how influential he was in lobbying, but it sounds like in this case his influence was so powerful he didn't have to do anything directly, he indirectly . . . .

**MCCLURE:** He dropped it in the papers.

**RITCHIE:** Influenced someone like McNamara.

**MCCLURE:** Yes.

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**RITCHIE:** How did Johnson and his administration come on to the Labor and Education Committee, when they wanted legislation?

**MCCLURE:** Well, they knew they were welcome. They weren't coming with anything that we hadn't been working on for years: education and health and unemployment and everything else. The whole social package of the Johnson administration--not all of it, but a great part of it--came to this committee where we had been straining since Truman to get action. So there wasn't any problem. There was question of which way, perhaps, or what language, or how much and so on, but the purposes were all identical. Everybody on our committee--well, all the Democrats certainly, and some of the Republicans--were committed to the Johnson program before it was introduced, before it was invented as a program.

**RITCHIE:** The House had been a stumbling block for years to things that the Senate had been proposing.

**MCCLURE:** Sure.

**RITCHIE:** Was the Johnson effort then directed more at the House?

**MCCLURE:** Didn't have to be. Adam Powell was chairman by then, and he was the same, too. Held been struggling for Harlem and the poor people of his district and, therefore, of the country for years. There was no need of arm-twisting and bullying or anything

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else. Certainly not in the case of poverty legislation. That was true generally of education and health, Johnson welcomed them, and we did, too. We wanted his support and his administration's support.

**RITCHIE:** How would you rate his legislative liaison and the way they approached Congress, as opposed to the Eisenhower and Kennedy and Nixon administrations?

**MCCLURE:** Well, I think you have to phrase it differently. It wasn't how they approached, it was the conditions of the country, the political picture. Johnson could do no wrong for the first year or two. He wrapped himself in the Kennedy mantle so effectively that if you attacked him you were attacking a dead man. It was all in a good purpose, because Kennedy was never going to get anything done; it just wasn't going to happen. He had great public charisma and popularity but he was not popular up here and everything he got he had to strain for. The Old Bulls didn't think much of him, and they still dominated both sides. But Johnson was one of them. He'd locked elbows and scrubbed shoulders and shot back shots of whiskey with them. He was one of them. The fact that he was crazy on all that social stuff was too bad, but he was their guy. A Southerner, too, you know, a Southwesterner, not one of



these effete Easterners from Boston.

So he had, in the beginning before Vietnam, a perfectly beautiful, symbiotic relationship with Congress. It didn't require

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any browbeating and arm twisting, at least in our committee. Now, it may have in others; I'm not familiar with them, I'm sure there were some things that Congress broke with him on, or didn't go along with. But on our committee I don't think there was any of that. That was reflected in the kind of people he appointed and the people with whom we dealt in the agencies, including the secretaries at the top. It was all very cozy.

What it was for those of us who had been around for a while, whether members of Congress or staff, the fruition, the culmination of *years* of effort, of fruitless hearings, of endless meetings, of dozens of votes, all of which had gone down the drain. Sometimes you would go home at night and say, "What am I doing here?" A whole year's work tossed down the tube at the end. It was frustrating as hell. And here, suddenly, we'd all hoped that Kennedy would give us new directions and a new world and all that--and he intended to, I'm sure--but it didn't happen until Johnson became president. Then, God, it was wonderful. We were just all elated, in joy and on high clouds all the time, until the Vietnam war began to rot the infrastructure and the whole Johnson thing collapsed.

**RITCHIE:** One person who seems to have stepped back and kept aloof from all this was Lister Hill, whom you mentioned did not get involved in the poverty program, even though he represented one of the poorest states in the Nation, and who chaired this committee and

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had helped liberal reform in the 1950s. Yet he seems to have kept it at arms distance in the 1960s. What happened to Hill?

**MCCLURE:** Well, he foresaw what did happen, that these community action agencies in every city in the country and every town in the country would come into clash with the existing institutions, welfare, relief, education, school systems, medical provisions, hospitals, and so forth, all of whom thought they

were doing a great job for the poor, but they were not. They were being challenged by the organizations representing the poor, the people left out. People who never could find the clinic or didn't know it existed, had a voice. He could see that this was going to just bring into frightful clash the very structure that elected him--the political structure-with the common people.

The program never was a great success in the South, except where they had tremendous battles, in Atlanta and places where they won, in fact, and elected their own mayors. But it was a tremendous struggle in the '60s, and Lister foresaw this. It wasn't that he was anti-black; he wasn't. But he could see that any federally financed organization going in and rounding up the poor people of Alabama to confront the established order was going to be agony for him, and any other Southern senator. And, indeed, it was. But none of the other Southern senators was chairman of the Labor Committee! But he never stayed out of any of the health and education legislation. My God,

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on the contrary, he pushed it as much as anyone else. Oh, he was all for Wayne Morse' bills in education, his own health measures, of course, and Yarborough's GI Bill for peacetime veterans benefits. No, I wouldn't say that he had withdrawn from any other area of activity.

**RITCHIE:** Well, do you think he felt increasingly uncomfortable with the direction things were going, since it was putting him in a politically difficult position?

**MCCLURE:** Yes, well, it was doing that, there was no question about it. He had almost been defeated, as I pointed out earlier, in '62, and he told me when he came back that he was going to be a different man, and he was, to a certain extent. I don't mean he really changed, but his public expression certainly had to change, or did change, and I feel he--well, he never said so and I couldn't prove it--but I think he did not run in '68 largely because he felt he might be defeated, by a Republican, because they were picking up Republican seats in the '60s in Alabama. What had been the most liberal delegation of any state in the '50s, was turning "Black Republican," (not in any color sense); they were right-wing Republicans who were taking over the seats in the House.

I feel he just didn't want to be defeated, and probably felt he could be, and might even would be. He was getting on in years, and it was a graceful time to leave. I don't think he felt too

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comfortable; the cities were in riot; the '60s were a tough time for everybody and members of Congress, too. Smoke rising up on Fourteenth Street, you remember, and so on. The world was rushing on passed him. He had done his great work, and I don't think he thought he could do much more. NIH was practically completed, the Library of Medicine was standing there, all these marvelous monuments to his vision in the field of human health and medicine were on-going, research programs, training programs, medical schools, nursing schools, etc., etc., etc. There wasn't much left to do, really. The machinery for discovering the cure for all ills was in place. It was not up to senators any more, except to give them more money, to do anything.

**RITCHIE:** Do you think it was that they were running out of new ideas or were they beginning to run out of money, in the sense that the "guns and butter" issue took over in the 90th Congress?

**MCCLURE:** Well, of course, you are spreading the question far beyond the Labor Committee. You're getting into welfare payments and food stamps and all that sort of thing. We didn't handle those things. We should have, I suppose, but they were under Finance and Agriculture. Though we were called Public Welfare, we didn't really have any welfare at all, that was a Finance thing, along with Social Security, which substantively should be in the Labor Committee but has always been, because it's based on a tax, in the Finance

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Committee. Well, that's the way this place is divided up. To the degree, and it was enormous, that the Vietnam war sopped up vast public funds and dumped them in the Mekong Delta, obviously it cut down the amount of money available even for ongoing programs, let alone new ones.

I don't think it was a question--I was speaking earlier of Hill--of his running out of ideas. I'm saying that he had damn near done everything that needed to be done, except to vastly improve Medicare and Medicaid, neither of which he could do a thing about; they were in Russell Long's [Finance] committee. I think he felt he'd made his contribution, that another term would just be another term, without any promise of advance, and maybe some promise of retreat, when you see what's occurred. Nixon was coming in and all of that. He got out in time. I miss him. I missed him then, but I can see he didn't make a mistake in his own terms in leaving.

**RITCHIE:** I asked about the Johnson treatment in lobbying, but the AFL-CIO also seemed to play a prominent role in Great Society legislation. Did they have a lot to do with lobbying the Labor

Committee?

**MCCLURE:** They certainly were the most powerful single outside influence on the Labor Committee that existed. They were prominent not only in labor legislation, which is, of course, what they are all about, but without their muscle, advances in health and education

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would have been very much more difficult, because they recognized that working men's children need education and working men get sick, and their wives need medical treatment, and so forth. Not only from a public relations point of view was it essential that they support these programs that were not directly involved in labor relations, minimum wage or something, but it was good for their own members, good internal relations, too. Oh, they were extremely powerful and extremely important, and if they threw a "No" on something it probably wouldn't happen. Of course, they didn't always win. They had endless struggles to repeal that section of Taft-Hartley that prohibits secondary boycotts. Never got it through. In fact, they never got anything through favorable to themselves that amended Taft-Hartley. That was the Rock of Ages on which they foundered, once it was in law. All they got was Landrum-Griffin on top of it.

**RITCHIE:** That was one of the few pieces of labor legislation that Johnson was defeated on.

**MCCLURE:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** What was it about that one that made it so impossible to crack?

**MCCLURE:** Well, it affected the building trades, largely. The carpenters would want to throw a picket line around a site and freeze out plumbers and riveters and all the other trades. Or they'd put a

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picket line around another plant that produced something that the first plant needed, that kind of thing. But mainly it was all on construction sites. The industrial unions didn't give a damn, really--the CIO unions within the AFL-CIO--about this provision. They weren't involved in secondary boycotts. The contractors are numerous and generally well-to-do, and very well connected with the business

community, and the banks and financing, and you really had a confrontation by a segment of the labor movement, against the whole organized business community. In that situation they couldn't very well recruit enough members to support them. Big unions didn't really care. Even the Teamsters weren't particularly concerned. It was a building trades issue. Oh, it was perennial. We had a hearing every Congress. Sometimes we'd report it, maybe we wouldn't. Nothing every happened to it.

Be that as it may, anything affecting the labor movement, whether directly or through their interests in other subjects, brought word from them--they had a squad, they had twenty-five people on the Hill, they had a legislative director who managed the troops, they fanned out; some of them were actually indefatigable, some were lazy, but they were there. And they let you know. They touched all bases. They really didn't need to come around to us except to tell us, "Great, keep doing what you're doing," or make some comment about "Well, don't do it that way because . . .", "We prefer it this way, but it doesn't matter too much." We were intertwined with them so

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much. We lunched together. We knew what they wanted, and we knew our bosses wanted it, so we didn't have any problem with conflicts of interest or being bribed by a ham sandwich or something.

Just to show you the kind of impact they could bring to bear, when I returned to the staff directorship after Senator Williams became chairman in 1970, there used to be a little club called the "Club 116" in an alley back here, which no longer exists. It's where the Hart Building now sits. Schotts Alley. A lot of lobbyists belonged to it and played poker and what-not, waiting for something to happen. One day, shortly after I came back, Senator Williams said, "We're having lunch with Biemiller at the 116 Club at 12:30." I said, "All right, I'll walk over with you." Now, Andy Biemiller was a former congressman from Milwaukee who had been defeated in the '40s and had joined the legislative staff of the then AFL, before the merger with the CIO. As time went on it was amusing, as George Meany got heavier and jowlier, and bigger-bellied, so did Andy Biemiller. They were physical twins at the end, and I think twins in every other way, too. So Biemiller had a list and he just handed it to Senator Williams and said, "Now this is what we want this year." The senator said, "Stewart, you've got your marching orders." That was the end of it, just like that.

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**RITCHIE:** When they indicated the issues they were interested in, how did they go about supporting them? Did they offer support, background material . . .

**MCCLURE:** Oh, all the time. Anything, plus buttonholing, and lapel-holding, and backslapping, and indications of support in upcoming elections and all the other things that lobbies do. They were often more effective on matters not directly effecting themselves because they were allied with other lobbies that were working toward health legislation or education. Whereas, in the case of a labor struggle per se they didn't have any allies really, oh, a few public interests groups issued statements, but you didn't see the nurses or the NEA up here struggling to help get some amendment to Taft-Hartley. It just doesn't work that way. But they were the muscle, the labor lobby, labor movement, behind all social legislation passed up here in the last twenty years or more, probably longer, but certainly since the war. After they merged in '55 they, of course, both weakened and strengthened themselves. The dynamism of the CIO was greatly muted, but the muscle of the AFL was added to the mix.

I think George Meany, if we separate out his gruff manner and his harsh views on certain things, and his rather long reluctance to recognize the Civil Rights Movement, was probably the right leader for the labor movement after the war. He did have a heart, and he

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did have social concern, he really did. He certainly understood politics as well as anybody in town. I'll never forget--I think I mentioned this earlier--in 1968 I think it was, the Senate set up a committee under Mike Monroney of Oklahoma to reorganize the Senate committees that were getting out-of-hand and overlapping. They ground away in their backrooms for months. I guess they had some hearings, but mainly it was a staff operation. They prepared papers.

Word leaked out that one of the proposals they were going to make--they had legislative authority--was to split the Labor Committee in two to create an Education and Health Committee and just leave the Labor Committee standing there naked by itself. Well, I've just told you that the interrelationship, this symbiotic relationship between education and health on one side and labor on the other was brought to focus in our committee, more even than in the House where health is in the Commerce Committee. We were the central point at which these three different forces met, and to pull them apart would weaken both and might absolutely wreck labor's power up here completely, because it would be impossible to get anybody in his right mind to serve on the Labor Committee if all he was going to be involved in was the labor-management war. He couldn't win. No matter which way he went the other side would murder him. They would have had to dump freshmen on it like they used to do on the District Committee, who'd sweat till they could be promoted off of it. It would have been utter

disaster.

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I saw that and so did Bill Reidy and we went to work. Since Lister Hill was retiring, he didn't give a damn, but he didn't stop us. We set to work to stop the Monroney proposal from ever leaving the committee or even getting in their report. We recruited Mary Lasker, of whom I've spoken, this millionaire woman in New York who had backed Lister Hill's health measures and especially research in medicine. She got on the horn, and she knew all I of these senators because she had given money to most of them, and expressed her concern. We rounded up a number of troops, but the clincher was that I could never get a hold of Biemiller. Why wasn't he around? Here was a thing that was going to wreck their legislative program forever and he was making no signs of paying any attention to it. It called him and I called some of his people. "Ah, that's not going to get anywhere. Don't worry about that." I said, "What do you mean? I'm talking with the staff of that outfit and they're going to put it in their recommendations and it will be grabbed by a large number of senators if it ever gets out of committee." Well, they never did anything.

So one day there was a bill being signed by President Johnson. It was a bill from our committee, I don't remember what it was, something that the AFL-CIO was interested in. Johnson used to invite all the lobbyists and interest-group spokesmen, and members of the committee and staff to the signing. You got a pen, "The president wants you to have this as a memento of . . ." We all had scores of them at

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the end. But whatever this was, we met in the Fish Room first, standing around, milling around till we could go in and go through the line and shake the hand of the president and Mrs. Johnson and get our little pen and a speech from him. It was a nice thing to do. They still do it in a minor way; they have a few senators and congressmen around the president as he's signing it; you see it in the paper. But this was a big show, based I think on that memorandum I sent to Johnson at the very beginning, urging him to bring the congressional staff into his operation, that we needed it and he needed us. He did a lot of things like that. He had a whole evening lawn party for staff; well, I hadn't meant that, but the idea was that--and he knew after having been up here--that staff had an enormous say in things and should be cultivated and kept informed, by the White House not just by the departments.

Well, anyway, here we were, and I noticed George Meany standing talking to somebody. I went up and when the other person left I said, "Mr. Meany are you aware of the proposal in the Monroney Reorganization Committee to split the Labor Committee?" And he said, "WHAP" I said, "To split the Labor Committee into Health and Education in one committee and Labor in another." I thought he was going to blow his stack. He'd never heard of it. "ANDY!" Biemiller was standing across the room. "COME OVER HERE!" What's this about the Monroney Committee proposal?" Biemiller said, "Well, what one?" "Well, Stewart was telling me . . . tell him." It was

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terrible because I'd really wrecked my relationship with Biemiller, but I had to do it. Then, having gotten through it very fast and wishing I was somewhere else, Meany said, "Andy, get up there and stop that." Which he did, and it did. Because he understood *instantly* what that would mean. He was a very shrewd old guy.

Of course, Biemiller hated me from then on. We were never great friends, but we had a good working relationship, but after that it was just hopeless. He never came around; I didn't exist. Well, I left the committee, too, shortly thereafter, when Lister Hill retired. I called him up once to get a line on something I was working on and I might as well have been talking to a blank wall. "Yeah . . . right . . . uh huh, goodbye." Because really I'd caught him out in the most critical posture for the legislative rep of a big organization to be caught in, but I didn't know how else I was going to stop this thing. The chairman of the committee didn't give a damn. How were we going to stop it? Well, you had to use the only muscle that was available, and they wouldn't respond. It was a bad show.

**RITCHIE:** Do you attribute it to labor's intervention that they were able to stop the Monroney Committee at that point?

**MCCLURE:** Oh, sure. Immediately. I'd been to Morse and Javits and they were active, too, but when they could march in with George Meany and a few muscle men from the labor organizations . . .

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Well, Monroney wasn't really sold on this. He had nothing evil in mind, he was just tidying up things. He quickly saw the point, too, and shelved it. It was a staff proposal in the first place. Nobody had any



intention, I don't believe, to do what it would do, or realized the effect it would have, but once it was pointed out to them, then they could see that they were proposing a very dangerous idea, unless they were working for the Chamber of Commerce, which I don't think they were.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned that you sent a memorandum to Johnson when he became president, about the congressional staff. What prompted you to do that?

**MCCLURE:** Well, one time when he was majority leader he called committee staff directors together and gave us coffee; Bobby Baker rounded us up and Johnson would rub our shoulders, "Now, get back there and get your chairman going." It was absurd, because we had very little to say about what our chairmen were going to do, to promote things. I was impressed at he technique, though. I didn't think that it really served a purpose except that it pleased the staff people to be recognized. So Charlie Brewton, who went down as a deputy director of the Office of Emergency Planning under Kennedy, stayed on and worked in Emergency Planning conducting the president's fund-raising organization, thousand-dollar tickets for special treatment at the conventions and all that sort of thing. That was

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Charlie's emergency, to raise money for the President's Fund. It was quite legal, of course, it was political money. There were no deductions. So he was pretty close to the White House. Furthermore, that unfortunate chap who was Lyndon's closest aide, Walter Jenkins, was a friend of ours on the Hill.

Charlie and I were talking one night about what could be suggested to Lyndon to help him. He had just become president, with all of this crashing around his head, and we got talking about this, the waiting troops on the Hill who want to help him, but they've got to be asked. Charlie said, "Why don't you draft up something and we'll take it over to Walter?" So I did. In fact, Charlie joined in, and in his usual flamboyant language made it quite an impressive document. I just wanted to send in the idea, but he had troops marching and the colors massing. You could just see the whole Senate staff out there: Huzzah! Huzzah! Walter liked it and took it right in to the president. I just thought it would be nice to have the staff people down to talk with the White House staff on legislative matters and the president might drop in and pat them on the back. That's about all I intended. But, God, he went into a full-scale lawn party. He had a reception one night and the whole White House was turned over to the congressional staff, huge reception line, champagne and the works.

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He had a lot of things going that were designed to influence the staff, no question about it. Well, he did the same for members, of course, but this was something new. Now whether it came out of my memo or not, I have no idea, but I did suggest something like that. And it was a natural for him, because one way he operated was through staff. That's not well known, I suppose, but he had to. Maybe not directly, maybe Bobby Baker did the actual talking, but he knew all of the staff and who was whom, and who worked for whom, and what they were up to. Hell, you can't work up here without knowing the staff has to be taken into consideration. How do you get an idea to a senator? Frequently the only way is through his staff.

**RITCHIE:** In addition to Johnson I was interested in the Senate leadership in the 1960s, Mike Mansfield, Vice President Humphrey, Edward Kennedy as Democratic Whip, Everett Dirksen as Republican leader. How effective was the leadership at that time?

**MCCLURE:** Are you talking about the Johnson period?

**RITCHIE:** The Johnson period, mid-60s.

**MCCLURE:** I don't think they had to be effective. The leader was in the White House. The leadership of the Democratic party was in the White House. That includes both houses. Mansfield was an ideal successor, since nobody could fill Johnson's shoes. There wasn't anybody around like that. Never will be again, probably.

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Mansfield was a quiet, scholarly, gentle, soft-spoken man, highly respected by everybody. I've seen him get angry once or twice, but it was very rare and usually on some minor issue involving Montana where he wanted to get a headline by shrieking--a Veterans' hospital about to be closed, or something like that. But in terms of the operation of the Senate you didn't even know he was around. To the degree there had to be traffic movement, which there does, Kennedy was perfectly able to do that. It's a staff matter anyway, which bill comes up when, how do you manage the day-to-day operations of the floor. I don't recall Mansfield's intervening in anything at any time. Nor did he have to, much.

Then he became, I think, quite disillusioned with the Vietnamese war, early on, as did, oddly enough, Richard Russell, long before any public intimation of that appeared. Most senators were very disturbed by it. None of them were as clever as George Aiken who said, "Why don't we just declare a victory

and get out." I wish we had. You know, the Senate really never did take a position, at least not very early, on Vietnam. They were awfully unhappy with Johnson. I remember hearing Russell in the lobby looking at an AP printer, and turning away and saying to somebody, "For God's sake, we've got to get out of that place!" This was early, I don't remember what year it was, '66 or something.

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But Kennedy didn't have much to do either, and I guess he didn't please people enough to keep him, because he lost the job the next round. Humphrey didn't do anything much. You didn't have to. With Johnson in the White House, having majorities in both houses, the leadership on either side didn't have to do a lot, didn't have to run things.

When Nixon came in, of course, Mansfield was still leader and [Carl] Albert was still speaker, and the present speaker [Thomas P. O'Neill] was majority leader, you had a whole different ball game. You were in opposition and you try to keep your troops in line and you try to look like you have an alternative. I don't think we did too well on that, and haven't done too much since, in posing alternatives that were any better. It's hard to say, I wasn't up here for much of Nixon's time. I wasn't up on the Hill, so I don't know exactly how things were done, but I know from the very beginning Senate committees were quite critical of Nixon's appointees, they gave him a hard time on a lot of them. But they usually gave in and let him have his people, as they always do. And again, Mansfield didn't change his style and there wasn't any leadership.

Mansfield's style was to let the chairmen of the committees run their own shows, come out with whatever they wanted to come out with, whenever they wanted to. And he'd juggle around the schedule to take care of them. But he never called up to say, "We've got to have your

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bill on Tuesday," or something like that. Johnson would. No, very low-key, quiet guy. Of course, the chairmen all loved this. They were all kings again in their own domains. Dukes of their dukedoms.

We'll never see another Lyndon Johnson, at least in my time; maybe yours. Sui generis, that guy. He seized the moment, by God. He probably never expected to become president. If Kennedy had lived and been reelected, Johnson would have served two terms and departed the scene too old to run. So

here was this fabulous opportunity, and he made the most of it. God bless him.

Well, you read a list of bills earlier on that we acted on in that 89th Congress--by the way, this is not on point, but earlier when we were talking about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, I made the claim that Charlie Lee and I had dreamed up this Title I. Well, if we did, it was in the afterglow of what had happened in the poverty legislation, as Don Baker reminded me just this morning, and I want to amend what I said earlier and not take quite as much looming credit. But the first concern of the poverty people in the task force, long before a bill came up here, was the church-state question. If you're going to pour money into communities and have community action groups who were going to be spending federal money, it was bound to be that a lot of them would be Catholic and other church schools and hospitals and so forth.

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In the process of refining legislation to take account of that--which is what Charlie and I were thinking about, too, later, the next year--it was determined that the money would go where the poor children were, no matter what building they were in or under whose auspices the program was being conducted, that the money was going to the poor, children as well as adults. And that's really what the key to Title I of ESEA is, it goes to the poor kids who happen to be in a certain district, but it doesn't go to the school district because it was a geographical area; it goes to a district because it has a high percentage of poor children going to school there. So I want to add that, that this idea was not totally new. Part of it was, but not all of it.

Well, there aren't any new ideas really around here. You know, somebody's thought of these things and they're tucked away in an amendment somewhere in 1912. In fact, a staff man could make himself a very important position up here by just digging into the past ideas that were great but never got anywhere, looking for the moment to reintroduce them. Take Senator /Harrison/ Williams, for example. Senator Humphrey had been on the committee in the early 150s, before I went aboard. He conducted lengthy hearings on the problems of migratory labor, but left the committee to go, I believe to Foreign Relations, and that just ended it. Nothing was ever done, I don't think any bills ever developed out of them.

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Then one day in '59, Senator Williams, who had just been elected to the Senate and named to the committee, and was very eager to be doing something, though he was the most junior member, came over with this great idea he wanted to have me help him sell to Senator Hill. He said, "I think we ought to have a subcommittee on international health." I said, "Well, I think we should, too, Senator, but if you propose that to Senator Hill I'm afraid he wouldn't have a very high regard for you for the rest of your life around here. He is Mr. Health." "Ah," he said, "that's right. Yeah, well, I hadn't thought of that," he said. "I was thinking of outside the country." I said, "Well, he thinks outside the country, too; in fact he's got a bill, involving international health, cooking." "Oh," he said. "Well, damn it, I want to do something, Stewart, what can you think of that would be good for me, from New Jersey, close to the labor movement?"

I thought a moment and I said, "You've got a lot of migratory workers in New Jersey. This would be good for you only in one sense, what I'm going to suggest." He said, "You mean I should take over the migratory labor field?" I said, "Sure, that's what I'm going to suggest. But you've got to reflect that all the growers aren't going to like what you are going to find, or any of the legislation that you will develop." He said, "Oh, I know that, but I know the conditions those people live under. They're horrible, they're vile. Something should be done, and I'm going to ask Senator Hill to put me

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onto doing that. That's a great idea." Well, we dug up Humphrey's hearings and off we went.

He became a hero in New Jersey among all the people of good-will, the good-works people, the religious people. The only people who hated him were the farm growers, the owners who hired migratory labor, who were going to be required to put in toilets and something beside tar paper shacks. But that was pure serendipity. I had been reading something in the back history of the committee and noted this study that Humphrey had made and then abandoned. Oh, Williams went a long way with that. I don't know whether migratory workers are any better off than they were, but at least the federal government paid a lot more attention to them after his efforts.

**RITCHIE:** It became a national issue shortly after that when CBS did "The Harvest of Shame" documentary.

**MCCLURE:** Sure, terrific program.

**RITCHIE:** Made a reputation for Williams.

**MCCLURE:** Yes, it did. He did well with it. He went down into the South into these God-awful places where these people returned after they stopped working up here, when they worked in the fruit fields in Florida and all over the South. There are two migrant streams, one up the East coast, to follow the crops as the season

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advances, and another goes up the middle West. There's a third one on the West coast, but it's much smaller.

He did a wonderful job, and he had a grand guy doing his work for him, Fred Blackwell, who was one of the first additional staff members we added, I think I told you. When /Strom/ Thurmond, who had drafted him to be counsel to the Veterans' subcommittee, left, Yarborough took over the Veterans' subcommittee, but there wasn't really a lot to do. So, when the proposal made by Williams reached Senator Hill, about migratory labor, the chairman asked me in. He said, "What are we going to do about staff? I don't want a lot of staff around here." I said, "Well, Fred Blackwell probably would be sympathetic to this whole subject; he comes from a very poor mill family in South Carolina. They're not migrants, they're not in the bottom of the heap either, but he knows all about the poverty problems of the South. Furthermore, he isn't doing enough to keep him busy in the Veterans' subcommittee." So we assigned Fred to that. Well, of course, in due time we had six or eight people on it. And Yarborough had three or four on Veterans'; but that was the process as the '60s went on.

**ITCHIE:** With all this change with the creation of new subcommittees and the addition of new staff members, how did this affect your work as the chief clerk of the committee?

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**MCCLURE:** Well, it multiplied it about as many times as the staff . Don't forget that among my duties was taking the minutes of *all* executive sessions, committee and subcommittee. This was before the open hearings and open meetings we now have, and before they hired stenotypists to type it all up. The committee clerk's job in the law is to keep the minutes. I was scrupulous about it, never missed one in my life, took them in long-hand on long yellow sheets, and within the day had them typed--so I could remember what I didn't write down. They were very full, because I wanted not just the sparse thing saying "Senator So-and-So offered an amendment which was adopted," as the old minutes read. That

didn't mean anything. It didn't really describe what happened, and the arguments for and against. You needed more, not boringly, but the essence of everything: who did what, who said what, and how it came out.

Well, as you got fifteen subcommittees--fortunately I had control of time and space so that nobody could have two executive sessions at the same time, that was out. We had to find rooms, we still do, of course, everybody has to borrow somebody's hearings room. We could have three or four hearings going at once, that was no problem because the subcommittee staffs handled those. In keeping track of what each subcommittee was doing and sitting in the executive session taking minutes I was pretty well aware, and if the chairman said, "What's going on over there?" I knew because I had been there and could read him the minutes, if he wanted them, which

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he sometimes did. It was an intelligence operation for the chairman as well as for historical record. And the staffs used it when it came time for the floor; they wanted to see how things went in executive session, and they had a record vote, the names, and the voting slips attached, so that the staff could be thoroughly briefed on what had happened. They served a number of purposes. And they're fun to read now, as a matter of fact, because I put in jokes and anything I could liven it up with. So that was a big piece.

Handling the payroll, which was supervised by the Disbursing Office, required knowing all of our people, what they were earning, where they were sitting, and how long they had been here, and whom they depended on for their job. Then the annual struggle for resolution money and justification got bigger and bigger and bigger as time went on and more justification had to be dreamed up to be presented to the Rules Committee. What a farce that all was! But we went through the routine every year; I guess they still do.

Plus the human equation of having fifteen so-called staff directors of subcommittees, some of which had only two or three people. But there were fifteen men or women with whom I had to be in touch at all times: drop in on their offices, keep an eye on them, find out what's going on, and they coming to me with a lot of traffic all the time. I don't mean I was staff director in the sense I told them what to do. That was not my role. I was chief clerk,

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technically and in fact. But if you're going to try to manage one of these huge things up here with sixteen senators on the committee, plus a lot of others who get involved, and their staff, and your staff, and your chairman's staff, and your members' staffs, you know, there may be five hundred people you've got to be aware of at all times, and maybe two hundred of them you see in a week, in a hard week when you've got to run around and do things outside the office, and go touch bases. I loved every minute of it, don't misunderstand me, but it was really a hot seat by the time we had a hundred and fourteen people.

**RITCHIE:** I was wondering in the sense that obviously the work increased at a greater rate than the remuneration . . . .

**MCCLURE:** Oh! Indeed it did!

**RITCHIE:** And yet you stuck it out with this committee for all this time.

**MCCLURE:** Sure, I loved it.

**RITCHIE:** You were probably in a position to have gone into lobbying.

**MCCLURE:** I was offered a couple and I didn't even think of it. I knew there was no better place in the government to work than the Senate, and as I looked around the country I knew I could make

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more money, but I couldn't see any place where I'd have as much fun, where I went to the theatre every day for free, sometimes two and three different plays going on at once. Hearings, executive sessions, conferences, debates on the floor--wonderful. And topping it all, the feeling that you're participating in historical events of some consequence, sometimes. God knows, not all the time, but at times you really were involved in big things, and that's fun, of course. Oh, I wouldn't have quit here. If I had a chairman I could live with I'd still be here. No, I wouldn't, I couldn't have lived with the Republicans, that's not true. I would have left. But I mean in terms of functioning, I wouldn't be able to stand it even if they wanted me around. I got out about the right time. Nixon was in power and there wasn't going to be anything going on that would interest that committee much; mainly fighting off Nixon and his minions was the principal job. I'm just very happy I wasn't up here when Carter was president, and I'm *doubly* happy, triply, that I'm not here now. Should Walter Mondale, or some Democrat become president and we get a Democratic Senate again, and I'm only seventy-five years of age, I



"Stewart E. McClure: Chief Clerk, Senate Committee on Labor, Education, and Public Welfare (1949-1973)," Oral History Interviews, Senate Historical Office, Washington, D.C.

might consider coming around, a Nestorian figure advising from the sidelines. That's by no means certain.

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**End of Interview #6**

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