

Esther E. Peterson, Oral History Interview—JFK#2, 1/20/1970
Administrative Information

Creator: Esther E. Peterson
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Biographical Note

Peterson was a legislative representative for the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO (1958-1961); Assistant Secretary for Labor Standards (1961-1969), and Director of the Women's Bureau (1961-1964) in the Department of Labor; and Executive Vice Chairman of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (1961-1963). In this interview, she discusses organizing labor support for John F. Kennedy (JFK) in the 1960 presidential campaign; her appointment to the Labor Department under JFK, and other Kennedy administration appointees; the President's Commission on the Status of Women; and legislation about equal pay for women, among other issues.

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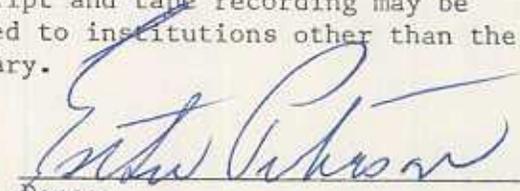
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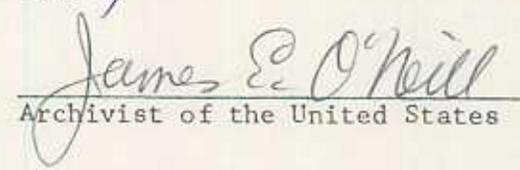
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Esther E. Peterson—JFK#2

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Second of Three Oral History Interviews

with

Esther Peterson

January 20, 1970
Washington D.C.

By Ann M. Campbell

For the John F. Kennedy Library

CAMPBELL: Mrs. Peterson, I thought perhaps you could recall for us your first meeting with President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy], then Representative Kennedy.

PETERSON: He was representative then. Well, I was working as a lobbyist for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and I recall being part of a team working with other union representatives, with different lobbyists being assigned to different congressmen. And I, being a woman, kind of the low person on the totem pole I suppose at that time, was assigned to then Jack Kennedy, the congressman. And, you know, there were a lot of people who didn't particularly like the way he conducted his campaign¹, and there were issues in which he didn't really shine as a labor person, actually, during that period. But anyway, I was assigned because we have a lot of members of the Clothing Workers in his district. I remember going in and seeing him. One of the things that really pleased me, he was brand new, and we immediately got along. Oh, it was an easy, very easy, nice relationship. He was so easy to talk with, completely at ease. Of course, he was young, and I wasn't so in awe of him as I was of some of those with more seniority, you know. I can remember that very definitely. But I also remember his

¹ As I remember, some felt that he was not strong enough on civil rights, and had not been forthright on that issue during his campaign. Also there was fear that he was dominated by his Boston Irish cohorts. I felt that he wanted to be elected and he felt the sense of the voters for as soon as he became—as soon as he was elected, he certainly had a far more positive attitude toward those questions. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

asking me, oh, about some of the laws and their differences, the difference between this law and that law. And I liked his honesty, and I liked his basic approach. “How would you know between the Norton [Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932] and.... Now, remind me about this, the minimum wage and the hours and the Fair Labor Standards [Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938],” a lot of things that we were working on—just to refresh his memory². It was a very nice and easy basis. Then he used to call me from time to time and ask me for things and advice and a little help. So I liked working with him very much, even early.

CAMPBELL: You were, I think, representing labor for a few years while the President was in the House. Do you recall what the labor people in general thought about his service in the House? How was he viewed?

PETERSON: You see, I left in '48 to go abroad, and I wasn't there during a lot of that period so I just don't remember. I remember nothing outstanding about it, no. I think they (labor) didn't expect him to go far.

CAMPBELL: Would it be possible to contrast your experience with the then Representative Kennedy to your contacts with other representatives? Was he the typical young representative of...

PETERSON: Well, I think the thing about him was you could tell that he was ambitious. But the thing that was so nice, he was so bright, and it was fun to talk with him. And before a hearing you'd give him a few questions, and he'd make the most of them. And he listened—this was so good—he really listened, and I felt if you went to him with a good outline of arguments, he would use it. And that's very satisfying for a lobbyist. And with a lot of others there were just gestures. I also remember that you worked with him specifically, not with his staff as much as

you did with some others, and that was very good. I liked that. There was always this informality. But it's hard work. I'm trying to think of the actual congressmen I was working with at that time. He was young, you know, and he didn't have the seniority that a lot of the others had.

² I had been asked the question about working with him, with President Kennedy. I was talking about the first time I met him and I say that I remember him asking me about some of the laws and their differences, the difference between this law and that law, and I say that I liked his honesty and I liked his basic approach. There the transcript gets a little confusing. My recollection is that he listed all the various names of the wage and hour law, fair labor standards act. Norton had had something in minimum wage law, wage and hours laws, and a number of bills had carried the names of different people who had been promoting the bill. It was a simple example but there were many more examples than that when he would sit down and wanted in a nutshell the essence of various bills. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

CAMPBELL: Then when you returned to the labor movement in this country in the fifties—by this time the President had had an extended association with labor legislation—do you recall at that time any impression of the labor movement’s feeling toward the then Senator Kennedy?

PETERSON: Well, you see, it had different temperatures at different periods. We worked with him a great deal on the unemployment insurance, I remember. And maybe I should talk to Leonard Lesser because I was working very closely then on that and with Nelson Cruikshank [Nelson H. Cruikshank]. But Senator Kennedy was good and helped us a great deal. On the minimum wage bill, I recall, he was thorough and very good. I remember so well so many of our hearings on some of the issues I had been working on. And, of course, the real mix-up was in what they call the Kennedy bill, and all of that part which I’ve, I’m afraid, pretty well forgotten.

CAMPBELL: You arranged, I believe, for Mrs. Roosevelt to testify once in favor of the minimum wage. Was it a difficult task to get her to do?

PETERSON: Yes, I did. It was rather tense at that moment because of, you know, the relationship between the Senator and Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt]. And I was annoyed with him the day she testified because here was this grand old lady, and he didn’t come down and kind of go through the niceties with her that one would expect, the respect, I think, that was due to her. Later on, after I got very well acquainted with her she gave me a picture of her walking out of a room in her cottage at Hyde Park, I think, with him or the day she gave him word that she would support him. And it’s a beauty. I mean his face is just, you know, so very, very pleased. Those old wounds were somewhat healed. But, when you kind of sit back and look at these political scenes, you can understand a lot of the problems. Because she was, I guess, playing with some of the people, especially in New York politics, who were somewhat on the other side of the Liberal Party. So, yes, I remember that day very well, so very, very well.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall if there were any specific remarks from Mrs. Roosevelt or you just were aware of the tenseness?

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PETERSON: Oh, I was aware of it, I was aware of it. And I recall as I was walking out with her after her testimony some people were rather rude to her. And I remember the dignity of this marvelous woman standing up to some of the remarks that they made about her and her children, you know, confronting her as she was walking down an aisle. I remember her saying in answer to a “hate” remark, “Hate is a strong word. Do you really want to use it?” But then I’m talking more about her and not of Representative Kennedy at that time. But you could feel it, I was well aware of it.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall in that period of the late fifties and really before the President’s campaign began in earnest, how any particular labor leaders

might have viewed him as viewing a potential president?

PETERSON: Well, it's hard for me to remember names, but I wanted personally.... You see, you think of these things only in terms of yourself. I had talked with him a great deal about getting more labor help. I remember I wanted to arrange a little luncheon for him with some labor people. McDevitt [James L. McDevitt] wouldn't take part. But Al Barkan [Alexander E. Barkan] and I did go. The luncheon was in his office and food was sent from his home³. I remember trying to get some names of labor people I thought should work for him. I wanted to set up a little group of some labor contact people to work for him. And there wasn't enthusiasm. I remember that so definitely. But in my own union, Mr. Potofsky [Jacob Samuel Potofsky] and Mr. Rosenblum [Frank Rosenblum] and these people, they liked him.

At that time I was thinking seriously of leaving my job and later on Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] offered me a job to come and work full-time—this was in the primaries—because I had declared

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for him [JFK], and he was the person I wanted⁴. And my union at that time did not want me to do it. I couldn't do it for personal reasons because of my husband's [Oliver Samuel Peterson] illness—but I made the big decision then. I remember thinking, "Well, to heck with it. I will break with them," because I had real confidence in JFK. I thought he was going to make it. But then, later on, after he got the nomination, why, it was quite different, of course. Then people really moved in. But there wasn't the kind of...

CAMPBELL: What reservations, do you recall, would your union have had?

PETERSON: I think, in part, his youth. You know, a lot of these are older people, and I don't think a lot of this is ideological as much as it's personal. I think that with some of them—maybe some, not all of them—down deep there was a little of the Catholic fear that would never be expressed openly, but I could tell by the jokes

³ I'm discussing the luncheon that Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] asked me to put up, to arrange with the Senator and labor people. We were trying to really work out some connections, to get labor people to work toward his campaign. It was very difficult, as I pointed out before, and McDevitt, whom I had hoped would go, would not go, but as I say here, Al Barkan did go, and at that time, we discussed a lot of names of people whom we thought might be able to head up a labor campaign. Al was helpful, but even so, the initiation of names, we had to put forward because Al, too, was a bit under wraps on coming out early to say that he was really in his corner when the labor movement had not decided. We were there quite a while and I recall when we left the room Ted Sorensen said to me, "Golly, Esther, that was a long time, that's more time than he gives most people," or something to that effect. And I was glad to hear that because I felt that he had found the suggestions that we were making very useful. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

⁴ When I talk about my support of the Senator for the presidency, and I describe how Bob Kennedy offered me a job to handle labor work in the primaries, I remember it very well because Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] and I sat down in the old, then hotel that's now been, it's right next to the AFL-CIO, we discussed salary and all. I looked into it very carefully, but found so much traveling would be involved that I couldn't leave, that I couldn't take a job that involved that much traveling at that time because of my husband's health. But it was Bobby Kennedy who made the offer, and with whom I talked. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

and remarks. Well, would a Catholic candidate choose Jews to help? You know, you got a little bit of this. Then I think there was a real fear that he wasn't really a liberal. And the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] situation and the things that he said in getting the vote the time when he was in the House was long remembered. And then, of course, some of the things.... Bobby's activities were all part of this. And there was the ruthless talk. And they all recognized.... Some of them seemed to feel that Bob was anti-labor.

CAMPBELL: His service on the McClellan committee [Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in Labor and Management].

PETERSON: His service on.... Yeah, but it was what he really wanted, too. These two young "whippersnappers," I heard them called. You know, things of this kind. But I think a lot of this was so much—maybe, I can say as an older person—the resentment of some of the established persons was to those who were coming in early and moving up.

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CAMPBELL: I think you mentioned in your earlier interview that you sensed sort of a difficulty in communication between the President and some labor people.

PETERSON: Some of them. It's very true. You see, he was an intellectual, too, and that was difficult for a lot of them.

CAMPBELL: You weren't able, then, to join the campaign staff, although you...

PETERSON: I didn't until after the Convention [Democratic National Convention]. I did help them at the Convention. I went there and started working real hard with them then. I was assigned the Utah delegation. And then I worked here in the office so I could be here. It was just a situation at that time when I couldn't travel a great deal.

CAMPBELL: Did you think at that time that the Kennedy forces had a sense of the best way to tap labor's energies in that campaign?

PETERSON: Oh, yes. They were.... How to tap labor's.... There were all kinds of problems, organizational problems, very difficult ones. Labor's people get their noses out of joint as easily as anyone. I don't mean that it's just labor that gets this way. But I recall meetings up in Al's office getting things straightened out about things that were said and not said. And all the business of the advance people, to be sure that the labor people were present, you know, all the little details. And they had problems with materials. I had that desk to kind of cover, materials and labor messages, that area of the campaign and assisted a little on the advance people and helped with the messages

and telegrams and materials⁵. I think they learned, and I think it got lots, lots better as time went on.

CAMPBELL: You made an interesting comment, I thought, in your first interview when you mentioned that Robert Kennedy had asked you to join the early staff, and you said that the President didn't view you as a woman. Well, what did you mean by that?

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PETERSON: I never felt... You know, people kept asking, "Oh, what's his attitude, you know, to you as a woman?" You know, I'm glad I'm a woman and all this; it isn't that. But I wasn't conscious of there being a difference. I felt that he dealt with me very straight. And I remember being in meetings with him, with Ralph Dungan and with others, and I never felt that he.... He always turned to me for my opinion the same as he would turn to the others. And I remember meetings when—I remember one in particular when we were meeting on the labor act, and it was a night that I was a little annoyed with Arthur Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] who was then counsel for the Steelworkers. We were working on the minimum wage act and had a meeting of the committee and all the representatives. We brought all the big shots around. This was when he was a senator. Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] was president. And I can remember Arthur going to a meeting with Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] and not coming to this dinner where he was supposed to be. I can still remember this, you know, our feeling about it, because a picture in the paper the next morning showed Arthur coming out Nixon's door or something like that. And there was a reason that Arthur couldn't be at the dinner, but Jack was there and I remember he asked awfully good questions. And he went all around, and then, finally, I remember he said, "I'd like to know what Esther thinks about this, too." There was always, I think, a respect, and I liked that. It meant a great deal to me because very frequently, as a woman, you learned that if all your points were made by others, you let them be made, and hurrah. But I always felt he respected me as a person who had some ability. And that meant a great deal to me.

CAMPBELL: I thought you might have acquired an interesting perspective on the place of the few other women who were involved in a major way in the campaign. Do you recall, for instance, was Margaret Price at DNC headquarters with you at that time?

PETERSON: You know, I didn't know her until she came. But, you see, I think my advantage was that I worked with him not on women's questions; I

⁵ I'm talking about my work during that campaign where I sort of handled the labor desks as far as materials, appointments, <d stops, and messages were concerned. During that time, I worked very closely with Bobby Kennedy and I learned an awful lot about the way he operates. Certainly, it was during that period that I learned to respect him a great deal. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79; The <d appeared in the original transcript—transcriber's note]

worked with him on issues, on unemployment insurance, on minimum wage, and it wasn't a women's thing. And I really think because of that that I was able to make some progress with him on the other, when I talked to him about having the Commission on the Status of Women. But, you see, Margaret's issue was women. And this is something I remember about the equal rights amendment, a feeling of, "Oh, why do we waste our time on those things when wages are important, security is important?" And I really was quite disgusted with the women who spent all their time running around for women's rights. That doesn't mean that I didn't think a lot should be done about it, but I do think that my strength was that I worked

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with him on substantive issues, and I think the women who did work with him on substantive issues never had any trouble working with him.

CAMPBELL: Were you familiar with or did you get involved with the report that, I think, Mrs. Price prepared before the inauguration, suggesting women for government positions?

PETERSON: Well, I did help with that. I remember giving names and keeping track of names. But during the campaign, I didn't work with the Women's Division. You see, I was working more with labor. We had a wonderful bunch of women over there working, and I did get somewhat involved with Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]. We got Mrs. Kennedy involved in that. Those activities were, you know, to help move the campaign along, but they were never the substantive part of my work with him. I did not really do anything about the women issue except to suggest names. I did oppose putting equal rights amendment support in a letter to Emma Miller [Emma G. Miller], the sister of the senior senator from Pennsylvania.

CAMPBELL: Do you happen to recall some that you did suggest and that worked out?

PETERSON: I think I have those in my file some place. Yes, I do remember. I remember Ella Grasso [Ella T. Grasso] I had worked with and liked very much in Connecticut. I had worked with Mrs. Smith [Elizabeth R. Gatov], who became treasurer [Treasurer of the United States], and I liked her very, very much. A woman in Colorado I remember. Some of these names come to me. But we did collect an awful lot of names, I remember that very definitely. And our problem there, too, was that you got a lot of names of people who worked in the political campaigns, but you didn't know exactly what Ella Grasso did, for example. You didn't know the practical experience of the woman. You see, you had women who ran things, and then you'd come up with the business of their needing an appointment, but where do you put them and what is their experience and what is their background to get them well placed?

CAMPBELL: Would you judge that that was a successful effort, the submission of the names?

PETERSON: No, it really wasn't.

CAMPBELL: It wasn't, was it?

PETERSON: No, no, it wasn't. I don't think we got really at that. This was part of what really got me

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going on trying to get him to accept a commission on the status of women. I felt that we were going at it in such a fluffy way. I don't know how to say it. But I thought we needed to know where we were going and where did we want to go. And I always knew from working with him, you give him a piece of paper with some good, solid arguments on it for this and this and you get some decent reactions to it. And I felt that on the whole women's question, there was so much pressure about it that we really ought to get something substantive, which we did, which I was very glad for.

CAMPBELL: Yeah, which you did.

PETERSON: I remember during the campaign, oh, an awful thing happened. You see, I'd come from the labor movement, and I'd been opposed to the equal rights amendment—not that I'm not for equality of women, but I just think the amendment was the lowest thing as far as interest and need goes. And I felt that we are in the Constitution as persons. All we needed is Supreme Court decisions to declare it so. But one of the most difficult things of the campaign were the women from the Women's Party who wanted letters endorsing equal rights. And I have one in my files, an actual paper where they forged a letter and put the equal rights amendment in. We had drafted the letter so carefully, but when I looked at the paper the next morning, I saw that it looked like Kennedy had approved the equal rights amendment. And I traced the thing down and found actually that people carried it from one typist to another—you know how campaigns are, how loose they are. I have in my files the copy of when that letter left and the copy of when it went in, and here's this little word written in in ink⁶.

⁶ I refer to the time when the Women's Party was trying to get endorsement of Kennedy for the equal rights amendment. Some women from the Women's Party had come over and I had been working with Myer Feldman on the statement and we worked it out carefully so he said that he believed in equality of opportunity and was going to work toward that. But, it went the next day, as I say, in the paper, I see it said that it carried the endorsement of the civil rights [equal rights] amendment. So I followed up and went to the copy of the typist and I found that the women had carried it to the typist and the little words "and the amendment" had been written in. I have a xerox, or whatever it was they had in those days, of it and it's in my papers, I think, in the Schlesinger Library [Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library]. It was *really* forged.

And I think it must be remembered that I was working on the labor desk, and the labor people and the women in the labor movement felt so strongly that if the group were pressing for an amendment, and got their way, that we would lose the ground that we had made in the minimum wage and in matters of this kind that protected both men and women and this, of course, indicates the basic fight that we had on that question which led to the formation of the President's Commission on the Status of Women. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

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- CAMPBELL: That would be interesting sometime to have for the Kennedy Library [John F. Kennedy Library].
- PETERSON: I think I'd better give it to them. It's really unimportant, but it's a funny side. The issue was terribly important to a lot of people and still is to a lot of women. Yes, it is, still is.
- CAMPBELL: Just on a chronological basis, then, before the inauguration there was this rump session of Congress which got bogged down in the minimum wage question again. Do you recall being involved in that at that time?
- PETERSON: You know, I think I was, and I'm trying to remember. Isn't that awful? I just have to look over some of the *Congressional Records* to remember.
- CAMPBELL: Senator Kennedy came back in and tried to get it passed at that time.
- PETERSON: Yes, I know. I'm sure I was helping with it.
- CAMPBELL: Yeah. And then it finally came through the next year.
- PETERSON: The next year. I was very active on it then, and I did.... I can't remember whether.... I just don't remember.
- CAMPBELL: Then after the election and before the inauguration there is great emphasis on appointments, who would get what. Do you recall when you first heard, for instance, about Mr. Goldberg's appointment? Was that a foregone conclusion?
- PETERSON: I think it was. You see, his office was over there in the same building, and we used to run in and out of there a lot, and I used to consult with Arthur a great deal on a lot of the labor matters. And oh, I remember, oh, heavens, all the work of who was to go to the inaugural and who was to get what tickets and who was to sit where. You see, these were major, major items.

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And Arthur was great. He knew everyone, and I knew them pretty well, so we did a lot of that work in arranging tickets lists with Al Barkan and with all the rest of them. Arthur and I just sat down and did it. I think I just kind of assumed all along that he would be the secretary

of labor. Yes. I think we kind of expected it. I remember the day it was announced. We all went over to be with him out on the sidewalk at Kennedy's Georgetown house.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall the reaction of labor people to some of the other major appointments?

PETERSON: For instance?

CAMPBELL: Well, would they have felt strongly at all about Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk] or Secretary McNamara [Robert S. McNamara]?

PETERSON: Not a great deal. No, not a great deal. I think they were concerned about HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare] and they were concerned about Labor, at least those that I'm aware of. I don't recall anything particular against Rusk.

CAMPBELL: Anything particular?

PETERSON: No.

CAMPBELL: How about some of the other women appointees⁷? Were you involved in those things at all, Katie Louchheim [Kathleen Louchheim], for instance, into State or any of those?

PETERSON: Not a great deal. I think Margaret did most of that. They used to come and talk with me about it, and I used to recommend people. And I always helped as much as I could. And I'd meet with Margaret from time to time to advise and do what I could, but I had no major responsibility with that.

CAMPBELL: Margaret Price?

PETERSON: Yes. Well, Margaret had a lot of it, and then Ralph Dungan was the one who really worked at it. I worked with him a long time, and we

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knew each other very well. And he used to consult with me, and we used to help not only on that, on those appointments, but on others.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall particular women who were simply difficult to settle into a position?

⁷ We talk about women appointees, I think also, it should be noted that, Andy Biemiller [Andrew J. Biemiller] told me that when they went over with Meany [George Meany] the names of possible people, that I was the only woman on the list and that there was no question but that I should be appointed. Evidently I had full support of the labor movement. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

PETERSON: Oh, you know, there were personalities and those who felt that they should have jobs. There was a good deal of that. You see, I was not too good at any of that because I'd never been in the structure of the party. I'd always worked in politics, and I'd worked in Utah, and I'd gone out and worked for people whom I liked, so I certainly was politically savvy. But I'd never been part of the formal party structure. I had always operated from the labor political action groups. So I think I was viewed a little bit.... In fact, there were a lot of objections to my appointment because they wanted to know what I'd ever done for the party and, you know, some things like that, I understand. Although, goodness gracious, I'd worked in campaigns and done a great deal. It annoyed me because I felt that I had done more in really putting across some elections than a lot of people who had appointments. But nevertheless....

CAMPBELL: I recall that you said in your first interview that Ralph Dungan, I believe, contacted you in regards to your position.

PETERSON: Yes, he was the one who called me first.

CAMPBELL: Was this position, which was one with the emphasis particularly on women, an appropriate one for you?

PETERSON: I don't know if people will believe it, but I really had not anticipated having a job in the administration. I had thought that.... In fact, I'd thought my husband and I were going to go for another of his foreign assignments. As I told you, my husband was quite ill during that period, but I had no idea but that we would be going out again. And I remember, though—that some of the union girls began talking about getting me appointed. Then a lot of the women began organizing (Ann Draker, Louise Stilt, Clara Byers and others). They had a luncheon and wanted to know if I wouldn't let them propose me for director of the Women's Bureau. The first luncheon was organized by some of the trade union women and others, and they wanted to get a letter off saying that I would make a very good appointee. I have those letters someplace, I think. It kind of started that way. So there was some pressure, but I don't think pressure would have been necessary

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anyway. I don't think it would have because I'd met Kennedy, and I remember he asked me once, I remember him saying to me, "What do you want?" And Ralph mentioned a number of possibilities. And I think I said the Women's Bureau, partly because I know that area, have some competence in that area, and partly because I was interested in women's employment. Then I wanted really to see if I couldn't do something to help the women in the low wage jobs. I was really concerned about women who had to work, and I'd seen enough of the low wages they were paid in my trade union days. And then I didn't like the feminist, equal rights approach. I thought maybe we could elevate some of the tactics being used. But I really think I could have had some different appointment if I'd wanted.

CAMPBELL: When you came over to the Labor Department, did you have an opportunity to meet with your predecessor?

PETERSON: I met with her. In fact we had a very funny time in that exchange. I remember Arthur Goldberg—you know I liked Arthur so much. We had worked together, Arthur and Jack Kennedy and I. We worked on Taft-Hartley. I'd been brought back from Sweden one time to help on it, so I knew Arthur very, very well. And I remember when Arthur called me out in Utah—my mother died then and I'd gone back home—and said, "Look, Jack's appointing you, Esther." And when I came back, he said, "We're all going to have lunch together with Mitchell [James P. Mitchell] and each with our counterparts." But then he called me later and said, "Esther, I'm so embarrassed. Would you mind taking Mrs. Leopold [Alice K. Leopold] to lunch some other place?" because Mitchell didn't want to have her. I remember taking Mrs. Leopold to lunch over at the Rive Gauche and having a good time with her.

But the thing that bothered me about her at that time was that she wanted to stay on as a consultant. And I had a real rough time. She had it all set up, and Mitchell had agreed. And Arthur said, "Oh, it's all right, three months isn't anything." I said, "Look, that's just ridiculous." I had to be rather firm about that.

CAMPBELL: When you came into the bureau, did you immediately see a great number of things that you thought needed changing?

PETERSON: Yes, and I had seen them before, too.

CAMPBELL: What were some of those?

PETERSON: Well, I felt that the emphasis during Mrs. Leopold's administration had been pretty much on the professional woman. And not that I would

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neglect that, but I really felt our concern should be for these millions of women who had to work in the low wage occupations. And then I wanted a little more progressive attitude on some of the laws, a little more enlightenment about the problems of these women and some studies to back up. And that's when I really became pretty disillusioned because I ran into a tight bureaucracy of people who'd done things their way forever and nobody wants anything any different. And that was rough.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. What sort of working relationship did you establish with Secretary Goldberg? I suppose you already had a...

PETERSON: We already had a very good relationship, very easy, very easy. It was so good to work with him. He's a comfortable person to work with because you'd know if anything was wrong; he'd tell you. It was a very good, open, "Look, Esther, you should have done it this way." Or, "This would be better." You

grew with a person like Arthur. I always did a lot of work on the Hill. He knew where I had some ability, and he'd use me where I had ability, so those were good years for me.

CAMPBELL: Did he have, do you think, a real and abiding interest in the Women's Bureau?

PETERSON: I don't think he.... I think he figured as I figured that the Women's Bureau was an anachronism. That doesn't mean that there wasn't work needed: we needed to have statistics; we need data; we need somebody pressing and pushing for the low wage woman worker. But the Women's Bureau as such, I think, he felt was outdated. And it was because of that, I think, that he decided to make me assistant secretary. I didn't know anything about that until he called and told me, "Esther, I've made you an assistant secretary." I didn't know a thing about that beforehand. John Leslie [John W. Leslie] called.

CAMPBELL: Is that right? How was the title chosen? There was kind of a new title, not assistant secretary for women's affairs or anything.

PETERSON: Well, at first it was assistant to the Secretary or something, director of the Women's Bureau and assistant to the Secretary. Alice Leopold had that title I think, too. And then, I believe, she too wanted to.... I think she ran into the same problems I did. I'm quite sure we talked about that. The thing I resented was her wanting to hold on and tell me how to run my job when I felt like I wanted to make my own mistakes and handle things in my own way. But then the title.... They got this bill

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through, and Jack evidently said, "Yeah," and I think part of this was they wanted a woman assistant secretary someplace. I think there had been pressures about that, too. That was a real, real surprise as far as I was concerned. But anyway, I think Arthur announced it on a radio program one day, and then they called me up afterwards and told me what had happened. And you see Arthur had this wonderful way. He'd go over to the White House and say, "Look, I did this," and Jack would back him up. I've seen Arthur get up and have a blank piece of paper in front of him—he did this at my swearing in—and say, "I have a note from the President." And he'd make something up. Then he'd call the President and say, "Look, Jack, I said that you said this." But they had such a good relationship. I think there was basic trust with a lot of us in those days and that's what made those days so great and so exciting and so wonderful.

CAMPBELL: The title, assistant secretary for labor standards, as it came out, eventually encompassed several bureaus, did it not?

PETERSON: Yes.

CAMPBELL: Did that happen right at once? If you look at the *Government Organization*

Manual, it appears that at first you were an assistant secretary without the bureaus, and then about in another year the Bureau of Labor Standards moves under you.

PETERSON: It's partly that. You see, at first I think they went up and got the bill through on the basis that.... In fact, I think Jim Reynolds [James J. Reynolds] testified to the effect that this was really upgrading women and that this was going to be a women's post. And I don't think Arthur had really felt that, nor had I thought that, to tell you the truth. But probably that part, some of it, helped get it through. The debate on that bill was funny. I don't know if you ever looked at it. Did you see it?

CAMPBELL: Yes.

PETERSON: I can't remember whether it was Hoffman, Clare Hoffman [Clare E. Hoffman], I believe, who made some remarks about a political job for a woman. Yeah, it was.... But I believe the first intent was to have it a woman's position. And then it became more. Arthur was trying to reorganize the Labor Department and get things more orderly. Conditions of women's employment and work standards, the labor standards, all that was given to me. Maybe it's because Fanny Perkins [Frances Perkins] had established the standards, I don't know. I think it was part of the whole

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reorganization. But, in a way, the position did not really fulfill the congressional intent.

CAMPBELL: Did you experience some difficulty when these long-standing bureaus then move under your wing?

PETERSON: Oh, I think a lot of them resented it, yes. Yes.

CAMPBELL: Did you feel at that time that you had support from...

PETERSON: Well, I had support from Arthur, but I think also that these were not considered to be very important bureaus. These were, you know, a little lower than the coffee break maybe in order of importance. And I made a lot of mistakes in this period. It was thrust on me very quickly. And I was so involved in getting the commission, you know, and legislation and other items, that it took me some time to understand the new responsibilities⁸. They were quite responsible areas. And actually the

⁸ When we discuss the additional responsibilities that I was given as assistant secretary of labor, we describe the legislation that was sent up creating the assistant secretary and I explain that I had not, did not really know about it until Arthur called me and told me about it. I say in the transcript, "Well, I had the support of Arthur, but I think also, that these were not considered to be very important bureaus." I made a lot of mistakes in this period. It was thrust on me quite quickly and I was involved in getting the President's Commission on the Status

Bureau of Employees' Compensation ran beautifully by itself. The Appeals Board had no problem. At least, I wasn't aware of any until I got into it. I was given kind of a whitewash when I went over to BEC [Bureau of Employees' Compensation] and looked it over carefully. After I got into it and saw the problems, my heavens, it needed work. But I didn't go into the bureau and have an analysis made. Oh, boy, could I do it now; now that I know about it. But the Bureau of Labor Standards also had to have a great deal done with it. And I really worked with them more than I did the others, but then we had problems because I'd had philosophical differences with the directors of some of these agencies. And that was the frustrating and also the exciting part of coming into government, because you have a philosophy that you think the President wants you to carry out, and then you have this other rather solid, stultified way that things had always been done.

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And, "Who's this whippersnapper?" and especially a woman coming in, you see, and trying to change things. So it was not awfully easy to....

CAMPBELL: It would be interesting if you recall any particulars about the difference in philosophy in a particular instance to...

PETERSON: Well, I could probably recall some of those. I'm trying to think back.

CAMPBELL: For instance with Mr. Motley [Arthur W. Motley] in the Bureau of Labor Standards.

PETERSON: Oh, we had a rough time with him.

CAMPBELL: In what way?

PETERSON: Well, again, I felt that in his case that his emphasis was not always really on the welfare of the workers. I felt that there was a certain PR [public relations] attitude toward it rather than our congressionally-assigned responsibility to see that obstacles are removed, that the states work toward the same goals. So there was a lot of resistance on a lot of things, on some of the safety programs, for example, the allocation of funds, the allocation of personnel, and on what was most important. Where do you really put your emphasis?

But the difficulty was, of course, that there are so many layers. I was fortunate in having a good deputy at the beginning. I didn't have one for a long time, and I was so new to all this I didn't know how to turn. But, finally, I did get a very good deputy. Some of the people tried to push off on me some candidates for the job who weren't very good. And my instinct told me, "That guy is not good, they're getting rid of him, they're kicking him upstairs to me." It was a rather difficult period then dealing with some of these individuals

of Women established and working on a number of pieces of legislation. So that, it took me some time to understand the new responsibilities. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

who they wanted me to take. I finally got the person I wanted, not my first choice, but my second choice.

CAMPBELL: And a man.

PETERSON: And a man.

CAMPBELL: I thought perhaps it would be interesting to have your impressions of other appointees early on in the Labor Department. Mr. Wirtz [W. Willard Wirtz], the under secretary early on.

PETERSON: The under secretary.

CAMPBELL: Had you known him before?

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PETERSON: No, I had never known him before. No, I met him the day of the luncheon when we were all there. And then I had to take Alice Leopold to another luncheon because we were women—or for other reasons, I suppose, I don't know. But that's the first time I had met him. I had heard about him, and I knew that Arthur told me what very high admiration he had for him. But I remember I met him that day...

CAMPBELL: James Reynolds.

PETERSON: ...and Jim Reynolds I liked very much. I had a good working relationship with him, too. And George Weaver [George L-P. Weaver].

CAMPBELL: And Jerry Holleman [Jerry R. Holleman].

PETERSON: And Jerry Holleman then. Pat [Daniel Patrick Moynihan] wasn't in then. Pat Moynihan didn't come till later.

CAMPBELL: He came later. I wanted to talk a little more about your relationship with some of the other bureaus in the department for your operation. I suppose you needed cooperation from almost every one in one respect or another. How helpful was the Bureau of Labor Statistics?

PETERSON: Well, Ewan Clague, when he was the head, I found very helpful. A lot of people didn't, and had some problems with him. I found him very helpful. You know, I guess you have to define that word helpful in different ways. He was helpful in saying, "I wish I could do this," but he was not always able to do it. I mean if we wanted more actual statistics, for example, we might be told, "We can't because of budget," or a lot of other reasons. But I did feel a far more cooperative, a real cooperative

basis there. And I had real cooperation from Leo Werts [Leo R. Werts], who was not the type of person who said that you can't do things. There were so many "can't do" people in the department that it was refreshing to have one or two who could do. Indeed, personnel and organization should be able to help you to accomplish what you want to accomplish. But I didn't have a great deal to do with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. I think in the Women's Bureau area, some of the women who were on my staff didn't want to give up doing their own studies. I felt BLS should do the studies. They had the competence and the expertise. But some of my people would get mad and say, "We should do it." And I didn't like all these little fiefdoms, you know. My theory was that we outline the study, we say what we want, but BLS should do it. They had the competence. We should have it done where that competence is.

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And it was the same awful fight between the Women's Bureau and Labor Standards, where they were duplicating work. But to get them to get together and do it was just hell.

CAMPBELL: Was your operation related at all to Arthur Chapin's [Arthur A. Chapin] work with minorities, women minorities?

PETERSON: Oh, no. He didn't.... His was completely a racial group. We did work on the minority question, but those developments came as a result of the commission. My feeling was that we'd have to have an outside group (the commission) to say, "These are the things we must do." So I would go to the various agencies and say, "This idea is the result of a recommendation, the commission's. This isn't just Esther Peterson talking." We needed so badly, in order to change the bureaucratic approach to things, to have a basis for the changes. And Kennedy recognized this point when we talked to him about having a commission.

CAMPBELL: Was it basically your idea?

PETERSON: Well, yes, it was, actually. I have.... Yeah, I think that picture up there, Arthur says, "Who inspired the idea." That was the day he signed the order. And that one next to it is, Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] handed it to me and said, "Esther, Jack signed the wrong one." And that's his real signature, setting up the President's Commission. It's one of these flukes. But the real one, of course, is in the archives [National Archives]. But that's his real signature on the press copy that was going out.

Yes, the idea, it was original in that I thought it was time to have an objective look at women's role in our society. And I had the executive order written and sold the idea to Arthur first. I patterned it a little on what I had known from what Congressman Celler [Emanuel Celler] did in the old days when I was working with him on equal pay. And he had had a status of women commission bill in for a long time. This is quite different. I mean that was legislative. But Arthur was the one who said we could carry out our idea by executive

order, and that was after the equal employment executive order had been issued, you see. So we kind of patterned it on that.

CAMPBELL: Were you consulted at all about that executive order, the early one?

PETERSON: No, not really, just that I participated in some of the discussions. And, of course, sex omission from the later order was one of the hardest things that we had to fight. But there again, I felt

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that the better way to accomplish what was needed for women was through establishing a commission so you would have logical, supported recommendations, which I still think is the best way.

CAMPBELL: Before we leave the Labor Department per se, I wanted to ask you about Mr. Moynihan's arrival. Was he able to work well with the rest of the department?

PETERSON: No. You know, he's an individualist. I found him delightful, I must say. His office was right next to mine, so I saw him a good deal. We were rather good friends in this way. And I think he's brilliant, and he was very stimulating always. And I'm an action person; I'm not an idea person. I mean, I hear an idea and then I like to go ahead and carry it out. I'm not good at, I'm not an analyst. And I'm just not trained that way. I'm a housewife, really, by trade. So it was exciting to me to be with persons like Pat, and at the meetings he has a terrifically fertile and wonderful mind. I liked him.

CAMPBELL: Could you notice significant changes that occurred when he eventually assumed this position, assistant secretary for planning and research? Was there a change?

PETERSON: No. No, not really. You know, I think there were a lot of ideas and things that he was pressing for, and then he used them as a springboard for a lot of his very good ideas that did come through. But it didn't really affect the basic structure much. I think his work with Leo Werts in setting up manpower and program planning, I guess part of it was to fit his need. He did influence the department a lot, yes. I shouldn't say he didn't. But it was all a whole period of trying to regroup and reorganize, and Leo was really the one who, I think, was the power and the idea behind all that.

CAMPBELL: How did his report on the Negro family hit the department?

PETERSON: Oooh! It really hit the ceiling, you know. And, you know, it was really funny: denials and acceptances and would it take? If it will, we want to accept it; if it won't, we want to disown it.

CAMPBELL: How did Mr. Wirtz's assumption of the secretaryship affect the operations of the Women's Bureau? At all?

PETERSON: Well, how do I say it? Arthur had a more

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positive attitude. I think, really understood the issues more. I think it's partly because his wife was sort of a professional woman. I think those things make a difference and added up. Bill did very well with it, but I always felt that it was not from deep conviction as much as it was from, you know, carrying out what he believed to be the right thing politically and for the times.

CAMPBELL: You were an active speaker at conventions at that time. I wondered if your speeches were ever cleared by anybody?

PETERSON: Never. No. I would usually kind of say what.... You mean during the campaign times?

CAMPBELL: Well, no, just simply during your time at the Labor Department. There were some departments, as you know, in which speeches were cleared with great care.

PETERSON: No, no, no, mine were never cleared.

CAMPBELL: No problem with that?

PETERSON: I had no problem. Well, look, you know, I'd be reasonable. Maybe I would never go quite as far as I would if I'd been on my own.

CAMPBELL: Could you recall and describe the nature of your contacts with the White House, with the White House staff, in this period? Who did you talk start with that?

PETERSON: It's hard for me to think. This isn't the Kennedy period. Well, Mike Feldman and Ralph Dungan, I suppose I knew best because we had worked together. And Mike I knew pretty well. I knew Ted [Theodore C. Sorensen], worked with him a little bit. And White [Lee C. White]. And O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien]. Not as much, actually, as with Ralph. And Mike Manatos [Mike N. Manatos]. I did quite a bit with Mike. I suppose you'd say my closest arrangements were with Ralph.

CAMPBELL: Did you get involved in sort of purely political things during those years?

PETERSON: Oh, I'd be sent out, you know, to special places. I did a lot of

campaigning. I think I did about as many speeches as almost anybody. I'm told I did, but I'm not sure. I never kept track of this. And I'd talk over with them what attitude I'd take or what we

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would do. I didn't get involved in a lot of the political policy.

CAMPBELL: I believe that almost all of the Kennedy years your bureau was involved in this effort for equal pay. And I think very early you contacted state governments in an effort to acquire a fund of information about equal pay laws on the state level. What did you conclude from that survey?

PETERSON: Well, I concluded very definitely that we had to have a federal law. That, too, I think, I can take some credit for. I got Arthur to really agree to put it on our legislative list, and I talked with the legislative people over there. I had to convince them that it was a good political issue, that they had to do something for women and that this would be one of the best things they could do. I can remember Bill Wirtz was not as warm toward this idea as was Arthur. He didn't think we could ever get it. I think that was one thing. He didn't think it was possible. I don't think he objected to it in principle as much. But I didn't ever have enthusiastic support during those times. All you hear is, "Oh, another women's," you know, "sort of thing." Now, we did get it through, you know. Well, we were working on equal pay parallel with working on getting the commission set up. The commission was not responsible for getting the equal pay bill, although sometimes in speeches I hear that this is one of the first accomplishments. It was one of the commission's first accomplishments. Well, it's one that we certainly pressed for and we got Mrs. Roosevelt to testify for it, but it was well on its way before the commission acted.

CAMPBELL: At that time.

PETERSON: Well on its way before then.

CAMPBELL: Many union contracts at that time already contained clauses forbidding discrimination in pay by sex. Were they effective?

PETERSON: If the union meant business they were, but if they didn't, they were not. Many of them gave lip service to the question but no real substantive.... You know, it was a very necessary law.

CAMPBELL: In your efforts in that regard, what organizations could you look to for help?

PETERSON: Well, as I look back on that, we organized, actually, from my office. And you had to be awfully careful about this because you had to know how to handle it. But I tried to use the contacts that

I'd had when I was in the labor movement. We'd always had a little trouble getting some of these women's groups. They would work on equal rights but not on what I thought was the substantive thing. So we weren't able to get some of them which we should have had, but the BPW [Business and Professional Women's Foundation] was very good, and the National Council of Jewish Women. The church women were good. The Catholic women were good. Irma Piepho, I remember, was their legislative gal. Margaret [Margaret J. Mealey] was good. The Y [Young Women's Christian Association] was very good. The Consumer's League helped. Also Church Women United. Also the National Council of Negro Women. I'm trying to think. We had about thirteen or fourteen national organizations on the National Equal Pay Committee as we called it.

CAMPBELL: How about the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] for instance? Would this have been...

PETERSON: They were more active, really, on Title VII and some of that legislation. And I don't recall their.... Yes. I think Dorothy Kenyon did testify. I'd have to look in those old hearings. I could look through those hearings and refresh my memory on it.

CAMPBELL: Was there organized opposition to equal pay?

PETERSON: Oh, heaven, yes! All the arguments of why we didn't need the same rates, how women weren't worth as much. The usual ones, the Chamber of Commerce, the NAM [National Association of Manufacturers]. And then, of course, the thing that annoyed me was that many of the union officials just gave lip service and some were really negative. The Glass Blowers, for example, that union was really opposed to it, I think. You could even feel their undercover lobbying against it. Again, it was, you know, the women's things. It never quite passed the laughing stage.

CAMPBELL: What sort of support did you have from the White House on equal pay?

PETERSON: All right. However, they didn't interfere. We were given the responsibility and we lobbied it through.

CAMPBELL: It wasn't a top priority item?

PETERSON: No. We didn't get help from them. It wasn't on O'Brien's list or anything. We got the bill through ourselves, frankly.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Yeah. Did you have any conversations

with the President about it?

PETERSON: Oh, in passing from time to time. And he gave us some good statements and we'd write something and he'd say it. Those things were no problem. We had verbal help. I think that was typical of all of them. But you know equal pay was never top priority. Well, they helped me at certain times, but I've literally carried that bill up. Morag Simchak [Morag M. Simchak], my assistant, was a great, great help.

CAMPBELL: How about other bureaus in your own department? Were you alone in this or were you able to get...

PETERSON: No. No. No. No, not at all. And again, here Arthur was awfully helpful, very, very good. I used to talk with him, and he'd help me and instruct me and give me real, real assistance. He helped more. And we, luckily, were given the lobbying job ourselves. I didn't have to turn that over to anybody else. And Mac Simchak helped me a great deal over in the Labor Department. She was on my staff and I had her full-time as my legislative person. So we were really in the thick of it. Then the solicitor's office was very good, very, very good. And we had some extremely good help from them. But that's what really did it.

CAMPBELL: I think there was a question early in your drafting of the bills in '61 about who was going to administer these things. Did your bureau want that job?

PETERSON: The bureau wanted it. I didn't... I had problems with it because, again, I didn't think we should set up administrative agencies and enforcement agencies all over. It just didn't make sense to me. You should have all of this administered in one place and it was quite logical that it should be in the Wage and Hour Division and be an amendment to that instead of a separate law with separate enforcement provisions. The people who were doing the inspecting should look after equal pay, too. The payroll should be inspected. It's just far more orderly not to set up another administration.

CAMPBELL: Did Wage and Hours want the job?

PETERSON: Oh, yes. Sure. Everybody wants it. It's important, you know. The difficulty was, and I think rightfully, there was an argument that it would be buried and that it wouldn't get attention. But that depends on the administrator. I'm not sure that a little

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bureau could also get the appropriation of the funds to have it done. Maybe it could, I don't know.

CAMPBELL: Were appropriations a problem for your bureau in general?

PETERSON: Oh heavens, yes. Just all through, through my whole history in the Labor Department. I can remember at the beginning the President wanting us not to ask for too much because the first year we had to be very careful. There was some good reason every year why we couldn't ask for what we needed. And then we'd have to go up on the Hill and the congressmen would say, "Well, can you do this with that amount of money?" "Oh, yes. That's all I want." And you'd put your tongue in your cheek and lie like a trooper, you know. That was very, very hard. I don't think there was one year during the eight I was there that you could develop a budget that you could really live with and say, "This is what will meet the needs of the legislative requirements that I'm entrusted with." Could I have that book there? This one, *Wage and Labor Standards Legislation*—and that's prior to the 91st Congress—these are the laws that I had something to do with and to administer. And if you'd look at.... You know, every once in a while, I'd look at those to see, "Now, what did the Congress say that we should be doing?" And if I had to do it over again, I'd insist on every new political appointee having that book or one like it for their area, studying it, being briefed on it. And I had to learn this by, you know, by referring to this book.

CAMPBELL: Experience.

PETERSON: Maybe I should have known it, but I didn't know it. That's the point. I didn't know. Oh, of course, I had an idea. And it just happened that I was in that position and that was a fact of life⁹. But

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to go with a clear conscience and say, "This is what we need to really give women a break; this is what we need to take care of the working mothers; this is what we need to take care of the safety areas"—I'm just thinking of those areas of my responsibility. I don't think I was able once to come even approximately to what I thought was a modest meeting of the needs, financial needs, that we had.

CAMPBELL: Back to the equal pay efforts. In early '61 several bills were pending in the House, many of which were very similar. Mrs. Green [Edith S. Green] had

⁹ I say, "That's the point, I didn't know. Oh, of course, I had an idea. And it just happened that I was in that position and that was a fact of life." Related to that was the experience that I had before the Appropriations Committee [House Appropriations Committee] once when Mel Laird [Melvin R. Laird] was the ranking minority member and I remember he kept pressing me and said, "Can you do that? Don't you need more money? That's impossible for you to carry out all that's necessary." And he kept pressing me. And finally I asked the chairman if we could go off the record and we did. And then I said, "Look, Mel, Congressman Laird, you *know* the restraints that I'm under, you know how we must stay within the limits of the budget. That's unfair for you to keep pressing me like that." And he smiled and smiled and we had a little colloquy then, if I recall correctly, and actually we became rather good friends after that. He helped me a good deal, not only with various pieces of legislation on which I was working, but also in many other areas. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

one. I think Mrs. Weis [Jessica McCullough Weis], Mr. Addonizio [Hugh J. Addonizio]. How did the administration choose one to back?

PETERSON: Oh, just on a very practical basis as to who could carry the bill and get it through, and the matter of which committee it went to, and who was handling it at the committee. And it's just nothing but pure politics on how you get the bill through.

CAMPBELL: Then in the Senate, I believe your sponsors were Senators McNamara [Patrick V. McNamara] and Morse [Wayne L. Morse] in that first year.

PETERSON: McNamara was chairman of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee, you see.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Would it have been advantageous at all to have the women senators involved?

PETERSON: I remember talking to Margaret Chase Smith. You see, neither one of them had anything to do with that committee, and they, too, didn't much like women's issues. You know, I felt that about Margaret a great deal. Maurine [Maurine B. Neuberger] not as much as Mrs. Smith. Frankly, I wanted the people who would work for it. And then, of course, this to me, was a *principle* issue. It wasn't a sex issue. It was a sex issue only by implication. That's why on the commission we had both men and women. I felt we should look at the issue and not the sex of it. I do remember talking to them and letting them know we wanted their support, just as I talked to all the senators.

CAMPBELL: To get their.... There were no hearings scheduled in 1961. Do you recall the details behind that?

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PETERSON: I wish I could remember. I was probably so busy on the commission.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Then there were hearings early in the spring of '62.

PETERSON: Oh, yes. Sixty-two.

CAMPBELL: How involved were you in planning that testimony?

PETERSON: Very, very, very much involved, yes. I was scared to death.

CAMPBELL: What organizations did you find particularly cooperative? The ones you've already named, perhaps?

PETERSON: They were, and the AFL-CIO and a lot of the individual unions were

helpful. We lacked information, though, and I always felt that we never quite had all the facts. I knew we were right. I'd seen enough and had enough experience to know we were right, but never really to have the real substantive backing that you could, you know, say with real conviction: these are the facts.

CAMPBELL: Would this have been a certain lack of...

PETERSON: Study and research.

CAMPBELL: ...research just from your own department, a lack of funds to prepare that? Let me turn this.

[BEGIN TAPE 1 SIDE 2]

PETERSON: It would be interesting sometime to have Mac Simchak. Remember she was the person who worked most for the equal pay bill.

CAMPBELL: Excuse me. [Interruption] In those hearings you, I think, experienced some opposition testimony from NAM and the Chamber of Commerce.

PETERSON: Oooh, I should say. I remember one breakfast they'd—who was it? The NAM and the retail people had me over to breakfast. I thought they'd pull me apart.

CAMPBELL: Had you conferred with them before the hearings? Did you know what to expect?

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PETERSON: Oh, yes. I've had experience with them. Of course, I guess one reason they fought me so hard was because I'd made speeches against them and I'd been on the other side of the fence on so many issues when I was working for the labor movement, you see. And I really think all that spilled over to a lot of their antagonism to me on the consumer issue, too.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. You had a reputation. [Interruption] How would you characterize the cooperation you got from the congressmen? Were you involved at all with the chairman of the committee, Mr. Powell [Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.]?

PETERSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But the subcommittee, you know, had most of the work. And I got along all right with Mr. Powell. You know, you'd have to kid him and kind of keep him informed. And he was all right. He did not stand in the way at all. And I remember he called me the day it went through the full committee. But it was the subcommittee work, of course, that helped the most.

CAMPBELL: With Mr. Thompson [Frank Thompson, Jr.]?

PETERSON: That's right.

CAMPBELL: Was Mrs. Green an active force?

PETERSON: Well, Green was. I think she had wanted it to be the Green bill. But it was before Thompson's subcommittee. It was important to have it in the proper subcommittee. And I felt it was awfully good to have a man sponsoring the bill and pressing for it.

CAMPBELL: What consideration led to the scheduling of hearings in New York as well as Washington?

PETERSON: Well, that was partly political. Zelenko [Herbert Zelenko]—I think it was.... What was his name? Zelenko. Congressman Zelenko, if I remember correctly, wanted a hearing there very much to give him more visibility. I think the American Civil Liberties Union testified there, and there were so many low wage people there. So the New York hearing was held purely to give a little bit more support because we needed a lot of New York congressmen to vote for it and we were afraid we might have a little trouble. I felt all along that you had to use these hearings as an instrument for developing a climate of opinion and to get stories in the papers so people would know about the issue.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall how Mr. Zelenko was chosen as the

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floor manager for the bill?

PETERSON: Why did he get it? If I could remember. Well, he is the one who, you know, pushed it mainly and is the one who really pressed it the hardest. And it seems to me that they were dividing up pieces. Equal pay had become part of the amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act. And I think he felt that this was a good issue for him.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall how you assessed his effectiveness in the management of it?

PETERSON: Not too effective.

CAMPBELL: I think on the floor an amendment was proposed by Mrs. St. George [Katharine St. George] changing the language from reading something like "work of a comparable character" to "equal work."

PETERSON: Yeah. Which just makes me furious because here's this woman who was supposedly really in our corner who speaks for the opposition. How do you define equal, you see? If you have work of comparable character—but equal, then you get down to identical, and she really wrecked us. Some of those things that got into the bill have been very difficult. She was really a negative force on the bill. So I had no regard for some of these women. They supported the equal rights amendment but not the equal pay bill.

CAMPBELL: Had you expected that from her?

PETERSON: Yes. She'd given lip service to the principle, but never had helped us.

CAMPBELL: And I think Mr. Goodell [Charles E. Goodell] also...

PETERSON: Exactly.

CAMPBELL: ...was making changes. Was that also something you expected?

PETERSON: Oh, yes. A lot of that. And we had gotten wind of this from the Chamber of Commerce and some of the work within the committee. You know, when you have caucuses you kind of keep track of when the report's being written, you can see what the minority's beginning to put in.

And in the Senate, on that side, we really sat around the table a lot with these people and tried to iron out some of

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the differences in our own little caucuses with the Chamber and some of the others. But I feel that all along they thought they could kill the bill, really.

CAMPBELL: Was the White House satisfied, do you think, with the bill, the way it came—were *you* satisfied?

PETERSON: Well, no. You see, I wanted it to come out as we got it out of committee. And it ended up not as strong. And I still think we will have to go for some strengthening amendments. But I think the big thing is that it did push equal pay along a lot. There's a law now, and it's beginning to take hold. You know, you don't get all you want. It would have been good to get the committee bill, but I've learned so much being around the Hill. You take one good giant step and it establishes the principle, then you've got to build on that. You never get the whole piece anyway. It never happens¹⁰.

¹⁰ I remember I called Arthur about the final passage of the bill on the Hill. He told me to come right over to his office, which I did immediately, and he said quickly, "What have you said to the press?" And I said, "Oh, that it was great. That it was a real marvelous beginning." And he said, "Good, you mustn't act like you're disappointed, and I know you were disappointed, Esther. But you must never act to the press like you were

CAMPBELL: Well, there were no Senate hearings in '62. Then you come along with them in '63. Do you recall Lister Hill's position?

PETERSON: Well, he was not too.... I'll never forget one incident with Hill. You know, we got along with him very nicely and he's always so polite with the ladies, but he was not with us on this issue. McNamara and Wayne Morse were the two who really, really helped us very much. But I'll never forget, it was on a TV show with Mrs. Roosevelt on one of her last appearances. We were on a TV talk show, but I can't remember which program, and some women reporters were interviewing us. And they were asking about Senator Hill. The bill wasn't through then and I was trying to be so diplomatic and I said, "Senator Hill, who is so concerned about people, he's done so much for health; he's done so much." They asked me what attitude he was going to have and I said, "I'm so sure that he will show his great concern for women who need this just as much as he has in

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other areas," because I wanted to be friendly. They turned to Mrs. Roosevelt. She was not so sure. Well, why not? "I think he just doesn't like that word 'equal.'" I remember it so well. I just, oooh... [Laughter] And I loved her for saying it, you know, but Esther here didn't have the guts. I was trying to—I was trying to be so nice to him, you know. "He just doesn't like that word 'equal.'"

CAMPBELL: In 1962 there was a chance of final passage which I think was blocked by Mr. Bow [Frank T. Bow], Republican of Ohio. Was this something that was unexpected?

PETERSON: We weren't expecting that, no. I don't think we were, except that that's the kind of thing he always did. We should have known it.

CAMPBELL: What had changed in 1963? Just sufficient time to get things ironed out?

PETERSON: Partly. And you know, we had women go call on congressmen in their districts. That took an awful lot of organization.

CAMPBELL: I thought we'd talk a little bit tonight about the commission and finish that up next week. You said that the idea was not a completely new one with you, but probably at this time, you would have been its author. Was Mrs. Roosevelt involved early on in the framing of this?

PETERSON: No. First I talked to Arthur about it. I talked to Arthur about it when we

disappointed, it's always to be called a victory." It was quite a lesson to me because I had to call many things in my legislative endeavors victories when they were little pieces of what we really wanted. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

(the administration) began getting pressure for the equal rights amendment. And I remember going and saying to Arthur how we've got to get at this women's question another way, we've got to find a new way. And he said, "Well, try something." And then I remember thinking of Celler and his commission, and I came up with this commission idea. And Arthur liked it. I put it down on paper. And I've sent those things to Radcliffe [Radcliffe College] and I think, also, they've gone to archives, but I don't know what the final disposition of some of these papers has been. But I did send off those early memoranda, I'm quite sure.

Anyway, then Arthur said, "Go ahead and develop the idea." And I called Mike Feldman and talked with him about it. Then I went over and had lunch with Ralph Dungan one day and we discussed it. And I sold it to them, both, I think, purely on political bases. "You've got to have this. You've got to be ready for the next time." That argument always works with political people.

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CAMPBELL: Their language.

PETERSON: It's their language, of course. I met the President once, just briefly, and he said Mike had said something about it. He said, "I think it looks good. I think it looks all right, Esther." And then I remember another time at the White House or somewhere.... You know, during the Kennedy White House it was so lovely and free and easy and nice. Oh, dear, when I think of the difference! But anyway, I can't just remember where I was, and Mike called and said, "Esther, I just talked to him and he likes it. Go ahead. Develop it, get it down."

So then I called in two persons to help me get it drafted: Evelyn Harrison of the Civil Service Commission and Kitty Ellickson [Katherine P. Ellickson], whom I had worked with at the AFL-CIO. I got them to draft some statements, including a statement for the President, what he'd say. And then I made a decision—Arthur and I decided this together—to use the civil rights executive order format¹¹. And I'll never forget getting this done. It might be interesting for you to interview Evelyn Harrison because she helped me very much during this period. Then I got involved with John Macy [John W. Macy, Jr.], the chairman of the Civil Service, on it, too.

I'll never forget getting all this outlined and deciding what the commission would do. We had some interesting discussions about whether it'd be completely substantive or whether

¹¹ I am at the office at the E.O.B. [Executive Office Building] today, getting the manuscript off and I have just gone through records and have checked out some of the questions relative to the executive orders. There's a bit of confusion in the transcript relative to the difference between the executive order for equal opportunity, the executive order that was proposed by the commission to meet the question of advancing women, and the employment executive order and I would like to clarify some of those things.

When I'm discussing getting the President's Commission on the Status of Women established, I say, "and then I made a decision—Arthur and I—decided this together—to use the civil rights executive order..." I do need to research to know what that was. I think it was number 10980, but I recall discussing that with Arthur and our saying, "Now look, what we're trying to do really is give to women the kind of citizenship we're trying to give to blacks through the civil rights." The order that resulted is to secure these rights. It was before we had the other executive orders relative to employment. [Esther Peterson, 2/19/79]

we'd get into psychological kinds of things. And I think one of my victories was that we'd stay in substantive areas that we could really look at in a positive way.

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CAMPBELL: And away from the feminine mystique.

PETERSON: And away from the feminine mystique which I just didn't want the commission to be part of, nor, I'm sure, would the President. I just didn't think he should be involved in that. And it wasn't what we needed either. But then I remember—my stupidity about financing and all of these things—going to Arthur one morning. I can just see myself. “Arthur,” I said, “we've got to decide how we're going to finance this darn thing.” And we had an appointment to go over and talk to the President about it the day the executive order was signed. And Arthur looked at it and said, “Oh, no. We'll take care of that, Esther.” And he wrote, “And it will be financed in a manner to be determined.” And I think that that's exactly the wording on the executive order. I'm quite sure it is very unusual for that kind of language to appear in an executive order because usually you have to have this all spelled out specifically, you know. [Interruption]

CAMPBELL: To be financed in a manner to be determined.

PETERSON: In a manner to be determined. This is just Arthur Goldberg. This is pure Arthur. And he gets by with it. And then we got it signed. And then we had to decide who would be chairman. And I wanted Mrs. Roosevelt and Arthur agreed with that because I felt she was the only person in the United States who had the stature. But there was talk of others because Mrs. Roosevelt, at that time, was not in such good grace with the Kennedys, partly because of her ties to the Liberal Party. And Ralph and Mike talked to me about it a good deal. Well, finally I guess it was Ralph who called me to say it was all right to ask Mrs. Roosevelt if she would be chairman. But I was the one who was to call her, not the President.

CAMPBELL: Is that right?

PETERSON: So I called her and explained it all to her. And she said, yes, that she would like to do it. And I remember her saying to me, “This may be the last, the last thing that I really do.” And then we worked with her on a list of other people to be on the commission. We had outlined pretty much who we wanted on it. And I very definitely wanted industry, labor, women, all people who were concerned, and I did not want a women's commission. I wanted people who were in a position to act. At that time, a lot of them thought it should be all women. We had little battles like that along the way, but we won. And I think it was good.

CAMPBELL: How did you choose the specific cabinet

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members who were to be on the...

PETERSON: We chose those mainly from those who had in their departments some concern for the issue—like the Civil Service Commission, which had a tremendous interest, you see. Labor had a great deal. HEW had a great deal. Treasury had an awful lot on the taxation questions, and it was on a basis of which ones had programs that affected women. Commerce, a tremendous amount. I remember having to make those justifications.

CAMPBELL: How was Dr. Lester [Richard A. Lester] chosen to be vice chairman?

PETERSON: Personal experience from my own area because I had worked with him on the minimum wage question. He had been one of our expert witnesses from time to time and always had a very good point of view towards women as people—not women as women, but as a force in labor and employment area. And I felt that we had to have someone with academic credentials. And then, let me be frank, I wanted to have the votes. I thought it was very necessary to be sure that we had enough people there who would vote along the lines that I thought the commission should go. I guess I'm very practical, I wasn't in politics for nothing.

CAMPBELL: Senator Aiken [George D. Aiken] was considered, I think, by a few people an unusual choice. How does he...

PETERSON: I think this was all some part of personal desire—I'm very fond of him. And I worked with him. And he helped me so much. It's awful how personal a lot of these things are, but they are personal. He was one of the best supporters that we had on minimum wage. He was one of the best supporters in the early equal paydays and helped us get the commission started. He was always a reasonable individual to work with. And then, also, I wanted to be sure that it was bipartisan, that we had both sides, and I couldn't think of a Republican who would serve us better than Senator Aiken. And the President liked him, too.

CAMPBELL: Your representative from Texas, Mrs. Boddy [Sarabeth Boddy], how did...

PETERSON: That was an adorable story. And I guess I should tell all these things, shouldn't I?

CAMPBELL: For history.

PETERSON: For history.

CAMPBELL: And you can close this for twenty years if you'd like.

PETERSON: No, I don't think so. Because it actually ended well, but it's quite a story because she literally was the only political appointee that was thrust on me, the only one, and that was from LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] and Liz [Elizabeth S. Carpenter]. And Liz had a good idea. She said, "We ought to have somebody that represents the real, you know, the ordinary woman. And she's helped an awful lot and she's been good." I must say that President Johnson, then vice president, was very helpful. He had met me by the elevator one day and said, "Esther, when are you going to get busy and do something for women?" And I felt that if we didn't get going with the commission, LBJ would get busy with the issue himself, so I remember telling Kennedy, "If we don't get going on this someone might take it away from us." And I think this helped Kennedy move ahead with it because he could see it was becoming a popular political asset. I had to be loyal to Kennedy, but I must say Johnson was very helpful to the commission. But Mrs. Boddy came from LBJ land and Liz introduced her and brought her in.

But the story that I wanted to tell you about that was so delightful. At the time of the first commission meeting, the Johnsons had all the commission out for a reception at Les Ormes, the Perle Mesta House. There was a car and driver for Mrs. Roosevelt and me. We had just had our first day's meeting, and Mrs. Boddy pulled us all up so many times because she'd ask, "Well, what is a minimum wage? What are you talking about?" There wasn't a subject where we had a common vocabulary. And we all were kind of concerned. I'll never forget Mrs. Roosevelt's question to me on the way in the car. She said, "Mrs. Peterson, where, where did you get Mrs. Boddy?" And I said, "Well, Mrs. Roosevelt," and I told her the truth. I said this was someone the Vice President asked us to put on. And I told her Mrs. Boddy was the only political appointee on that whole commission—a very small price to pay, I thought. Then when we got out to the house there was a receiving line and I was introducing people to Mrs. Roosevelt and the Vice President. Everyone came through the line. And here came Mrs. Boddy. After she got through, Mrs. Roosevelt turned to the Vice President and said, "I wonder where they found her. She doesn't know from anything." I just gasped. [Laughter] I could just gasp.

Later on—it was so sweet—when we were taking Mrs. Roosevelt back, she said, "You know, I didn't turn to look at you for fear we would have smiled." I never knew that she had this lovely sense of humor. Oh, it was funny. It was delightful.

But as it turned out, you know, although we were all concerned because Mrs. Boddy kept speaking up, and we'd have to go into long explanations about so many things, we found

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that she provided a very valuable service because she kept bringing us back to reality as to where people were. And actually I got very fond of her. We're really good friends now. And she made a real contribution. So I must say that I reversed my position quite strongly about her.

CAMPBELL: Would it be accurate to say that you were heavily involved in the choosing

of every member of the commission?

PETERSON: I think so, yes.

CAMPBELL: Was Mrs. Roosevelt consulted at all about other commission members?

PETERSON: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes.

CAMPBELL: Did you wish to include other people that weren't included for one reason or another?

PETERSON: Well, we.... I think I was a little concerned about having some of the media. I thought that we should have people who interpreted it more. But I think Arthur was right, and I think Mrs. Roosevelt was right, too, in warning that first we had to know what we were going to say. Then, we evolved this idea of having consultations. But I recall some feeling, though, about the media, if I look back on it.

CAMPBELL: What were some of the major problems you faced just in getting this operation under way?

PETERSON: Oh, finance! [Laughter] Finance and staffing and a place. Oh, you see, we had to start from scratch. We couldn't, the Women's Bureau couldn't do it and didn't want to do it. In fact, they were almost a negative influence for a long time with an attitude like, "Hurry up and get this out of the way." And I didn't know my way around government then, either. I know now and I had learned, but to get staff loaned and detailed, to get buildings, to get a budget—we had to work that out. Those were rather trying days but we were able to manage. We finally got an appropriation from every department. And that's another reason we had to have the cabinet members on. I had to interview all of them and get commitments.

CAMPBELL: Were there major disagreements at first or ever, just simply about how to proceed, what areas to tackle, that sort of thing?

PETERSON: Well, we tried to spell it out in the executive order. So we already had a definition, and that

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helped us. And Mrs. Roosevelt was splendid. She accepted what was in the order. We talked with her before, too—I keep thinking of her beautiful face—and when some of the decisions were made, you know, not to get off into the psychological areas, she really was actually very influential in keeping the commission on its course.

But I do think it helped to draw up our program specifically.... And then we worked very carefully, brought a very good person in from the army who helped us in the real documentation of the logistics, which was an excellent job. So we had a very fine system.

Evelyn Harrison found the army expert for me. We got her on detail. Yes, it was a difficult period and we had real, real problems, real problems in the staffing to get competent people. You see, we were able to get commission members to work by promising that we'd have staff work done for them. So we had to have a technical secretary back of each one of the committees that were set up, and then we borrowed staff from other departments to help.

CAMPBELL: How would you characterize cooperation from various government departments? Did it vary greatly?

PETERSON: It varied greatly, but really, on the whole, I thought we did very well, really very well. And it helped to have the President's hand in it and his presidential order. I talked to all the cabinet officers. I tried to start at the top. You know, if a top person tells staff to do it, it's going to get done, but if you go lower—well, orders don't move up as easily as they move down. At Labor, we had no problem. And HEW, we got marvelous help from HEW, really. I think we got least from Commerce and least from the army.

CAMPBELL: The Department of Defense in general.

PETERSON: Right. There's real resistance there, you see, because I suppose they knew that we'd be going after some of their old time-honored traditions. Civil Service Commission was splendid. Agriculture was fair. About like that.

CAMPBELL: Was there a good general understanding early on of the commission's mission, just what was expected to happen, the question of highlighting problems or generating specific legislation?

PETERSON: I think so because, again, in the executive order we had the charge: "You are to do this." And we kept reading this to commission members. It was in the charge and it was in the executive order. And

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that helped tremendously. We had a tendency to get off on a lot of controversial areas. There, again, as long as Mrs. Roosevelt was there, she was able to keep us pretty much on course. And then we had awfully good staff work. We had working papers. Commission members would never come to a meeting without a working paper which they received in advance. So you had something to work from rather than, you know, like you do on some of these commissions.

CAMPBELL: What do you generally think of the government commission?

PETERSON: Oh, I think a lot of them are just a lot of baloney. And I think they're excuses. In fact, I'd love to do a paper someday on commissions and find

out just how much money has been spent on commissions, and how many times they were excuses for not doing things. But when I talked to the President and Arthur about it, this commission, I said I wanted it to make its report and then I wanted it to end. I felt all we wanted was a good group of men and women of authority to say certain things ought to be done. Then I felt that women's groups and the Women's Bureau could get in and get busy and work to carry recommendations out. And we would have a basis for a program instead of all the bickering and silly talking about what we should do and what should be our policy. I think commissions can be great, but, I think, usually they're not worth very much.

CAMPBELL: In the case of this commission, how was the decision reached for the establishment of the seven committee organizational arrangement?

PETERSON: Well, I don't know exactly. I knew we had to have real technical assistance. We studied a lot of commissions. We looked at the goals commissions; we looked at the Hoover. We looked at all kinds of commissions to see how they were set up. And ours was a kind of an amalgamation. We interviewed a lot of people who had commission experience. That's where Evelyn Harrison helped me a good deal. And a lot of people who'd worked in Social Security [Social Security Administration]. Some of the fellows who later came on our staff had worked on other commissions. And we got reports of what was wrong with those commissions and where they didn't work out. So this seemed to be administratively and technically the best set up for us.

CAMPBELL: Then what factors entered into the adding of the consultation?

PETERSON: Well, because as we went on in our discussions, we did find these areas that were of concern but

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that we hadn't been able to have staff or money for—the Negro, for example, the Negro woman. I am very pleased that we were the first group who really did anything on that, you know. We really brought them in and made that report, and the tape of that meeting, I think, should be one of the best documents in the files. Have you heard it?

CAMPBELL: Yes.

PETERSON: Didn't you think it was good for that period of history?

CAMPBELL: Yes. Had there been particular pressure of some sort to add this to your schedule?

PETERSON: Well, I think Dorothy Height [Dorothy I. Height] helped with this. She's head of the Council of Negro Women [National Council of Negro

Women], and she was a commission member. But Mrs. Roosevelt was the one who did a lot on that. We had a discussion on whether or not we should have a task force or committee on the disadvantaged woman, the minority woman. And Mrs. Roosevelt was so great on that. She said that that should be a concern of every committee. And as it is it runs through all the reports. There isn't a report that doesn't deal with the disadvantaged woman, in civil rights and political, home and community and all of these. This was part of her philosophy and we adopted it. Then on the consultation the media was set up because after a lot of discussion, we felt the attitude of the media on women was so important to women that we had to look into it. We had "consultations" on subjects that we didn't have time or money to do a complete analysis, and that weren't spelled out in the charge, but that we felt we had to have some information on to include in our study.

CAMPBELL: What was the extent of Mrs. Roosevelt's involvement in the work of the commission?

PETERSON: Well, during the first year she was really involved. We would go to New York. I used to call her a good deal. I used to go especially and meet her in her apartment. She came here and spent a whole weekend, I remember, when we just went over papers and plans. We'd give her the agenda early. She worked hard until she started going downhill physically—after the Hyde Park meeting she began getting a little weaker—then she got a cold, you remember, and things gradually got worse. But we never replaced the chair, you know, the chairman. So while she was well, she was really involved; she was really interested in the commission.

CAMPBELL: What areas of the work interested her the most,

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do you recall?

PETERSON: I think, really, the employment areas, because she knew that this was a here-and-now issue. Yet, on the other hand, she kept saying that she hated women's talents to be lost. I'm trying to remember the quotes that we'd pick from her which were ideas that ran through most of her work with us. She was concerned that we hold onto family life. She kept saying that the work we were doing would strengthen family life. I remember her using those words a great deal, that if we solved some of the unemployment and low pay problems women would be happier and they'd strengthen family life. I suppose, if there was any one thing that concerned her most it was the employment of the disadvantaged, of the minority groups.

CAMPBELL: Did she have direct contact with the White House and the commission's work at all?

PETERSON: Well, she was there a good deal. And I remember the day we first took her there, she went in and had a good talk alone with Kennedy for a while.

She told me afterwards that they talked only politics, they didn't talk women. [Laughter] So she said.

You know, I'll never forget the morning that we went over there to have one of our first meetings and I went in for a minute. It was the morning that a newspaper article appeared saying that Romney [George W. Romney] was thinking of running against Kennedy. I remember the President was not interested—I'm a Mormon from Utah—in talking commission. All he wanted to know was everything about Romney. I remember it so well because Arthur and I were trying to get him to look at the agenda. All these nice little moments are really great fun.

CAMPBELL: Did you sense that the relationship between the President and Mrs. Roosevelt was healthier at this time?

PETERSON: Oh, much better. Oh, yes, much, much better. Oh, yes. I think that the tensions that we felt earlier were pretty well gone.

CAMPBELL: Was there active consideration of the establishment of some sort of a permanent commission home at Hyde Park? I've heard something about an idea of moving an office up there or something like...

PETERSON: I think.... You see, she had invited us all up for one of the sessions. We had really quite an exciting session there. And then after she

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died, we were all concerned about what was happening to Valkill, that it was being sold and torn up. And at that time, there were a lot of us who said, "Oh, couldn't we raise funds? Maybe the women could raise funds and hold on to her cottage and her things, and make this...." So there was all kind of talk at that period, but we never could get an agreement from the family and get the money together in time to do it.

CAMPBELL: You submitted an interim report to the President then in August of 1962. Why was that thought necessary? Was it always in the plan?

PETERSON: I think it was just to let him know the direction we were going. And it gave us a good vehicle to go to other cabinet officers and say, "Look, this is the way it's beginning to look. If you're going to say anything, you better start saying it now."

CAMPBELL: Do you recall if there was a reaction from the White House at that time?

PETERSON: We had some quite difficult times, and I think this was when we were considering family planning as a subject although it never showed its head. But we wanted to get it in in some way or other and it was a delicate maneuver. And we finally cleared with the Catholic groups and the others the wording that's

finally in the report. The casual reader wouldn't know it, but we who worked on it know what it really says, you know. I think the report was the first government document that had any, any indication at all that the direction we go will be toward family planning. And that was part of that period.

CAMPBELL: We're about to run out here. I think you could...

[END OF INTERVIEW #2]

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