

Oliver W. Hill Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 02/29/1968
Administrative Information

Creator: Oliver W. Hill
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Biographical Note

Hill was a Virginia political figure; the State Coordinator for the South in John F. Kennedy's [JFK] 1960 presidential campaign; and Assistant for Intergroup Relations to the Commissioner of the Federal Housing Administration from 1961 through 1966. In this interview Hill discusses working on JFK's 1960 presidential campaign; the negative reaction to Lyndon B. Johnson as the vice-presidential candidate in the South and among African-Americans; difficulties for the Southern operations of the JFK campaign; getting the African-American vote in the South for JFK in the 1960 election; working with and around different civil rights groups and leaders in the 1960 campaign; other campaign staff members at the federal and state levels; attempts to solve the problem of discrimination in housing during JFK's Administration; the Federal Housing Administration, including staff and directives and projects in the South; the President's Committee on Equal Opportunities in Housing; and the 1962 executive order in housing, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

with

OLIVER W. HILL

February 29, 1968
Richmond, Virginia

By Larry Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: This is an interview with Oliver W. Hill. The interview is taking place February 29, 1968 in Mr. Hill's office in Richmond. The interviewer is Larry Hackman. Why don't you start out, Mr. Hill, by just talking about how you first got involved in John Kennedy's career, connected with him.

HILL: Well, my. . . . Hold it a minute, let me . . .
[Interruption] Well, my first--well, put it this way--my advance connection with the Kennedy campaign came about ^{at} some conference we were at, ^{Wardman} at the Waterman Park Hotel. And this was the year ^{of} '58, ^W '59--^[Herbert E. Tucker] Herb Tucker, an old friend of mine from Boston, said he wanted me to meet Senator

K

Kennedy because he was going to be an aspirant for the ^{Presidential} Presidential nomination. And we had a nice chat, and, as I recall, Senator Kennedy spoke to the group that we were assembled for-- as I say, I don't remember what the group was at this time. ^{Then} Then, subsequent to that, ^[Marjorie Lawson] Marjorie Lawson, during the early part of the '60 campaign, the primaries--Marjorie Lawson was, of course, very active--and she tried to get me to campaign in West Virginia. Frankly, at that time, I had had a long association with Senator ^[Hubert H. Humphrey] [Hubert H.] Humphrey and I didn't feel that I wanted to go out and campaign against him, so I just laid hands off. At the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] ⁱⁿ Convention--and at that time Frank Reeves was advance man for Senator ^[Harris L. Wofford] Humphrey. I was at the NAACP Convention, ^[Harris L. Wofford] Harris Woffard and Frank . . .

HACKMAN: ~~You've got this~~ want me to cut this off?

HILL: Yes. [Interruption]

HACKMAN: You were talking about Harris Wofford.

HILL: Yes, Harris Wofford, ^[Frank D. Reeves] Frank Reeves, ^[Robert L. Carter] [Robert L.] Bob Carter, and if I'm not mistaken--who was

Secretary of Labor, Assistant Secretary of Labor?
HACKMAN: [~~George L. P. Weaver~~? Weaver [George L. P. Weaver]?]

HILL: Weaver. We had a conference, ~~and~~ [?] by that time the Humphrey campaign had just about petered out, ^{had} and Frank ^{had} agreed to join the Kennedy campaign. I agreed to meet and talk with him after we got to Los Angeles. [?] I had my family with me then, and we were on our way home, sort of an extended tour through the West. When we got down to. . . . No, Weaver wasn't in it, [?] because at that time Weaver was with [?] [Stuart] Symington, ^[Stuart Symington] and so was Congressman ^[William L. Dawson] [William L. Dawson]. And I'd always been very close to this Congressman.

[?] We got on down to Los Angeles, ^{and} as my wife says, "accidentally" [?] ~~at times~~ ^{we had time. . . .}

(All right, I can get that thing. [?] Tell them to hold up ^{every} ~~the~~ thing for a few minutes, will you?)

Just hold it --

They had the campaign--I mean, during the Convention. . . . To make a long story short, the usual things happened during the Convention. I don't recall meeting the Senator during that period, [?] until the Sunday following the nomination. If you recall--I don't know whether you

were there, but I'm sure you've heard of it since then--there was a big flare-up among a lot of people involved in civil rights, trade unions^{and} things. They were going to bolt the Party; they weren't going to support [Lyndon B.]^[Lyndon B. Johnson] Johnson. But, of course, there were those of us who felt that you couldn't elect Kennedy without electing Johnson, ^{who had} and the Vice Presidential nomination. So in order to pull forces together, [Interruption], Senator Kennedy and Senator Johnson appeared. Well, put it this way. Dawson was the ostensible sponsor of the meeting, and invited all of these people there. And Senator Kennedy and Senator Johnson appeared and spoke, and that's when Johnson made his statement, you know, "Jack ^{was} planned that."

At the conclusion of this conference, I singled out Harris Wofford and told him, "You know, you ought to ^{be (in)} try to get me ^{to} working in the campaign. I haven't done anything up to this time. In view of this ^{black} business, I ^{got} have a very good civil rights stature, and since most of the flak is against Johnson, I'll be perfectly willing to go along, be advance man ^{and} identify

myself with Johnson to help further the campaign." He said, all right, he would transmitt that to the proper people.

In the meantime, ^{as I say} I had my family ^{and} we went out on a ^{va} vacation. So ~~when~~ I got back to Richmond, ^{and} just before the first of September, I got a call from Dawson, saying that he had been talking with ^{sure} the Kennedy forces ^{and} that he'd agreed to work with them in the campaign. At that time, he was--of course he was elderly, but I mean his physical condition was not too good. ^{In fact, his physical condition was the thing} He had insisited that he would have assistants ^{and} they talked with ^{them} him about possible picks, and "one person ^{who} that was agreeable to them and agreeable to me is you. You're going to work with us in the campaign ^{if it's all right} so I agreed to do so. ^{ff} And as a consequence, I was involved ^{up} in the campaign, in the unit headed ^{up} by [R. Sargent] Shriver. ^[R. Sargent Shriver] Now, our main emphasis, of course, was to corral the Negro vote in the South, and in certain sections of the East. As a consequence, I made trips to varying ^{parts} parts in the South--Nashville, Knoxville, Atlanta--I don't know. I don't remember all the particular

places now; I only met with groups. And ~~of~~
~~course~~, we were particularly interested in mo-
bilizing a campaign, that's what it amounted to.

During the campaign, on one or two occasions,
I managed to meet ~~with~~ ^{with} Sarge . He was
coming into Nashville on one occasion as I was
going out, ^{and} I mean, I had a chance to speak to
him for a minute. In New York, if you recall,
in October that year, they had a civil rights
conference.

HACKMAN: Right. Committee on Constitutional Rights, or
whatever.

HILL: Yes. And at that time we were particularly
interested--at least I was--partiuularly inter-
ested in trying to get him into Richmond. We
weren't getting too far with the directors, so I conceived
the idea where I--I looked for some opportunity to get a chance
to talk to him directly. And I don't remember
now who it was I spoke to, but he said, "Well,
hell, we're going to have to sidetrack him, ~~but~~
^{But} ~~because~~ he's got to go to the men's room." So
he said, "Well, get over ~~right~~ next to him."
So, "Okay," I got over next to him, and with
the police guard and all ~~that~~, ^I had a chance to

when he went into the men's room

talk to him. ~~He went over to the men's room,~~
^{then} and I waited for him, and when he came on back
we chatted. He said, "You gotta be bound by
what Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] said," ~~what~~ but
he urged ~~me~~ ^{me} to go back to Bobby, because Bobby
was there with us all the time, ~~any~~ ^{at that} time. It
didn't work out. He came to Virginia, but I
wanted him to come to Richmond.

HACKMAN: He was in Norfolk and Roanoke. Right.

HILL: He made Norfolk and Roanoke, but I wasn't satis-
fied. I knew he was going to come here, ^{into Virginia,} but I
tried my best to get him, because I think it
would have been far more effective if he had
come to Richmond. I don't know whether we would
have carried it or not, but we ~~would have~~ had
a better chance. ~~Because~~ you see, ⁱⁿ Roanoke, ⁱⁿ
that ^{area} ~~year~~ you've got the really strong Repub-
lican thieves around here. Norfolk ^{though} naturally,
is good Democratic territory.

And things went along that way. After
the campaign, of course, I came on back then.
I'd been away from practice for about nine
months, so I dug in ^{and} ~~tried~~ to practice. As a
matter of fact, I'd had no intention of seeking

any job. I was in New Jersey with my wife one weekend--for an organization of my wife's girl friends, they were having a weekend up there--and [Louis Martin] Louis [Martin] called me. He said they had a spot and they were in this bind (the man who stood a good chance of getting it, they didn't want to have it) and would I consider taking over this thing? But I didn't have the faintest idea what he was talking about.

HACKMAN: This is Louis Martin who called?

HILL: Louis Martin, yes. Louis called me. But he had to have an answer right that day. That was the usual rule, I think. I told him I'd think about it for an hour or so and I'd call him back. My wife didn't have any objection to me going off to Washington, so I agreed to do it. And it was this particular job.

HACKMAN: Let me run back over a few things in the campaign.

HILL: Okay.

HACKMAN: From your conversations with Congressman Dawson in this period, what was his opinion of the way the Kennedys were running their campaign in relation to the Negro? I noticed, at the beginning, his role was very controversial, as to just how they were going

to approach Congressman Dawson[?] or how they were going to get him involved in the campaign. Wasn't there a lot of discussion about this with Mrs. Lawson, Frank Reeves, and all these people?

HILL:

It could have been. You see, I was temporarily out of contact with everybody, from the end of the campaign in Los Angeles until around the first of September, because we were just free-wheeling[?] and riding through the West, ^{looking at the scenery} seeing the sights. So whatever discussions they had, I had no part in it. ^{we} I heard there ^{was}, you know, personalities and ^{all} that sort of stuff, but I had no contact with it. When I got back, everything had been settled. Dawson had agreed to work, provided he had somebody that he picked. And I happened to be the person that he picked. ~~No~~ as I say, I really can't supply anything else as to what happened during that period. ^{Now,} everything worked smoothly, ^{and} the only thing ^{you} ~~was~~. Dawson was an old-line politician, accustomed to the practices and methods that had been built up, of course, and one of them ^{was} you talk[?] and you telephone[?] but you don't do a

whole lot of writing. Well, the campaign was running on a tremendous amount of paper. A lot of things I'd bring up ^{with} to him, he'd say, "Well, you can't argue with success. It looks like they ^{are doing} know that they're doing, so, hell, I don't understand it, but we'll go along." So I mean that was his approach to ^{a lot of} that thing. ^{Now} the only thing that disturbed him and disturbed me, ^{fact to tell} ^{throughout the South} ^{there was} very little sophistication, ^{and so far as} ^{forth} political activity is concerned, ^{and} particularly at that time. ^{There's} not too much at the present time, in my opinion, ^{but} particularly at that time.

← As a consequence, you could get some key individuals, but you ^{couldn't} ^{be} keep giving them a little money to work with things. I used to make this observation, I'd say, "Hell, I could call Los Angeles, Seattle, any damn where, and ask people, 'How's the weather ^{out} up there?' or anything else"-- I mean, just using a nonsensical question, ^{and} there's no problems ^{about} it." Or, I could jump on an airplane and go any damn place, ^{that} ^{if} I felt I ought to go ^{ahead}. I don't remember ever asking anybody. ^{Of course}, I was told some things

to do, but there was a tremendous amount of freedom so far as doing what you thought you ought to do, so far as you were doing things. But it was like pulling his teeth to get any doggone money for any of these little gropps. And that was the only annoying situation that I can think of during the whole damn campaign.

HACKMAN: Where was the bottleneck on this? Was it at Shriver's level, or . . .

HILL: Was it where?

HACKMAN: Was it at Shriver's level, or who would you go to in the attempt to do this?

HILL: Well, of course, I would talk usually, most of the time, to Dawson and occasionally to Shriver. But it was always--it was pass the buck on that deal, you know, where others don't come in. Things were going to happen but just never happened, you see. As a matter of fact, we had a little flak from this fellow McCray--I think you got his name written down McCroy but I think his name is . . .

What is his full name?

HACKMAN: Is it McCray?

HILL: If it's the same fellow I have in mind, it's a "McCray"

down in South Carolina, ^{I remember} ~~that is. And on that~~
² ~~I've been~~ getting a couple of letters from him,
 long after the campaign was over, ^{for} money he
 claimed that he'd spent, ^d and never have been
 reimbursed for it. But, as I say, outside of
 that type of little annoying situation ^{along that} ~~on my~~
^{line of} ~~kind~~, everything else seemed to work very
 nicely. Well, Shriver, I found him ^{to be} a good guy
 to work with.

We went over to Bobby's office, once or
 twice. I remember ~~it was when~~ I'd been down to
 Tennessee, went to two or three places, and
 came back and made a report that unless some-
 thing drastic was done, we were going to lose
 the entire state. Bobby called us over for a
 damn session on it, ^{and} some fellow named -thaler . . .

HACKMAN: [John] Seigenthaler, [John Seigenthaler]

HILL: Seigenthaler, Seigenthaler was there ~~at~~ ² ~~that~~
 that time. ^{But} I don't know what ^{the} ~~to~~ carry over was
~~with~~, because, some of the things that we sug-
 gested to him, I know they never were done.

HACKMAN: This ^{is in} ~~is~~ relation to the Negro vote in Tennessee?

HILL: This was in relation to the Negro vote, yes.

well, of course, I think ^I ~~it~~ went a little deeper than --

~~That~~ We discussed this thing with several other people, Negro and white vote. Of course, our primary emphasis was on ~~the~~ Negro vote, but we were also concerned with the total picture, as far as we could gather it at any particular time, And here, we went out trying to get any information on these damn things.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything particular about what the problem was in Tennessee?

HILL: Now, just right at this minute, I don't, except that we had this tremendous problem. I ^{just} can't remember ^{now}; I think there was some Tennessee personalities involved. And then, of course, they had ? Hooks and that group, -Republicans, they were pretty well organized, and ^{then} they had ~~the~~ other old problem who was a big Elk down there. I can't remember his name

*Went to see
some of them*

I think Hooks subsequently came over to the Democratic side, but when he didn't do it during the campaign; he stayed with the Republicans in that campaign. ~~Oh, no~~, I can't say anything helpful

HACKMAN: At the time you got involved in this thing in September, when you actually went to work up in

the Washington office, had they pretty well decided on what the strategy was going to be to toward the Negro vote in the South, or was it still being debated?

HILL: It was being debated, and played ^{by ear} ~~by ear~~. I got the impression ^{I mean} that was my opinion about ^{- that} it, we were playing it mostly by ear.

HACKMAN: Did you find yourself ^{usually} ~~usually~~ in agreement with Mrs. Lawson and Woffard and these people?

HILL: Uh, yes. ^{well see} ~~Well~~ ^{Marjorie} ~~Marjorie~~, it was Louis Martin, ~~and Harris~~, and Harris, we've had fairly disagreement on things that came up for discussion ^{and that type of things} ~~It seems~~ ^{as I say} it was a fairly ^{relationship} harmonious working with the group. I ^{had} ~~have~~ been in other situations where a tremendous ^{and all that sort of things} amount of bickering and cross purposes ~~has been~~ ^{but I didn't think we found it that bad} going on, and stuff like that. I think we found ^{of a} ~~out that~~ it was more the case of. . . . As I say, the only annoying thing was trying to get money ^{for} ~~for~~ some of these groups that we ^{thought} ~~felt~~ would do a job. But outside of that, - just like this Martin Luther King thing, when it came up, ^{once} it was suggested, I don't think there was any- ^{who} body disagreed with it.

HACKMAN: On the phone call, you mean?

HILL: Yes, oOnce it was done, I ~~never~~ ~~didn't~~ anybody even say that they disagreed.

HACKMAN: How did that get started, do you know, where the first thing came in from?

HILL: I thought that was a question that would come up, and I tried to turn the damn thing ^{over} in my mind ^{as to whose} ~~yesterday~~ ^{--Well,} this idea. You know, as I recall, there were two or three people subsequently claiming credit for the idea, but as to who really made the damn suggestion, I really don't know, ^{so} ~~I~~ ^{you} don't ~~even~~ ^{he} need to add to the confusion.

HACKMAN: Most of the people we've talked to on this talk about a split between Mrs. Lawson and Frank Reeves. Now, this may have been, you said, it ^{maybe} was ironed out or cleared up by the time you got there, but was that any problem during the campaign? Of course, Reeves was travelling with.....

HILL: Well, you see, Reeves was away most of the time; he was travelling with the Senator, or ahead of him. At the St. Paul conference, this question as to whether or not ~~this~~ was going to be a thing, and as a matter of fact, up until that time, Marjorie's husband . . .

HACKMAN: Belford Lawson.

HILL: B . . Belford had been active. And then ^{when} Frank came in, as I recall, I think, my recollection is that Belford got out, and he didn't do ~~very~~ much of anything after that.

Well, you know, as always there's ^{a little} yak-yak, but I'm talking about ^{some} things of a serious nature.

HACKMAN: ^{How were} Like the people ^{that} I have on this list here, ^{how} were these ~~people~~ chosen? Were they already working when you came on, or how did you go about developing these people, what ^{type} ~~kind~~ of people were you looking for?

HILL: Oh, well, you utilize the key people in these varying areas. Now you take Arthur Shores; he's been a civil rights lawyer for a long number of years. Most of these people were active in NAACP, and you either knew them from personal relationships or through organizations of that type, and that sort of thing, ^{and} I think most of the key people were gathered by that source. You see, ~~that~~ you might say, the backbone of the civil rights movement in the South had consisted of a relatively small number of people. So it was not too difficult to check with somebody in

some principal city^s and ^{all} that ^{who} they would know
 most everybody in the state. I'd say that ^{created} ~~would~~
 be no problem for us [↑] ~~th~~ getting in touch
 with people that you could rely on to work. It's
 like this boy [] ^{Straggett} ^{who finally} went to the
^{Democratic} ~~Democratic~~ ^{at} ~~in~~ the Virginia
 Union, and they had been doing some work, and
 they wanted something done, so I suggested that
 we got Straggett he worked ⁱⁿ on the campaign^s
 and subsequently went to the ~~the~~ Committee. The
 same thing was done in all the various states.

HACKMAN: Were there any particular groups that you avoided getting involved?

HILL: Well, there were groups that you would know that the key individual in that, you couldn't rely on him, or he was likely to be voting Republican anyway, or as I ^{says} ~~said~~, you couldn't depend on him, or ^{would} ~~he was going to~~ ~~maybe~~ kick up ~~the~~
 There ^{was} ~~was~~ for example--to tell you the truth, ^{Adan [Clayton]} ~~they~~ ^{for}
~~I~~ wanted to make this swing through the South, I don't know what all the rest of them did, but everything I could do to block it I did, because I just didn't feel ^{Adan} ~~that~~ that ~~that~~ was going to help us. And there were individuals^s in varying

places, You'd check on ^{them} some groups, they'd come up, they wanted to do this, that, and the other things, ^{-- you'd} make some check on them, ^{and find} you found that. . . . Oh, we just stalled along, ^{tried not} and ~~no try~~ to antagonize them, but on the other hand you feel you ~~still didn't use them~~

HACKMAN: How much support was there for him to take a swing through the South?

HILL: You mean on the . . .

HACKMAN: Within the group you were working with in Washington.

HILL: I don't know. I know the old man was very much-- Dawson was very much opposed to it. As I recall, Frank wasn't too hot on it; I don't know what position Marge took on it right at this particular time. But I knew we were able to keep it from coming up. ^{of} You see, I had had too much experience ^{with him} for it, I mean, I know ^{Adam} we had real well, ^{and} ~~but~~ hell, I knew too ~~many~~ many places where ^{he disappointed} ~~they just wanted~~ people. And we just didn't didn't want that kind of a flare-up in any community. That was ^{my biggest} ~~not the sole faintest~~ objection to ^{him} ~~it~~. There's no question but ~~that~~ he could make a hell of a fine speech, but another thing was, ^{that} there was no rhyme or reason to what

the hell he ^{was going} ~~is supposed~~ to say, and he might just kick up the bucket in ^a that particular community, ^{where you} ~~but~~ he might be doing fairly well. ~~I mean, I don't know.~~ ^{Of course} ~~Because~~ we had to be sensitive to not only trying to get the Negro vote but at the same time not antagonize any of the white people in these communities, and he could ~~you~~ get around to ^{antagonizing them} ~~doing that~~. So it was within that framework that I was opposed ^{to him}. I don't know if I answered your question; I think I interjected

HACKMAN: No, that's all right. How much consideration was given to the possibility of Senator Kennedy giving a speech to a Negro group in the South? I ^{had} ~~have~~ heard of the possibility of him addressing, I believe, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which met in Miami, I believe, some time in that period. Do you remember that?

HILL: I don't remember. I remember trying to decide what the devil we were going to do with this organization of SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] and ^{the} Southern Leadership Conference. They'd called this meeting in Nashville, as I recall, ^{it was} either Nashville or

Memphis, ^{?)} ~~and~~ where they were going to--it wasn't a strike, but something of the nature of a sit-in, type of operation. I mean, ^{anyway} nobody was opposed to them doing what they wanted to do, ^{but} hell, all we wanted to do was just postpone it for a couple of weeks. And I know there was a heck of a lot of discussion as to who in the dev^{al} we would get to try to get with King and forestall the darn thing, ^{?)} until after the election, at least.)

→ I can't remember now what it was that they were. . . .

As I ^{says} ~~said~~, the only thing I can think of right at this moment, it was something of the nature of a sit-in type of operation, I mean, I don't quite remember now what it was. But whatever it was, it was just something, ^{?)} if it hadn't been done by that time, we didn't see any reason why they couldn't wait two more weeks. to stage it.

HACKMAN: How much of an effort was made to get open endorsements by people like Martin Luther King, ^{?)} and Roy Wilkins, ^{?)} and Whitney Young, ^{?)} and maybe even James Farmer in this period? Did you get involved with these people at all in this period?

HILL: I didn't get involved personally, although I

know ^{who} that. . . . You see, Louis was sitting ^{at one} -
we were right across ^{the} desk from each other,
And, of course, we talked a heck of a lot, ^{and} I
know that efforts might be made to get--and as
a matter of fact, as I recall, Wilkins did come
out with a statement about ^{it} ~~it~~. Of course,
King was still playing it cozy ^{but} I know efforts
were being made to get them, but, as I say, I
wasn't personally involved in trying to persuade
any of them to do it. Up to that time, except
for a couple of meetings, I had never been ^{with King} ~~been~~
~~to him~~. I mean, I knew who he was, I'm sure he
knew my name, but up until that time we hadn't
made too much association.

HACKMAN: How did your operation tie in with the registration
efforts? Frank Thompson was heading a regis-
tration office, and he had ~~Arthur~~ Arthur Chapin,
I believe, was working for ~~him~~, maybe on the South.
Was there any consideration of making any ser-
ious effort at registration of the Negroes in
the South in '60?

HILL: Well, they had a registration campaign on here
in Virginia. I know we cooperated with groups
that were operating registration programs, ^{and} that

sort of thing. Then there were some of the organizations, you see, the only way they could come out in the. . . . Well, for example, NAACP, ^a ~~the~~ local branch, they could participate in any of these registration programs. And that type of cooperation was given at all times. ~~Although~~ I don't remember having too much direct contact with Arthur during the campaign. Of course, I knew him before, and have known him since, but personally I don't think I ~~was~~ except, as I say, I ~~remember~~ ^{know we were} working with a lot of groups, and talking with some groups, like the NAACP branches, and that sort of thing, ^{we were} trying to get them involved, and at least getting the people registered. Most places, you see, that was a short period, because thirty days before registration, most places, the poll was closed.

HACKMAN: I'm just wondering if maybe the strategy was to hold back on this, because of fear of losing the white vote, if anything really . . .

HILL: I don't recall too many. They had a rather extensive program going on in Virginia at the time, but I can't remember too many places where

they . . .

HACKMAN: I heard Jacksonville, Florida, ~~was~~ instance, was one where they were trying to register people fairly early ^o

HILL: It ^{done} could have been ^{back that far ^o} previously, I just don't remember ~~very distinctly~~. But, as I say, there would be isolated communities, ^o anyway ^o it wasn't a real gigantic South-wide deal, although, either the year before that or ^{sometime} ~~something~~, one of the foundations had given some money, ^{and} some of the people were trying to get Negroes registered in the South. ^{Of course} The NAACP had started out earlier, ^{ha} and the annual campaigns, ^o and tried to--as a matter, of fact, ^{this is where they put} ~~they put this boy~~ Johnnie Brooks ^o on some years before that, as ^o director of registration in the South.

HACKMAN; Did you handle sending materials out to these people, as far as campaign materials . . .

HILL: We sent campaign materials to groups ^{too, yes ^o}

HACKMAN: Was there any problem, as far as funds went, on getting enough of the materials out?

HILL: Oh, I don't recall any problem as to getting materials. We had a fairly good stock of materials, as I remember.

HACKMAN:

When ~~[Adlai E.]~~ ^[Adlai E. Stevenson] Stevenson was running, with ~~[John J.]~~ ^[John J. Sparkman] Sparkman on his ticket, I know a lot of the materials that went out to Negro groups wouldn't even mention Sparkman. Was Johnson seen in this way? Can you remember that being a factor?

HILL:

I don't think that was too much of a factor. I know this, Johnson was speaking here in Richmond. The same night he was supposed to speak here, I was supposed to speak over in Roanoke, and I came into town the day before he was supposed to come in. So I went to headquarters to find out how they would use Johnson. They were having him speak to a few whistle stops and that sort of thing and not stopping him in any way in Negro neighborhoods. And so I objected. They said, "Well this is all set up now." I said, "Well, hell, there ain't nothing set up that can't be changed." So they claimed they couldn't change it, and I said, "Well, hell, I'll call Washington and see if I can't change it." And so then the guy said, "Well, let me call, then." So he called, and whoever the hell he talked to said he would follow whatever suggestions I made to them.

So, as a

consequence, we made one stop² over in ^{the} Church Hill section over here³ and ^{an} other stop right down here on the corner of Second and Lee, which is a widely known street so far as Negroes are concerned, all around, just like St. Antoine's ^{Antoin CS} in New Orleans³ or ^{Beale} ~~Beacon~~ Street in Memphis. And so I got a group together that night, ^{and} we put on a tremendous telephone calling thing³ and got all the principal businesses in this area³ to let the people ^{so} know[^], so we had a representative crowd out here in the service station for him to speak to. And he made this whistle stop at Second and Lee. Now, I'm sure that, a lot of places, things weren't done³ because the traditional group was handling them, and they were scared to death. As a matter of fact, Johnson made a very excellent speech at the meeting and everybody I know was tickled to death for having him-- ^{So ^} Because the Negroes were leery of Johnson, too, you know, so it was important to sell Johnson to Negroes.

HACKMAN: Did you get anything like this accomplished anyplace else?

HILL: No, and the only reason we had this accomplished

here was because I happened to be here when the thing happened, ~~and~~ and otherwise, even if he'd have come here, I wouldn't have known about it. And incidentally, I never did find out what happened to the suggestion that I made ^{in reference to --} Harris said he talked to somebody, but the Johnson people just never responded, he said. I often wondered really what happened in respect to that. But I'm sure that a lot of things would have been done with Johnson that weren't done, had they had somebody who had a little different concepts about what ought to be done.

HACKMAN: Which states did you regard as being the most important in terms of working on the Negro vote? Were there any that you just wrote off competely-- I mean, Alabama, Mississippi, was there much less effort in those areas?

HILL: No, I think we operated on the basis that we were going to try to carry all of them. As you said, now, I think I made a deeper study in Tennessee than I did anyplace else, and I was sure that unless some drastic changes were made, werewere not going to get Tennessee. But other than that, our efforts were sort of uniformly spread

around. We didn't even write Tennessee off[?] but were still hopeful that it might come through. Of course, we lost Virginia[?] ^{though} ~~that it~~ⁿ

HACKMAN: Did your operation tie in at all with Byron White's operation on the citizens' group? John Horne, I believe, was handling this in the South.

HILL: Yes. No, I had--except sometimes we'd try to do something, and somebody would tell you, well, Byron White's group's going to do something or other,[^] Except that type of information about it, maybe I can say. But we certainly had no direct tie with him.

HACKMAN: What about some of these people that the Kennedy's had working in the states, like ~~[William C.]~~ ^[William C. Battle] Bill Battle[^] here; ~~[Joseph D.]~~ ^[Joseph D. Tydings] Joe Tydings[^] was working in Florida; Ben Smith was in Alabama, some of these coordinat^ors they had in the states? Did you check with these people, or work with them at all?

HILL: They worked more with Byron or somebody else. Now, frankly, I didn't know Bill--I mean I knew who he was--but I didn't know Bill Battle before he came in. Now, his brother, John, I knew real well[?] because we had opposed each other in

a whole lot of these school cases. He'd been representing several in Charlottesville, in two or three counties and things, so I knew him real well, and, of course, I knew his daddy because he'd been Lieutenant Governor. But Bill, I don't ever remember meeting him until, one day, somewhere during the campaign, on some occasion, that's the first time I'd ever met him. Yes, he was down here, he and Ray Livelekt. As a matter of fact, you see, they had two headquarters in a lot of places. He had the regular headquarters here, with Ray, and then Bill was handling a separate surplus set-up. Things that I'd need here in Virginia, that went through that organizational channel, I worked with Ray.

HACKMAN: What about ^{in the} other states? Was there usually one person in charge in these states, or did you just work with people around in different cities? Well, for instance, Texas, there are a number of people listed, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, . . .

HILL: Most of my operations were with individuals. For example, in Georgia, I don't think I ever went to the headquarters. I know in Texas, my

in -- I'm trying to thi

dealings
~~relations~~ were with individuals. Now, ~~Yes, I~~
 Tennessee I did have a conference with several of the key
 people in established organizations, citizens'
 groups, and the regular Democratic organizations,
 and as I say, here in Virginia, most of my
 dealings was with Ray Livelekt. I also met, had a chat
~~time~~ or two with Bill Battle, but most often I
 was dealing with Ray Livelekt. In North Carolina,
 it was strictly with individuals James Stewart,
 and several others, and Kelly Owen in Charlotte.
 I don't guess it was any planned thing about
 it, but that was just the way things worked
 out.

HACKMAN: How much help to you in the South was Louis
 Martin? Did you work with press people in the
 South, Negro press people, or did Louis do most
 of it?

HILL: Louis did practically all of it. The only de-
 viation was when we wanted to get old man ^(Thomas W) Young . . .

HACKMAN: Norfolk

HILL: ... Co-editor for the Virginia Pilot -- I mean not the Pilot,
 And that part of it, I mean
 the [Norfolk] Journal and Guide

HACKMAN: Journal and Guide, yes.

HILL: ^{I remember}
 So we were talking about this thing, and it was

decided maybe we ought to just turn old man Young over to me. And I went down and had a long chat with him and ~~with~~ his boy, and we finally pulled him around. Because up to that time, they had been strictly Republican. We were able to swing them around. But ~~outside of that, that was~~ ~~besides~~ the only newspaper that I had direct dealings with, and even then, after I got them to agree, I just turned it over to Louis; He worked it for me; I suppose I had nothing further to do with it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember what arguments brought them around, at all?

HILL: Well, I just sold them on our faith in what the Kennedy-Johnson Administration would do, as contrasted with ~~the~~ ^[Richard M.] Nixon and things that we were trying to accomplish. And then I was able to argue rather strongly against ~~[Dwight D.]~~ Eisenhower. See, we had gotten this school decision during the Eisenhower administration and I still think that desegregation of the schools is being accelerated much faster than it was and a lot of turmoil would have been eliminated if the executive had taken a stand,

knocked down the "massive resistance manifesto" that [Harry F.] Byrd^[Harry F. Byrd] and the rest of them set up, that sort of thing. I know I spent--well, it took me two days to swing him around, but we ^{brought} ~~did get~~ him around.

HACKMAN: What can you recall, in talking to Negroes all around the South, was the hardest thing to sell them on about the ticket, or about Kennedy as an individual, particularly?

HILL: I was able to marshall some very good arguments against the Eisenhower administration, and I contented^d that Nixon would just be a continuation of the do-nothing program so far as the Negroes were concerned. And then, of course, we utilized all ^{the} arguments, from Roosevelt^[Franklin D. Roosevelt] on up through Truman^[Harry S. Truman], and various things that had happened during the Roosevelt thing, and what other things had happened during Truman--how Truman^{had} stood up when it really took guts to stand, I mean^{to take} the ~~big~~ stand he did before the '48 campaign[?] and all these various things. And # And as I say, I utilized the do-nothing attitude on the part of Eisenhower, in respect to school desegregation[?] and even the use of troops--he

had no alternative, I mean, it was either a question of ~~Always~~ ^{Orval E} going to be president or we're going to stay with Eisenhower. ~~he~~ ^{he} had to stop the line some damn place. ~~So~~ ^I I remember debating with ^{P. Wicker} down there in Mobile-- he was a lawyer from Birmingham. ^{But} I cut him up going and coming ~~but~~ ^{It was} that kind of argument. So we appealed to the Negro's faith in the future, and unquestionably Kennedy did present a forward-looking viewpoint on things, and as I say, I don't think we had ~~any~~ ^{any} I'm sure that so far as the Negro vote was concerned, we lost very little of the Negro vote.

HACKMAN: I just wondered if there were particular things that people were upset about. For instance, he had done a lot of speaking in the South, and had some ties with ~~well~~ ^{that} the famous breakfast he had with Governor ^[John M. Patterson] Patterson. . .

HILL: Well, I don't think I wasted too much time with those things. I tried to carry them with the positive things I could think of. ~~And~~ ^{And} of course, I remember ~~two~~ ^{do} or three times ~~to~~ ^{do} discussions. how you explain this Patterson thing? Well, hell, I ^{if} say you ~~can't~~ ^{can} explain anything if you

just want to try to explain it. ~~Then they~~ There are always
~~to~~ sometimes ^{when} you ^{going to} ~~gotta~~ have to do some things
whether you want to do them or not. ¹¹ And then
you could give some example that would strike
your mind at the time, ^{if} you knew a particular
individual where he must have had to be in a
compromising situation because there's just
nothing else that you could do, ^{except--} otherwise you
would be very, very offensive even to people
who agree with you. ^{Of} course, you ^{would} spend more
time having to defend Johnson because his
record stood out more so far as opposition to
civil rights. I mean, he had participated in
a lot of things, but of course then we could
come around ^{to} saying that, after all, he had been
the key figure in the Civil Rights Act of 1957
and then point out also the fact that Kennedy
was going to ^{be} the President and not Johnson.

HACKMAN: What about the religious factor as far as the
Negro vote? I've heard some people say that
this could have been as much a factor with the
Negro vote as it was for the Southern ...

HILL: It was with some old-line Baptist ministers
particularly, and a few ^{old-line} Methodist ministers. I

can't say that it wasn't a factor, but so far as most of the people were concerned, you could talk to them and get along with them. I'm not saying there weren't just dyed-in-the-wool types; they would try to raise the issue. As a matter of fact--oh, it was the Ambassador to. . . . Frank. . . .

HACKMAN: Guinea?

HILL: No. He used to be in the NAACP; he was on the West Coast, administrator for a long number of years. Hell, that's about all I know. But anyway, I know Frank and I debated two Baptist ministers here in Richmond, over on the south side. We had three or four thousand people at this thing. They were-- this real old-line argument, the Pope was going to run the country and the rest. But gosh, from the enthusiasm of the crowd and everything else, I mean there wasn't any question but that we'd made them look ridiculous.

HACKMAN: Can you remember where this statement that Senator Kennedy made several times in the campaign, about solving the problem of discrimination in housing with the "stroke of a pen", where did that originate, do you know?

HILL: I don't know where it originated, but it was

made several times. And, of course, everybody really thought that it would come out. As a matter of fact, that was the argument that Louis Martin sold me on coming to Washington with this Federal Housing Administration.

HACKMAN: It was going to happen right away.

HILL: You are going to have this Executive order, and you need somebody who is interested in this type of activity--you see, I was assistant to the Commissioner--and so you're going to be in the key spot here, so far as what's happening. And, of course, I remember sitting in on a dozen and one conferences, ~~making~~ up drafts of the damn Executive order.

And then finally, the night that they finally decided on the draft that came out [~~Robert C.~~ Bob Weaver and Neal Hardy and I had been out to some country--I think it was Iron Gate Club, I'm not sure where in Virginia--where the FHA had had an annual deal. And we were riding back, and Bob said, "Well, now, here's what the education ^{and} budget thing is going to be. Here's what it's going to be." And, of course, I was most unhappy; Neal was unhappy because all the burden

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Side II, Taps I

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was put on FHA and VA [Veterans Administration]; and everybody else had a free hand to continue to discriminate. And then, of course, we tried to sell that on the idea that this was just a temporary deal, and very soon, as the smoke blows away, something stronger would come up. And as a matter of fact, the day that--what's the fellow's name, Governor's name that was head of the . . .

HACKMAN: [David L.] Lawrence [David L. Lawrence] ?

HILL: . . . Governor Lawrence was sworn in, I was over to the White House for the swearing-in. And I got close enough to the President that I said, "When are you going to do something for us on this housing business?" "There's still time, still time." And that was the end of that because there was just nothing he could do. And the only other time that--I mean, I don't think I saw him any more after that.

But they had this big "blow-out"--I recall the first one they had, where they invited practically--they invited everybody who worked in here. I think that was the first meal people like that ever had at the White House. My wife and I were

there ³ ~~was~~ ₌ a matter of fact, she got a picture. She pushed through the crowd, and ~~when~~ Kennedy said, "Att a girl, att a girl!"

HACKMAN: At the time you went over there at FHA, in the Intergroup Relations Service, what was the situation at that time, as far as ² well, I guess Hardy was the ~~Commissioner~~ ² As far as the top people in FHA, what was their attitude in this whole area? Did you get much support?

HILL: It was a case of drgging ^{them} ~~them~~ along, I mean, put it this way, there was no. . . . ~~Then, it~~ ₌ of course ¹

⁴ ~~that~~ was not only true so far as this area was concerned; ¹ it was true of a lot of things that Hardy wanted to try to do. The old-line was ¹ very slow, very slow to change. I remember a simple thing like this ² ₌ we were putting out ^{these} ~~a~~ lists of the repossessed houses, but people had to come to the FHA office to look at the list. Well, we got some feedback on it ² I talked to Neal ² and said, "Why can't we make up some copies of this thing ² and mail it out to people?" This was sent through the normal channels for determining things ² before it came back ² Oh, this would ^{and the other problem} _o cause this problem, that problem ¹ Well, I kept

bugging Neal about it. ^{He} He made a speech somewhere--St. Louis, ^{or some} ~~some~~ ^{doggone} ~~doggone~~ place--one night; somebody asked him the ~~doggone~~ ^{doggone} question ^{and} he said, "Oh, ^{yes} ~~yeah~~, we'll send it to you." It kind of caught him off base on what this was about, so he came back and had this ~~doggone~~ ^{doggone} staff conference one day. And he said, "Oh yeah, about this thing. . . ." And the Assistant Commissioner for ^{ess} ~~Repossessed~~ Properties ^{started giving} ~~and the other thing,~~ all the same old damn arguments, now, that had been. And so I chimed in ^{and} tried to knock down some of them ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{said}, "Well, we got to do this that and the other thing ^{and} it won't cost all that much." Finally, Neal said, "Oh, goddammit, we'll do it!" Bam, like that.)

Then we had the hard process of getting the regulations established ^{and} getting it done. ^{And} as I say, it was that kind of drag-your-feet ^{type of} ~~their-feet-back~~ attitude, but on the other hand, I had a pretty good working relationship with most of them. ^{Shortly} After I got in, the Housing Act of 1961 came down, and there were so many new features, it was determined that the Washington staff would meet in each of the six regions ^{and}

meet with different local and regional groups and explain these things to them. And that gave me an opportunity to travel around with them and get to know them personally and ^{let} get them ^{get} better to know me personally. So we worked up a probably real good working relationship. And a lot of things I was able to get accomplished without worrying too much about permission; on the other hand, there were a whole lot of times you had to get ^{their} permission to actually say it would be done. Then you weren't doing too much, ^{but...} and swinging at Neale, but...

HACKMAN: What about the other people working in this same area in the other--PHA [Public Housing Authority] and Urban Redevelopment and these . . .

HILL: Well, I had a hell of a lot more freedom and influence with my particular ^{setup} service. And judging from what they would tell me--and I'd tell them what we would do ^{and} with this, that, and the other thing ^{while} they'd give me all the help they could, so far as ^{their} staff experience and things, but they would speak of difficulties they had that I didn't encounter.

HACKMAN: Was this primarily because Hardy would let you

go more on your own? Or was it just the nature of the . . .

HILL:

Well, I think, a combination of factors. Hardy was more progressive than some of the heads, and ~~know~~^{let it run} a little more. And of course, when ^[Philip N. Brownstein] [Philip N.] Brownstein came in, he was ~~even~~ a tougher administrator than Hardy had been. I mean Hardy was a good guy, but he hated like hell to crack anybody's head. Brownstein was just the opposite; well, he'd crack your head at the drop of a hat, see. And so, you got that type of difference between the two different men. ^{Then} Most of the members of the Washington staff; ^{--then,} but of course, you could issue these ^{as directives} ~~directors~~ in Washington, and then the directors have got to carry them out. And ^{they were} ~~then it was~~ slow. And of course now--the key person in the FHA office is the chief underwriter. And in so many places, he was really a stinker. And then there were several directors ^{that} we had to finally get moved, you see. ^{Then} And most of them had Civil Service status, and that sort of stuff. So you couldn't just fire them; you had to find a spot, and transfer

them from Seattle to Philadelphia, ~~to some~~ ^{or find some}
~~sort, or something else. That's another way~~
of handling things.

HACKMAN: Was the South much tougher for you than the other regions?

HILL: No. During the whole time I was there, we were very fortunate in the zone commissioner, ^{that'd} be the person we had charged with the zone commission, ^{going} brought along, and ^{trying} tried to do all he could to carry out the directives, ^{and} of course ^{we} ~~he~~ ^{Bill} spoke to the director, ^{I mean} if he had any problems. Then, so far as directives and things, we got along ^{damn} very well, ^{and all} that, ^{but} in any ^{case} ^{never} getting to the implementation of them, and actually getting particular projects moving, or opening up, that sort of thing, then you had. . . .
^{In that area} And I had a whole lot to do with--at least I had a whole lot of people to call on me. I got involved in a lot of projects that we were trying to do, and there in that situation you had as many calls from white people ^{as} you did--as a matter of fact, the builders and ^{the} developers, they would lean on you ^{at times} rather heavily, ^{trying to}.

And then you had the other problem of trying to

develop housing, and at the same time, trying to develop the concept of housing outside of the traditional ghetto areas for Negroes. And so, sometimes, you're almost working at cross purposes with yourself and that sort of stuff.

HACKMAN: How much did Weaver push his commissioners in this this area? Was he ahead and out there, as far as this was concerned? ^{Could} ~~Can~~ did you take this problem to him, or to [Booker T. McGraw], [B. T.] McGraw, who was . . .

MILL: Well, of course, I had constant relationship with McGraw. To be very frank with you, I think Bob could have done a hell of a lot more than he did. Now, let me say that he was sensitive to the problem, ^{and} ~~and~~ he was sensitive, all right, to it, and I think he was trying to work ^{an} ~~an~~ But I think that he took too gradual approach to the thing. I mean, that's where I have serious criticism of him. For example, up until just here very recently, there had been ^{no} ~~no~~ real reorganization ^{or extension} of the intergroup relationships. ^{Service} ~~Now~~ All right, this was the first housing agency, ~~this was the~~ first to have this type of service. And ^{so} ~~still~~ when it took on in Washington, all the other agencies expanded and got way beyond it, and the intergroup

^{Service}
~~relationship~~ in the Housing, which is as sensitive as any field involved in ~~this~~ problem. There was no extension of it, no expansion of it. And during the first year, ^{and a} ~~the~~ half when everybody was moving out, he could and should have made it ^{and concerned} ~~much~~ more viable ~~comparing the service~~. Well, I ^{have to} just follow the usual line that all bureaucracies are accused of, of just increasing bureaucracy. But it was a great need for far more people.

HACKMAN: Was this proposed ^{vetoed} ~~in~~ vido, in effect, by Weaver, or at what level?

HILL: Well, I don't know what other level, but I never thought we had ^{Weaver's -- it was} ~~the~~ ^{was} going to "hold off," ^{on hold off's} ~~an~~ hold off. We recognizing ^{but} ~~because~~ we were going to just wait a while," that type of answer.

HACKMAN: How about Jack Conway, did he get involved in this whole thing to any degree?

HILL: Not too much, to my knowledge. Now, ^{of course} ~~of course~~, Jack was, you know, a good guy you could work with on anything that you wanted to put to him. The only problem I had with Jack was that some people out in ^{both} ~~in~~ the senator, ^{and one of the} ~~would have been~~ congressmen ^{from} ~~at~~ St. Louis, wanted to replace what

we would not do anything. He said, "Stall them as long as you can, man, until we have to make a showdown." So we were able to stall them, and I finally went up to the Hill one day and sat down with this--I've forgotten this Congresswoman's name right now.

HACKMAN: Leonor Sullivan?

HILL: Sullivan, yes. I sat down with her. I didn't give all my reasons about this guy but just tried to point out the fact that we oughtn't have to do anything at this time. We stalled her along. And after we were able to stall her along, the Senator, he was more of the same. They appealed to him, but he was just riding along with whatever she did, and we were able to say, "Well, Mrs. Sullivan is satisfied at the time that we let it ride along." I've forgotten whether it was [Edward V. Long] Long or the other guy.

HACKMAN: Long or [Stuart] Symington.

HILL: I think it was Long at the time. I'm not sure if Symington was involved or not.

HACKMAN: Did anybody at the White House level get involved in your area at all? Any phone calls from the White House?

HILL: Oh, yes. You'd get phone calls, and you'd get referrals, occasionally--not too much, but you get them.

HACKMAN: I just wondered who at the White House was in housing. They usually have . . .

HILL: Well, Lee White ^[Lee C. White] for awhile. I'm trying to remember. It seems to me like somebody else before him. I really don't remember right now his name. But as I say, I don't remember, so far as I was concerned, of getting far too much pressure from the White House, but I know those things could be. . . . They took the view--they wouldn't pressure us too much; they just took the view that they would send us over views they had--a report, I mean. I don't remember there was ever a situation coming up where, "This has got to be done" type of attitude. I don't remember that happening.

HACKMAN: What about employment within FHA, after the Equal Employment--that Executive order--came out? Was there much accomplished, did you feel?

HILL: A little.. Not anything like as much as. . . . Well, at first, it was really slow, but finally they got it accelerated and began to gain the directions

to recognize the fact that they had to make a better showing. They kept showing the office that had no Negroes, and then finally it got to a point where he had everybody really trying to acout around. Except for a few typist-clerk jobs, things of that sort, the other jobs, it was really a case of we were having problems about trying to fill them, and so forth ? .

But overthe five or six year period, they had enough sense to get enough done in good time. In any case, it was much better. They haven't made a whole lot of progress.

HACKMAN: I had read. . .

full view

HILL: As a matter of fact, they even made a Negro director, now, for the first time, a nice guy called ^ Youngblood. Now, he came in during the time I was there in the General LCounsel's office, a lawyer. He worked up, and I got a call the other day that he had been made director of the Washington office.

HACKMAN: I had read in onememorandum that the responsibility for progress in this field was supposedly with the Deputy Commissioner, and I'd wondered if the different-- there were about three Deputy Commissioners under Kennedy and I wondered if that

made any difference in this area that you could see.

I think there was--what?--a fellow named [James B., Jr.]
[James B. Cash, Jr.],
Cash, and a fellow named/ . . .

HILL: Well, in FEA, there was Cash, and there was [Paul E.]
[Paul E. Ferrero],
Ferrero, and then/ . . .

HACKMAN: A guy named [Philip J.] Maloney, . . .
[Philip J. Maloney]

HILL: Maloney, name of Phil Maloney. Well, they were what
were called the Equal Employment Opportunity officers.
They had a responsibility, really, under the order to
develop moral weight on cases of complaint and that
sort of thing. Although they would cooperate with
respect to employment, usually battling the employ-
ment out was with personnel.

And then another thing, there were two or three
times when we had freezes on employment. Then we ran
to another--during one of the appropriation bills
Senator [Albert] Thomas [Albert Thomas] limited EHA to a fixed
figure, and by the time he injected this figure into
legislation, we were over it, so that meant that we
had to come down to a figure. And you had all that
kind of foolishness out of the Congress which created
problems on some

instances where you might be able to do something
about employment. 77

HACKMAN: Why do you think he waited so long to write that Executive order in housing, till late '62?

HILL: I really don't know. Of course, there was, as I understand, tremendous opposition to it, you know, in varying circles. And then, of course, they all were generally pretty liberal.

Congress was worried. They called a--they started a 2-21d3 program, and then there was a vast need for more public housing, and any of these appropriations to make them pay more. . . . This is just my surmise. And then some of them, some of them ~~was~~ wouldn't talk, but on the other side there was a whole lot of talk about varying people being opposed to it. And of course, the idea at first was to try to get a much stronger Executive order.

HACKMAN: Did the Executive order change your job much, give you more leverage? I know there were a lot of objections to the way it was written, but was it at all effective from what you could see in your area?

HILL: Well, it was so limited that it really wasn't effective. But on the other hand, it did increase

the amount of work that I had to do. ^{Of course} ~~Because~~
 you're trying to develop ways of making it
 work, and getting the maximum mileage out of
 it, and that sort of thing. We had a tremendous
 amount of complaints on it; most of them you
 couldn't do anything with because they didn't
 fit the requirements. But then, even when you
 did have factual situations ^{that really} ~~which~~ came within
 the scope of the order, you had a hard time
 you had to start all over again, ^{ing} do the educating
 of the directors and everybody ^{was} ~~who~~ in their staff as to
 what to do, and then they would ^{haul} ~~file~~ the thing
 up so many different ways that it would get
 stale, and ^{all} that sort of thing.

HACKMAN: Was there much disagreement, or discussion
 at the top level in FHA, about how broadly you
 could interpret this thing, or was it fairly
 hard to define?

HILL: Well, I ^{Questions would come up} ~~guess you could call it~~, as to what you
 could ^{do} ~~do~~ in changing the regulations to further
^{or} ~~and~~ help enforce the objectives of the order, and
 that sort of thing. I think getting things
 done, getting things changed to comply with
 the objectives of the order was the biggest

problem. I mean, if it was a clear-out violation of the order, nobody was opposed. But there were so many instances where we felt that if we did things a little differently, or if we tried something else, we would be within the sphere of the order, and you would still be doing an effective job in FHA. You see, ~~there~~ the attitude ^{over} ~~of it~~ ~~always~~ there was ~~after all,~~ this is a business operation; you can't disturb the business operation too much, and all that sort of stuff. They were more concerned about the attitude of the mortgagees than they were about a lot of ~~things~~ of individuals.

HACKMAN:

You ~~did~~ ^{had} mention briefly, ^{ed} ~~early~~ ^{earlier} Governor [redacted] Lawrence's committee, ^{the committee} that the President appointed. Were these people any help at all to you, un-cooperative, or? . . .

HILL:

They were cooperative; they just never had the muscle, And they didn't have very much of a budget, so it was more of a paper-shuffling operation, so far as they were concerned. They ^{held} ~~had~~ a few conferences, one in Boston, one in Chicago, one down in St. Louis. And we got another group affiliated with them and held one over

in Baltimore. But outside one or two ^{other} educational things of that nature, it was just ~~a~~ shuffling ^{of} papers ^{around}. ~~that~~ Not that I don't think that the individuals who were in the job wanted to do more, but I just don't think they could do more.

HACKMAN: There's one other series of questions here, and this is a back on the campaign again? Can you recall any discussion of the possibility of trying to do something with Civil Rights legislation in that fall session of '60, September session, that rump session of Congress?

HILL: Well, I remember, you know, they announced that ~~said~~ they were going to come back after the Convention, but I wasn't involved in any of these things here. I'm trying to remember now ^{it} seems to me like the NAACP had someone ^{an} ~~one~~ just come up from Washington to talk to some of these ³ or so ^{officer} ~~people~~. I mean, maybe something of that nature, or meet with some groups ^{like that} but I really don't know because as I say, at that time I had been away from my practice a pretty long while, and ^I was just trying to start back in again, trying to get back to work.

HACKMAN: As far as Kennedy's trips into the South, did

you do any advance work on any . . .

HILL: No, I didn't do any advance work; Frank did that.
No, I ^{didn't do so} ~~did~~ no advance work.

HACKMAN: What was the policy--I don't know if you know this--but what was the policy as far as meeting with Negro leaders in an area when you would go in. Was this always done, or was it usually not done, as far as the Senator ~~getting together~~ getting together with Negro leaders in a given area? Do you remember anything, or don't know?

HILL: I just don't recall. Now ~~know~~ that he met with Negro groups and ^{met with} ~~various~~ Negro leaders, but I mean just how it was arranged, I just don't know.

HACKMAN: I was just wondering how that worked in the South.

HILL: I don't know. I'm sure that Frank ^{would of had} ~~was~~ there ^{to} meet with these, but ^{in fact} at the time I don't even remember discussing it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember looking back at the campaign after it was over and concluding that the Negro vote was crucial in any of the Southern states? how successful the efforts had been at all?

H That's a pretty tough question at this late date.

HILL:

Put it this way. I think the way we carried them, the Negro vote was crucial, and looking where we lost, the closeness of it was due to the fact that we got such a strong support from the Negro vote.

HACKMAN:

Can you remember anything in particular about Atlanta? I think in Atlanta the Negroes voted for Nixon, from what I've heard. I just wondered if you'd spent any time in Atlanta.

HILL:

first name

We went to [A.T.] Walden, who called a Georgia-wide group together. Of course, at that time, he was ailing and it was really run by [^T] Cochrane. Now, Cochrane wasn't as well liked. I mean, it was unfortunate that Colonel Walden was ^{K?} kind of feverish. At that particular time he was not only in bad shape but he also--he could hardly hear at that time, at that particular time. But of course, so consequently, instead of the Colonel running the meeting Cochrane ran it. And everybody knew that Cochrane wasn't really running it, sort of underhanded. So consequently, that organizational effort wasn't as effective as it would have been if the Colonel had been really the sparkplug that he had formerly been. But

I think that we had good cooperation out of the Negroes in Georgia. And this is news to me; I never heard that.

HACKMAN: I think a couple of people in interviews say. . .

HILL: If there had been an effective push

Well, if you see, you had a strong Republican organization in Washington--I mean in Georgia, and of course--I mean, I'm not trying to claim the Negroes were 100 per cent for Kennedy, but I still think that we had the majority of the Negroes, despite the fact they really started off with a strong Republican organization. . . .

HACKMAN: This was strictly Atlanta; I don't know about the state as a whole. I just heard somebody make this comment. They may be incorrect.

HILL: Another thing, you see, Cochran at one time had been sort of identified with the Republican organization. As a matter of fact it was in housing, wasn't it, part of the time during the Eisenhower Administration.

HACKMAN: That's all I can think of, unless you can think of something else on the campaign or otherwise.

HILL: I can't think of anything else right this moment.