

Hobart Taylor, Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 01/11/1967
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Biographical Note

Taylor, Executive Vice Chairman, President's Panel on Equal Employment Opportunity (1962-1965); Special Assistant to the Vice President (1963), discusses the origination and various successes of the President's Panel on Equal Employment Opportunity, among other issues.

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Hobart Taylor, Jr. – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

HOBART TAYLOR, Jr.

January 11, 1967
Washington, D.C.

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't I just, so we get it straight, ask you if you had any contact with Senator Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] before 1961?

TAYLOR: No.

STEWART: Had you met him, or had you...

TAYLOR: Yes, I had met him. I met Jack Kennedy in nineteen hundred and, either '58 or '59, in Indianapolis [Indianapolis, Indiana]. He went down to address a convocation of the United Negro College Fund. And my father [Hobart Taylor, Sr.] was a director of the United Negro College Fund, and we were down there—and I forget the name of this hotel in Indianapolis, it was supposed to be the leading hotel at the time. And Belford Lawson [Belford V. Lawson] was with him. And I got to meet him at that time and chatted with him.

STEWART: Do you recall your impressions of him at that time? Did you....

TAYLOR: It may have been as I think about it more and more, it may have been as early as '57. My impressions of him were that he was a very brilliant chap, very nice

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fellow. I thought he quoted quite a bit, much more than he did later on, from the classics. I didn't feel that—looking at presidents that I'd known—that he'd be able to make it, that was the impression I had, but I was very much inclined to his direction. I felt very sympathetic towards him.

STEWART: And you didn't have any other contacts with him?

TAYLOR: No, I did not. I knew Belford, and Belford asked me, you know, what was going to happen in Michigan, and who'd I'd be for, and all of this. And I told him that, very likely, the Michigan's delegation's first love would be Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson], and that, of course, I felt that he'd been to the well a couple of times, but that I didn't think that I should be taking positions on anybody that far ahead of time, I wanted to wait to see how things came out.

STEWART: What were you doing at the time, were you...

TAYLOR: I was a lawyer in Detroit [Detroit, Michigan]. I was senior partner of a law firm, Taylor, Patrick, Bailer & Lee, at the time, and I was County Corporation Counsel.

STEWART: I see. Then you were active politically?

TAYLOR: I was active politically.

STEWART: Were you at the 1960 Convention [Democratic National Convention]?

TAYLOR: I did not attend the 1960 Convention because—you see, what happened in 1960, when I looked over the thing, I concluded that I was going to be for Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], which was as one sage Texan newspaperman said it was like being a Puritan in Babylon. But I guess it all depends on where you're from, whether you consider where's Babylon. But, at any rate, there weren't many people in Michigan that were for Johnson, and I knew the realities of the situation, and I didn't war against them. So I decided that I wouldn't try to be a delegate to the Convention because they were going to adopt the unit rule, and there wasn't any point of my voting for something that I was not going to be for.

Now, frankly, to this day, I've been a very strong support of Mennen Williams, but I thought that we went too fast

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for Kennedy, or for anybody at the time. Although it certainly, I think, had a very important effect on helping President Kennedy to get the nomination, I don't think it helped Michigan get as much out of it as it would have gotten, and I think that we should have thought about

that a little more. And I don't think that Michigan, as such, has benefitted from these past few years.

STEWART: Your father was cited in the book, *The Kennedy Years and the Negro* as a, quote, "consultant to Texas Senator Lyndon Johnson" during the Convention. What specifically was his role?

TAYLOR: Well, my father did not attend the Convention in 1960.

STEWART: Well, he was cited in the book as a ...

TAYLOR: I can't help what's in the book. He may have consulted, but he did not attend the Convention.

STEWART: All right. He was actively involved with Lyndon Johnson as...

TAYLOR: My father favored Mr. Johnson.

STEWART: Would you care to go into your reasons for favoring Mr. Johnson at that time?

TAYLOR: Well, I thought that he was the most experienced man. I thought that in terms of the domestic problems which we had to face in the country, and which I considered the overwhelming ones, that Johnson was the only man who could get it done. I thought that he could manage the Congress. And I thought that we were on dead center in this country, and I didn't think it made any difference who was elected President, we were going to come up with about the same kind of Congress that we had before, and this was the thing which had held back the progress of this country over the past twenty years. So you had to get a guy who was on the inside of this thing if you were going to do it.

And then I also had reason to believe, from the President's history, that he was a much more of a liberal than

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people thought; that he was in the unfortunate position of having a limited constituency, and that he was representing these people; but that if he could get a broader constituency, he would do a better job for everybody. And he had proven courage and integrity. So I came to it on logic and reason. And the fact that I was born in Texas, as I'm sure you know, that was not a deciding factor in my mind at all, any more than I would necessarily be for George Romney [George W. Romney] just because I have lived in Michigan.

STEWART: Did you work in the campaign at all?

TAYLOR: When the Johnson people...There was a meeting of Midwestern Democrats in Detroit in February or early March of 1960, and the Johnson people came to town, or at least they wanted to come to town, to attend this meeting of so-called Midwestern Democrats which reached all the way to the Pacific coast, it developed. And they couldn't even get a hotel room in the Sheraton-Cadillac at the time, and Cliff Carter [Clifton C. Carter] called me—and this is really how I got involved, you might say, because I didn't intend to take any strong positions, I was just going to be a citizen—Cliff Carter called me and said they couldn't get in the hotel. Well, I knew the manager, and I got them a nice suite. And I never yet understood why, unless somebody really was opposed to them to an unusual extent, because when they came there, they were treated pretty much like social outcasts at the Sheraton-Cadillac.

And that was quite a group of Texans that came up. Warren “Woody” Woodward was among them, Eugene Locke who was later ambassador to Pakistan, two or three members of the Texas Legislature, Mr. Rayburn [Sam Rayburn] came, finally, himself. But these men were not accepted, and so I decided that I would at least introduce them around. So I went over there, and I knew everybody from Michigan, and I introduced them. They tried to get acquainted, and they had a difficult time, but they got to know some people.

And the last night they were in town, and they said that they would like to meet some of the Negro and liberal leadership from Michigan and other places, and I gave a party out at my house, and I invited everybody to come out, and this was considered to be a big issue there in the papers, and quite a bit was written about it. But that was the basic thing that happened in that convention. Then later on I did consult frequently

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with Senator Johnson and with people on his staff, and I did some things I think which were helpful to him.

STEWART: For example.

TAYLOR: Well, I don't know if it's important...

STEWART: You're talking about the pre-Convention period?

TAYLOR: I'm talking about the pre-Convention period. And I helped him get some delegates, and I held some people back from declaring themselves. I think we could have done more if Senator Johnson, the then Senator Johnson, had not taken a position that he shouldn't campaign openly and make promises, because he was leader in the Senate and it would be divisive if he did so. And as a result, he did not, himself, nor would he permit others on his behalf to actively solicit support. And delegates or potential delegates to the Convention were busy trying to find a home for themselves so that they would be on the right side of things, and so I think he lost a lot of ground on account of it. I don't think that he lost enough to have said that he lost the nomination through indecision. I don't think he could have gotten it. And I was also aware of the geographical realities as well, that he was from the South. But still, you know, you know

you have to stand for something sometimes, and I stood for him, on the basis that I mentioned to you before.

STEWART: What about in the campaign, after the Convention?

TAYLOR: Well, of course, once the Convention was over then I worked very hard for the ticket in Michigan. I made speeches; and I collected money; and I got people to do things. And I did one or two things in Illinois and other places that I was asked to go. And I got to know, of course, some of the Kennedy people. I worked mostly with Louis Martin [Louis E. Martin], and other people of that kind, and Frank Reeves [Frank D. Reeves], who was very active at the time. I did quite a bit.

STEWART: What, briefly, did you consider the biggest problem you had as far as Michigan was concerned, as far as your activity was concerned?

TAYLOR: I don't recall any particular problem.

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STEWART: It was a relatively smooth thing as far as you were concerned, as far as the...

TAYLOR: So far—I don't know what you're referring to, you'll have to tickle my memory if there's something that you heard.

STEWART: No. I was just asking in terms of what you, personally, were trying to do in the whole campaign...

TAYLOR: Well, you know, I had been in and around politics there for a long time, and I knew most of the people who counted. And it's mostly a matter of getting the troops organized and getting them out. And I knew how to do that. So we did our usual efficient job and kept Wayne County about the most democratic county in America.

STEWART: Did you have an official title in...

TAYLOR: No, I may have had, I don't remember. You know, when you set up campaign organizations, sometimes you have titles, but I didn't pay any particular attention to it. I'm sure I was on the finance committee, though, because I've always been on the finance committee back there. And I may have had some other title, but I don't even recall it.

STEWART: Okay, moving on then, did you have any role at all in drafting the executive order that set up the President's Committee [President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity]?

TAYLOR: Yes, I did.

STEWART: Could you briefly define that role?

TAYLOR: Yes. I had no intention of coming to Washington, and we were invited down to the Inauguration by Vice President Johnson. And we came down, and I was going through the line at a party which the Texas State Society gave for him over here in the Statler Hotel. He stopped me and told me that he wanted me to visit with him in the next few days, and I didn't do so.

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But I did get down about two or three weeks later on, in reality, in response to a second request on his part. This would be in late February, or about the middle of February. And he talked with me, and told me that this Committee was going to be established and he was going to be the chairman, and that they had been working on it for some time. And he asked me....Some of this is just a little hazy, but the way I recollect it is that he got me in his office that afternoon, and he handed me a copy of the proposed executive order, and he asked me to look it over and see what I thought about it.

Now, I had intended to go back to Detroit that night, but as a result I stayed over, and I got a room down here in the Willard Hotel. And I remember it so well because I forget to call my wife. I started working on this thing, and I don't guess there's anything more shocking for a fellow about 11:30 at night and he's forgotten to eat—I've got to see him in his office at 8 o'clock the next morning—and then the phone rings, and it's your wife, and "What has happened to you?" And I said, "Well, hi." And all of a sudden it occurred to me, and I said, "How in the devil did you find me here?" Well, she had just gone down the list of hotels because she had a message from somebody in the Vice President's office for me, changing the time or something of the sort, and they couldn't find me either. So at any rate, I got over there the next morning, and he had Secretary Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] there and Abe Fortas [Abraham Fortas].

STEWART: Who had written the original...

TAYLOR: I guess Abe did, Abe did. Oh, some people from the Justice Department, I think, had done something with it, but Abe, I guess, really had done it, and he had had a lot of the legal things in mind. And so I went over with him there the changes that I had in mind. Unfortunately, I don't have in my possession the drafts. But they were fairly substantial, and so the Vice President says, "Well, look, why don't you go and work these things out, and come back this afternoon?"

So I went over to Abe's office, and we talked a little bit and then Abe says, "Well, why don't you just....I'll give you a secretary and you do some things." And he said George

Bunn, who was a young man in the office, had done some work in connection with it, and “If you want George to help you, well

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fine.” So I said, “Okay.” So George Bunn and I worked together. Now he works, I think, on disarmament or something now. And I’ve only seen him once or twice since then, he’s an awfully pleasant fellow and a good guy. He’s here in Washington, he was out of the country for a couple of years. Last time I saw him, I saw him at the office of Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.], up the street on 16th Street about a year and a half or two ago. But anyway, George and I worked, and it was during the course of this that I...

I can tell you what I consider the biggest contribution I made was: They had a provision there that said that “Each employer shall take action,” and I said, “Well, look, let’s try to put something else in there. We’ll put affirmative.” I put the word affirmative. I was torn between positive and affirmative, and I decided affirmative on the basis of alliteration. And that has, apparently, meant a great deal historically in the way in which people have approached this whole thing.

Then I made quite a number of other changes in the body of it. I provided—the only remedies there were cancellation, contract cancellation, blacklisting, and I arranged for there to be lesser penalties so that there’d be some flexibility in the arrangement of things. And then, the labor union things, which we were never able to handle satisfactorily, we rewrote because, you see, you didn’t have to have a handle on labor unions in the same sense that you had on industry because you had no contracts with labor unions. So we wrote something in there to at least scare them a little. And there were quite a number of other changes which we made.

Then this, later on, went through the Attorney General’s [Robert F. Kennedy] office and back. And by this time I had promised the Vice President.... That afternoon I came back, he asked me how much money I made, and he found out and he said, “I can’t pay you even half that much.” And would I come down for a while? And I agreed to do it. Well, these drafts were sent to me from time to time, before the executive order was issued, and I approved the final draft that was issued, through George Reedy [George E. Reedy], and then a couple of days later it was issued to take effect on March 4, I think, or April the fourth, something like that.

STEWART: It was March.

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TAYLOR: To take effect. It was issued in March, to take effect on April the fourth.

STEWART: Right, right.

TAYLOR: Now, I came down on April 3, the day before it took effect.

STEWART: Were there any substantial disagreements in this drafting stage that you can recall?

TAYLOR: No, there were substantial chances, but no substantial disagreements.

STEWART: Nothing, for example, on the labor unions. No one...

TAYLOR: I think that everybody tried to do as much as they could to make it effective. We were determined at all cost to overcome the problems that had existed under the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] orders, in which there were no teeth, and nobody paid a darn bit of attention to the Committee, whatever it proposed to do. And both President Kennedy and President Johnson were very firm on this. There was one thing, the power was shifted from the chairman to the vice chairman, if you read the order carefully.

The executive power was apparently in the vice chairman, which was the Secretary of Labor, and this was because the Vice President would have the job of presiding over the Senate, and if an unpopular decision had to be made, it was better for it to be made by a fellow who was appointed and who could take the heat, than by a man who was elected and who would be charged along with the President, you see. So this is really, in a way, the way it got over there in the first place. And then there was also the problem of money for the Committee. You had to raise the money some way, and there was no budget, you see, so you had to take from Peter and pay Paul, and you know, we got it through contributions, and the Labor Department [United States Department of Labor] made up whatever else wasn't handled.

STEWART: Whose idea was that, do you recall, or was there any opposition to financing the thing in this way rather than going for an appropriation?

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TAYLOR: Well, we knew we couldn't get an appropriation. I know a great deal about this, but I don't know how much of it still involves people living and in the Congress, and I'm not sure that I want to tell it, even to...

STEWART: You have every opportunity to close this material for as many years as you want.

TAYLOR: I understand this. I understand this, but this is a problem still.

STEWART: These tapes and transcripts, I can assure you, don't go beyond our office. The typist sees them and I see them, period. There's absolutely no problem as far as we're concerned, and I would certainly hope you'd be as frank and open as...

TAYLOR: Well, I think it's kind of interesting, I really don't know how, you know, after a lifetime of being close-mouthed, and then you have daily examples of the danger of breaking that rule. But I will say this much about it, that Senator Russell [Richard B. Russell, Jr.] was determined that there be no appropriation, and he wasn't the only one. But at the same time the Senator decided not to object if money was collected and spent in about the same amount as the Eisenhower people had done.

Now, historically, you may remember that Truman [Harry S. Truman] financed his equal employment effort out of a contingency fund. Then Russell put a rider on an appropriation bill many years before, I've forgotten the date, providing that this could not be done except by specific appropriation of the Congress, and this closed up the original committee. And so Senator Russell had his on these things.

The President Eisenhower got something done through the device of an interdepartmental committee which was an exception to the Russell Amendment. But here we were using the same device as a committee, but again, the control in the Congress was such that they could have stopped this, too, if they had wanted to, and from time to time efforts were made to cut a department's appropriations by an amount equivalent to its' contribution to the President's Committee because of the fact that there was no statutory basis for it, you see. So this

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had to be worked out with Senator Russell, and it was worked out with Senator Russell, and there was a person on his staff that I dealt with, Mr. Jordan [William H. Jordan, Jr.], who was a good man. And I think that a lot of times people are a lot more negative about Senator Russell than they ought to be. All right, now, I think that's enough to reply.

STEWART: You mentioned the expected role of the Vice President in this Committee. Would you say that as it turned out, he played a much larger role than he had originally intended or expected to play?

TAYLOR: No, I wouldn't say that. I think he understood that it was to be his responsibility, and I think that he welcomed it. I know, for instance, that he had long wanted an opportunity to do things such as this, I had known this before. He had recommended Representative Dawson [William L. Dawson] for Postmaster General of the United States and had gotten the approval of President Kennedy for that. Mr. Dawson turned it down as you know. And he had done certain things. But he knew what it's like to have responsibility and not have power. And he had to think about this a great deal.

Now, then you also had a problem, the fact that his power base was in the South and that a lot of people down there were opposed to it. But he understood that, and he accepted it, and his very first investigation turned out to be in Georgia, as you well know, the Lockheed plant down there. So this was understood. He had to go down to Nashville very shortly after this Committee was formed—John Hope [John Hope Franklin] knows about that, and that's

when they first met. So I don't think there was any negativism on his part, but he is not a man who wants to be pushed into someplace where he can't see daylight.

STEWART: As far as your own position: one, how was originally defined? And two, did you have any reservations about getting actively involved in this thing?

TAYLOR: I didn't have any experience in it. I hadn't had anything to do with civil rights other than I had tried a couple of lawsuits, and I had made con-

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tributions, in the sense I...Frankly, most of the people who had had responsibilities in this area, really, went about their business in a way so different from the way I went about things that I was pretty much foreclosed from participation. I've always been kind of a sit-across-the-table fellow, and then we work it out, and if we don't work it out, then I find a way to put pressure on you till you come around and you see it my way, then I sit down with you again.

But I don't believe in large pronouncements, and statements as to what you're going to do to people and the rest of it—and particularly when you can't do it. Nor do I believe in a lot of people who have the power sitting around and saying that we ought to do this because this is the right and moral thing to do, and passing resolutions. I think it's much better to go see a fellow who can do something about it and talk to him about it, and get it done. Now, I'm just being candid about it.

Most of the people who have engaged in interracial good work in the United States have either been church people, or they have been social workers, or they have been people who, for some reason or another, are just simply sincerely interested in their fellow man, but they had not the means nor the power, nor anything else that it took to accomplish, you see. So, therefore, their efforts have been largely ineffective because they have not tied into an organization. And then, when they have acted politically, they have concentrated upon throwing out the fellow who is already in and putting in somebody who thought like them, instead of getting the fellow who was already in to do what it is that needed to be done. And this is not a workable transaction because you can be at it a long time, and you win one office, but you got all these other offices, too, that you've got to think about. So it's much better to try to get a consensus going.

So I had little faith and confidence in the customary procedure and I'm sure you've talked to other people and you've probably found out that they didn't have much faith and confidence in me. But they did have confidence in my ability as a lawyer, I think that was fairly generally understood. And I went in as counsel. And, what I did, I wrote some rules and

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regulations, and nobody ever took me to court, so I must have done a fairly good job. And nobody ever said we were unfair, we acted under those rules and regulations in quite a number of cases, and yet we could get the job done, and it was effective. And I remember that after we wrote them we went to the public, and we published them in the *Congressional*—not in the *Congressional Record*...

STEWART: *Federal Register*.

TAYLOR: ...in the *Federal Register*, and quite a number of people who were very much opposed to what we were doing came in and made their recommendations and suggestions, and we adopted a lot of them, and they became our friends. So it was a wise way to get something done.

STEWART: As far as these rules and regulations, was there any serious disagreement, for example, over the way in which it was decided to get reports from contractors?

TAYLOR: Yes, a lot of fellows didn't want it, and a lot of fellows didn't want to be responsible for their subcontractors, and didn't want it to go down to subs, and I went down two tiers, I compromised it out. But I figured that I would have about 95 percent of what I needed if I went two tiers.

STEWART: But there wasn't any very serious disagreement within the Committee, or by the people who were connected...

TAYLOR: The Committee didn't have much to say about it. Holleman [Jerry R. Holleman], who was the executive vice chairman, wasn't a lawyer, so Abe Fortas and I...Abe was invaluable in all of this. I had the laboring oar, and I talked with John Feild [John F. Feild] an awful lot about it, and between us and Abe, and Goldberg was useful....

STEWART: Did you have any role in the original appointment of the public members?

TAYLOR: No.

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STEWART: None at all?

TAYLOR: No. President Kennedy made those appointments. But after I became executive vice chairman, I appointed almost every public member after that.

STEWART: Why don't we go into that now? What, generally, was the process? I assume you tried to achieve both a geographical balance and an occupational balance, so to speak.

TAYLOR: I don't know how the original people were appointed, none of them were ever taken off; and the people that were appointed subsequently I appointed in order to get them to do a specific job. If there was something I needed, and I needed that man to do it, I appointed him.

STEWART: Were there ever any serious disagreements over any of your proposals?

TAYLOR: Well, there was disagreement over Plans for Progress.

STEWART: No, as far as appointment were concerned.

TAYLOR: No. Because it was done by the President, and no one knew that I did it.

STEWART: Oh, I see.

TAYLOR: The President appointed members, I didn't appoint members.

STEWART: Do you know who in the White House reviewed your proposals?

TAYLOR: Lee White [Lee C. White], up until Mr. Johnson became President, and after that I sent them to him, and he did it. After Mr. Johnson became President, I ran the President's Committee, I didn't even waste his time with a lot of reports, or anything of that kind. If it was something unusual that happened, I sent him a memo; if it was something

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I needed for him to do, I sent him a memo, and he did it; and that was the relationship because, at the time that I became executive vice chairman, I made it very clear that I was...In fact, to be Executive Vice Chairman; I was out in Seattle at the time that he asked me to take the responsibility on, and it was really at Mr. Goldberg's suggestion.

You'll find things in—there was an article written in a magazine, was it *New Republic*? Or some similar magazine—saying the Mr. Johnson put me in on a force play reminiscent of his old Senate days. Well, that was not the fact at all. I had become assistant to the Vice President at the time that I was appointed. I became assistant to the Vice President in June of 1962, and I was appointed in September, but the offer was made in August. And it was made at Goldberg's insistence, and it was based on Theodore Kheel's [Theodore Woodrow Kheel] recommendation at the time that he'd made his study. And Kheel recommended me to Goldberg and Goldberg went to the Vice President and asked him would he take me off other things and have me concentrate on this. And he called me, and I came to Washington, and I said, "Well...."

Bobby Troutman [Robert Troutman, Jr.] was having all of his troubles, and Bobby was for me. He represented the conservative side. And the Negroes, Whitney Young [Whitney M. Young, Jr.] was for me, and Roy Wilkins was for me, though with some hesitation. You probably read what Whitney had to say down in Miami [Miami, Florida] when the Urban League [National Urban League] gave me this award. It was the only one they've ever given, the National Urban League has only given one. And he said that he had had some misgivings, but that I had gained the confidence of industry and at the same time I had done something for people who were the victims. And I did do it, and I got people to work together.

But at any rate, I insisted that Bobby Kennedy approve it, because Bobby and the Vice President were not doing as well as they could be doing at the time. I knew that President Kennedy wanted it, and Bobby Troutman wanted it, and that the labor unions would be agreeable to it, and that the Negro leaders would be agreeable to it, and that I would have a free hand and complete cooperation. And I got that. Now then, of course, Secretary Goldberg went right after that to the Supreme Court, and there was Mr. Wirtz [W. Willard Wirtz].

Now John Feild and I did not see eye to eye philosophically on things, but we remained good personal friends and ever have to this day; and he never cut me and I never cut him. We're

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both from Michigan, we've known each other for years, we understood where we agreed and where we didn't agree, and John worked very faithfully for me as my executive director until he took another position because, in reality, there was no need of an executive vice chairman—a full-time executive vice chairman and a full-time executive director.

This had come about because in the Eisenhower time they had had an executive director that they didn't like, and they appointed an executive vice chairman to control the executive director, but they follow the same pattern when they came into the President's Committee with the idea that the executive vice chairman would be part time, would be an Assistant Secretary of Labor part time, but he would serve as a check over an executive director if he got out of hand. Well, when I came in, I was demanding all of the authority, and I took it as executive vice chairman, so there was no need for an executive director. And we understood this.

STEWART: Okay, one of my questions was that it's been suggested, and Leonard Baker in his book on the Vice President very definitely suggests that the study by Kheel was an attempt by the Vice President to force Mr. Feild out of the Committee. Now, I would conclude that you feel that this charge is absolutely without any foundation?

TAYLOR: He didn't pick Kheel, Goldberg picked Kheel. And Goldberg picked Kheel because of the fact that you had this debacle there with Holleman, and things simply were not getting done. There had not been—we had

been in business over a year at that time, and there had not been a reporting form developed for the construction industry, which was one of the most important industries to report on. No real steps had been made to get compliance people appointed in the various departments to carry out the order. There was no organization, just to be candid with you and, well, frankly, John Feild had not been able to organize the work of the Committee to that time. And, gosh, his heart was in the right place, and everything else, but he had not been able to get the machinery moving—and we were suffering. There was tremendous criticisms of the President's Committee by the Negroes and everybody else, and also by industrialists, too.

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And so this thing was getting to the place where President Kennedy was suffering politically, and he knew he had to do something about it, and he put the bee on Johnson and on Goldberg, and they decided to have Kheel make a study. And Johnson didn't know Kheel up until this time. And Kheel is a very liberal man; he's been President of the National Urban League; he had absolutely no reason, you might say, to go along with Johnson. So that allegation is entirely false.

STEWART: Okay, let's get on to something else. Did you have any role in the origination of the idea of Plans for Progress?

TAYLOR: Bobby Troutman was the father of the idea, and it came about in this way: There was a large contract which the Lockheed people had, a two billion dollar contract, down in Marietta [Mariette, Georgia], and charges of discrimination were leveled against Lockheed, and it was serious enough so that President Kennedy was kind of considering holding up their contract. And so Troutman was from Georgia, he was no friend of President Johnson's. But Bobby had run the Confederate Suite at the Convention. You know about this?

STEWART: The what?

TAYLOR: Confederate Suite for Kennedy, at the Convention in Los Angeles. You remember these relationships between Jack Kennedy and Patterson [John M. Patterson] and all the rest of this, you see. And you remember that in 1956 that the dyed-in-the-wool Southerners had voted for him as against Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] for vice president at that time.

So there were all kinds of interesting political relationships here, and so Vice President Johnson had enough sense to realize that Bobby Troutman was the fellow to put out in front. So he put Bobby out in front of it, and Bobby, knowing what it meant to Georgia and everything, and being a very interesting and quixotic person, and a man whom I still keep excellent relations with, whom I think is a very fine American though we may not agree on the details of things, again, Bobby set out to correct this particular situation.

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He went out to California, and he saw how they did it there, and he came back and he figured that maybe they could do it in Georgia and the Lockheed people said, "Well, gosh, let's work out a plan for getting it done." And this was called a Plan for Lockheed's Progress, a Plan for Progress. And so they did it, and we accepted this in lieu of immediate full compliance.

Now Bobby then realized that what was good for Lockheed was good for a lot of other people. Now Bobby also had an idea that if you sign a Plan for Progress you ought to be excused from being bothered with the executive order. This was neither permissible nor wise. But he set out with Jack Kennedy's consent (he used E.O.B. [Executive Office Building]) to get a lot of the other companies to join the program. I don't think it was all clear exactly what was being done, but it was sold on this basis. Well, Bobby talked to me about his idea, and I agreed with him that nothing would be accomplished until he did get these industrialists to do it internally, but I told him that I thought that he was asking for an awful lot of trouble, you know, if he tried to substitute a promise for the executive order.

And so finally, up came this, in June of 1962, there was a full page article in the *New York Times* which describes the problems between Troutman and Feild and everything. You've read this, I take it? Well, this thing, which most people feel actually was the result of John Feild's activity, that he was the fellow who leaked the news, you see, this made Bobby Troutman absolutely persona non grata. This ended his effectiveness, but at the same time it forecast the day that John Feild, too, had to go. Anybody who knows politics knew then they both had to go. And it was only a matter of time.

There was a letter which Vice President Johnson wrote to the *New York Times*, probably in July of 1962, which you ought to get, a letter to the editor, in which he pointed out how he felt that the two programs were not contradictory, that you could have voluntary action and also enforcement. And this was Vice President Johnson's position. So there it stood. Now, coming back to Plans for Progress as a concept, I then got into it when Bobby knew that he was finished. And President Kennedy told him. I think it was...

STEWART: O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell].

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TAYLOR: O'Donnell. I think, yes, that's what I was going to say, O'Donnell told him. Gave him the word. And he told you this?

STEWART: No, no. I read it.

TAYLOR: Well, yes, that's right. Kenny gave him the word, and I've forgotten, I'd been talking back and forth and some with Lee White and the rest of them, I went through him then. And then, as I say, he came to me and asked me what I thought about it, and I told him that I thought it was alright but that it had to be subordinate, that it had to be under the same authority, that it had to be handled well, and that I felt that it ought to be organized differently. Instead of having one or two guys running around the country just signing up people, that you had to have a format and you had to have

some show of what these people were doing. And I held out for those conditions from Bobby before I'd accept his support, see.

Plans for Progress as you know it today, the modern form, comes about from some meetings that we began to have in 1963, and which culminated in August of 1963 with a little ceremony at the White House. After I got in in '62, I started meeting with groups of industrialists. I had a meeting with Bill Miller and a bunch of fellows who later on became members of the first council of the Plans for Progress. I met with others. I went around the country. I just traveled and met and talked with people, and Joe Kruse, and Bill Bohn did the same thing...

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

TAYLOR: So I met and I traveled with these people and I concluded, finally, that I had a group of men who, although most of them were not necessarily liberal, and 90 per cent of them were Republicans, and probably conservative Republicans at that, still were committed to this particular project, which was what I wanted. And the more conservative they were, the better I liked it, in a way, because I knew that they would be able to protect this project better than anybody else. And so we got these men to go along with it.

Then I went to people like Conrad Cooper [Richard C. Cooper] of U.S. Steel [United States Steel Corporation], who is one of the great American heroes in my book,

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And I went to him, and I visited with him, and he asked me what I wanted. And I told him I wanted the steel industry, that I couldn't get it without him, and that I didn't want to have to work for it, I wanted him to give it to me. And so we laughed and we smoked a cigar, and he said, "Well, let me think about it."

So I waited about six months, and I called him up again. I told him I still wanted the steel industry, and he said, "Well," he said, "I've been thinking about it," he says, "and I'll come down to visit you sometime." So about three or four months later he called me up and he came and he visited. And between one thing and another, he brought me what he thought was a nice Plan for Progress, and he said that he thought that all of the big steel companies could sign this. And he got another fellow from Chenango Steel to come see me. He came, and he was the fellow who ran little steel. And then all the steel companies, together with the union, signed an agreement, and it came along.

Now after they got this done, though, this didn't really mean, we didn't get to these local rules, you understand? And we had to face that problem, and we had to get rid of a man in different mills and things of this kind, and we've only gotten some of it straightened out in the last few months, long after I was gone, and I'll bet you that there are spots where the local rules still aren't right. But we got the top, you see, and we've got everybody pushing on the fellow who's down there not doing the right thing.

So what I did for Plans for Progress was I involved a large number of the leading industrialists of the country on an entirely different level, and I created a mechanism through which it could work, an organization. I created the Council, I asked the companies to give us

men as an earnest of their good faith, because if they're paying the salary—and they do, and you know we have a staff over here on 1800 G Street, and if they are doing that, they have to follow up their investment, you might say, in it, and fellows take pride in what they're doing.

Now this idea, although I was told to close it up at one time—I kind of slightly disobeyed orders, or at least I got an extension—then finally when they saw it was working, and after the Negro leadership became convinced it was working, then everybody said, “Well, forget about closing it up. Let's go ahead.”

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STEWART: Who told you to close it up?

TAYLOR: That was a determination made by President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson and Mr. Goldberg and two or three other people as a result of entreaties of some of the Negro civil rights leaders that “Well, this thing has just got such a bad name (this was in September of 1962) that we don't think it can ever be rehabilitated. What we ought to do is just let it kind of die on out, and forget about it.”

I held my meetings and things, and then I involved people in it, and then by the time I was ready to organize it, I had Whitney Young at the White House to address them. And he was the leading fellow who had been opposed to it, see? And it hasn't hurt him a bit because the Urban League has gotten several times as much contributions, advice and assistance as it ever got out of these various companies before. They've got a budget that....When he became executive director of the Urban League, they had about a half a million dollar a year budget, and I think they now have four or five million, and it was from these same companies.

STEWART: Do you think there's some real connection?

TAYLOR: Well, I think that they came to appreciate one another. And I think that this is the solution to America's problems.

STEWART: Let's talk a little bit about the problem within the federal government.

TAYLOR: Now, I oversimplified that. But I oversimplified it intentionally. Still, in what I said, there's the root of it; that if people get together realizing that they have common interests in being constructive and in being productive, and they set out to work together to find out what they can do together rather than what they can argue about, well, then eventually the things which they wanted to argue about become unimportant.

STEWART: As far as the activities within the federal government, there was quite a bit of publicity, of course, about the employment policy officers who were appointed

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within each department and agency. In the regulations I believe there's a provision that these people in the organization should be under the immediate supervision of the head of the department or agency.

TAYLOR: Yes, I wrote that in there.

STEWART: Did this present a big problem? Did departments or agencies resist this at all?

TAYLOR: Well, some of them did, but there wasn't a heck of a lot they could do about it, and also, we put in there the power—there's a power in there, I think, that we have of approving the people whom they picked, and that they serve under our approval. We had known that in the past some agencies had put this way down in the hierarchy, and the equal opportunity officer never could get to the big boss, and therefore, he never could get anything done. He was frequently reduced to simple job protection, so he did it the way his immediate boss told him. We were trying to stop that.

Well, we could have done a great deal more, but we did a lot. And the people whom we had in charge of the government program—and they were put in there before I put them in there—did not really work at it this as diligently as I would have liked. They persuaded and they went over the rules and regulations, and they reminded people, and they were not as tough as they should have been.

And I couldn't do a hell of a lot about it because the leadership was in the hands of decent interested men who were leading figures in civil rights and in the intellectual group, and very highly regarded. And I just didn't feel that I could replace my chief, but I called him in, and I talked to him. I sent him around the country, and I asked him to have regional meetings and things of this kind. And he did that, but I just don't think we got as much out of the Government as we could.

Sometimes I even went to the effort of going myself, and I attended some of these meetings and tried to show them the way I wanted it done. But I really don't think I got as much out of that as I should have. I think dollar for dollar I got more out of the contract people outside, out of private industry, than I got out of the Government. But I had to lay in there right on them every day, and I notice from the report the other

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day that the government's kind of fallen back. And it shows you that you've just got to have a strong hand at the helm where these departments are concerned because they've got job security and they've got a rule that they know how to follow, and you can't beat those fellows following that rule unless you get them to want to do differently. And that means you've got to get out there among them, and you've got to understand their problems, and you've just got to labor at it day and night and teach and explain to them what's got to be done.

I think this is largely the failure of the government program, that we have not sold this program to the people in the middle ranks of the government. And the day that they are

sold on it, that's when you'll get the progress in the government. But just asking them or trying to force people down their throat and say you've got to have so many is not a solution to the problem. You've got to get them to want to go out and find people who they will be satisfied working for them, and who they feel will keep up the efficiency of their department. Now these people exist. And it's just a matter of search. But how do you get the guy to make the effort, you see? This is the whole thing.

STEWART: What was the big problem as far as getting employment policy officers in agencies? There was a problem of finding people who were qualified to do this kind of work, who had had experience in it. A certain amount of training had to be undertaken by the President's Committee to get the kind of people you wanted in agencies.

TAYLOR: Yes. I still don't think, by and large, that we got the staff there that we should have gotten in. Now, in industry it was different. I think they got a lot of fellows in there that they shouldn't have in, but then they weren't getting results, so they changed it. But in the government, you get a fellow in there and he's locked in.

STEWART: You remember which agencies were outstandingly successful, and which were quite the opposite in your program? Do any of them stand out in your mind as being one way or the other?

TAYLOR: Well, I would say that in terms of... Well, of course, I think that the Labor Department made a good try, and I think that Bill Wirtz is entitled

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to an awful lot of credit, too, because this thing came along after he did. He and Tom Powers [N. Thompson Powers], who was his assistant, I think labored at this thing. I think that NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] worked at it, and NASA worked at it under very difficult circumstances because their facilities, and their...

STEWART: Type of people who—the occupation involved were quite different.

TAYLOR: That's right. And also the location of all the NASA facilities are in the South—and in small towns in the South where they had tremendous problems of housing, and everything else of that kind, too, you see? But I think that the people of NASA were very intelligent. I think they gave quite a bit to it. And this is not in derogation of other departments.

I thought that State did it much less than it could have, and there are all kinds of reasons for this. But I thought that they could have done much better. I think that Agriculture [United States Department of Agriculture] could have done much better. I don't know what the situation is in Interior [United States Department of the Interior], I know that, you know, a brave try was being made about the time I left by Secretary Udall [Stewart L. Udall]. And

none of this is any derogation of the fellows who have the leading position but it is a problem. I heard it said that Governor Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] didn't really believe in this program, but I never found a man who was willing to give more of himself or his time to it than Governor Hodges.

And so it's hard to say because you've got so many factors, you've got so many layers of people there that it's hard to say. I think that every Secretary of HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] that we've had, as a man, was very cooperative. But overall, in all of these programs, you found that most of the progress was made in Washington, that it didn't get out to the field.

STEWART: This whole matter of identifying minority employees which an article in the *Post* [*Washington Post*], I think this morning, that they've been having so many problems, was this recognized at the start that you would have a substantial problem in doing this?

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TAYLOR: Well, I favored the head count, and all of the liberals, the people that worked in this field, had always said that you ought not ask the fellow what he is, or anything of the kind, and we ought not to keep a record of it. And I took the position that we might as well know what his supervisor knew. And that gives you some idea of whether you're making headway, or not. And so I favored the head count.

Now I agree, I can understand a fellow may not want to write his race down, it's no particular reason to write Negro or white or anything. Except that it is an operative fact where a hell of a lot of people are concerned. And I don't know how you get the job done without finding out what people are. Now what a man actually is, is not as important as what people say he is. So I don't see why you have to ask a person and I never understood, and I think they tried it over in Agriculture before I left. There was a supervisor who simply put the information down and fed it into the machine, and then you got to see what it says. I mean, if a man is treated as a this, or as a that, well, he might as well be that, see? That tells you what you're doing with what you've got.

STEWART: How would you describe your relationship with the Civil Service Commission?

TAYLOR: Excellent.

STEWART: With John Macy [John W. Macy, Jr.]?

TAYLOR: John Macy is a tower of strength.

STEWART: There was no problems then?

TAYLOR: None whatsoever. John Macy cooperated. He's ready right this minute to do anything that he can to help.

STEWART: Okay, moving on to the labor unions. I think I asked you before if there was any opposition at the start to including unions in the program.

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TAYLOR: I don't think that the labor unions... You know, nobody wants to have any strictures and obligations or anything placed on themselves, and I'm pretty sure that the building trades would as soon that everybody forgot about it. But, you know, we finally did develop some kind of program for them which didn't mean very much. And Jack Lyons [John H. Lyons] was appointed by George Meany to head it up. And Jack attended meetings and...

STEWART: The civil rights division of the...

TAYLOR: No, Jack Lyons is head of the Iron Workers Union. And they have a civil rights division, but we set up something very similar to Plans for Progress among the unions with Lyons as head of it, and I've forgotten, about eighteen or twenty union presidents. Borden of the—oh, I've forgotten what union he is—and the Electricians fellow and all this. And they were going to see to it that equal opportunity existed, but, as you know, this is just a terrible problem, and through hook or crook these exclusionary practices, so far as I know, are still the order of the day, except in unusual circumstance.

STEWART: How effective was the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training in the Department of Labor? Do you feel they contributed anything significant to the program?

TAYLOR: No.

STEWART: Not at all?

TAYLOR: You said anything significant, and I say the answer to that's no. I'd say that I think that the Under Secretary of Labor, Jack Henning [John F. Henning], made every effort. I think that Tom Powers made every effort, that they tried to change the rules and everything of the kind, but changing the rules and opening up procedures and making examinations possible and all, it doesn't mean a darn thing if people don't want to accomplish the objectives you have in mind, which is to give people a chance to learn the trades.

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STEWART: This, of course, was all related to the old problem of national and international offices not being able to control their locals anyway. So...

TAYLOR: So-called, except when they want to. But mostly it was related to the fact that unions are still standing up for the right to determine which individuals will be permitted to become members of the union and engage in that occupation. They alone in the country preserve a power over those who may enter their profession or occupation, even more so than the doctors of the lawyers.

STEWART: So, in general, you would say the progress among the labor unions was...

TAYLOR: Minimal.

STEWART: Minimal.

TAYLOR: There are some bright spots. There are the New York Electricians, and, you know Van Arsdale [Harry Van Arsdale, Jr.] and all the things he's done; I think we've made some headway in Detroit; I think they are finally beginning to see the light in Chicago, to some extent, and so forth and so on. But actually, you find more skilled Negro tradesmen in the South, where the unions are weak, than you do in the North, where they are not.

STEWART: To what extent did you and the people on your staff fear that the publicity you were giving to this whole area would cause many Negroes to see discrimination where, in fact, qualification was the problem? Was there a fear that you'd be cluttered with a lot of baseless gripes from people?

TAYLOR: I didn't worry about it. And we weren't flooded with a lot of baseless gripes.

STEWART: You didn't worry about it and you weren't?

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TAYLOR: No. We had a corrective action rate during the time that I was there of about close to 70 percent in contract cases and around 33 or 34 percent in cases involving the federal government. And the reason I think why it was so low there was because you get all kinds of personnel problems in government that, you know, there are procedures for handling other than through this nondiscrimination machinery.

STEWART: Was serious consideration ever given to cancelling a contract?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes. Yes...

STEWART: None ever were, though?

TAYLOR: Yes, what we did, we blacklisted some people quietly, and we suspended quite a few of them. And we had situations where we would have had to cancel them, but the fellows came along, you know, when we told them that it was just going to be that way.

I'll just give you one instance that happens to come to my mind of the Southern Research Institute down in Birmingham [Birmingham, Alabama]. They had elevated the janitors to a professional status and said that these were professionals. Well, you see, a fellow might have gotten away with it, but when you looked over the categories on the list, you see, they had Negro men and Negro women. Well, the only Negroes that were employed were men—and they had white men and white women. They brought this in to show how fair it worked, and there weren't any Negro women employed at all because they had male janitors. And I said, "Well, gosh, you know, you're just going to have to stop this research." And the people out at the NIH [National Institutes of Health] said, "Well, gosh, what they're doing is so important," that there was cancer and polio, and they were the only ones qualified. And I said, "Well, we're just going to have to let somebody else find out how to do this work outside of Birmingham. I'd just hate to think that these are the only people in the country that's qualified to do it because if it's so we ought to take more measures to protect them than what we are at the moment. They're walking around discriminating against people."

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And so this fellow who thought he couldn't do anything, well, he came back. He asked for time, and he came back in a couple of weeks, and we had found some very qualified people down in Tuskegee [Tuskegee, Alabama] and was very pleasantly surprised, you know, to find that he had some lab assistants that would do things just the way he liked them. And this was not an unusual situation, that when we made it clear, nobody ever wanted to have their contract cancelled.

And so far as these blacklistings or suspensions were concerned, not a one of them but we got through with that guy in a week or two, except one fellow down in Richmond, who didn't have any contracts at the time. And he just wrote back and said, "Well, hell, the government doesn't mean that much to me, anyway. I just won't bid anymore." So we waited about three or four months, and I had Secretary Wirtz write him a nice letter and ask him to come in, and say to him, "Gosh, you're the only fellow in America that we've got on a blacklist, and we hear you're a good American and a good Christian, and we just don't understand it." And the fellow said, "Well, I don't want to be the only one in America on the blacklist. What do I have to do to get off?" And, so he did.

STEWART: And that was the only case?

TAYLOR: Well, there were others that were blacklisted, but that was the only fellow who looked like he was going to stay any time. But I think that people....Nobody really considers themselves as prejudiced, or hating anybody else. You'd have to go pretty far to find anybody in a responsible position who'd say that he is prejudiced. He says he's treating people right according to the way he sees it.

So if you just talk along with him and give him an opportunity, why, he may not do it exactly the way you want it done, but he'll make considerable progress. That's all.

STEWART: In his book, *The Johnson Eclipse*, Leonard Baker describes the Committee meeting at which the Vice President attacked Dean Sayre [Francis B. Sayre, Jr.] for ninety minutes, as Baker describes it, "parading him as an ineffective do-gooder." This was in 1962, after a regional meeting at St. Louis [St. Louis, Missouri] which Sayre apparently felt was poorly planned and poorly executed. One, were you present at this meeting? And...

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TAYLOR: I was present at every meeting of the Committee, and there were transcripts made of every one of those meetings. And I can tell you that no one was ever attacked for ninety minutes. There were some words between Sayre and the Vice President. As I recollect it, Sayre asked a rather tenuous question, let's call it, which suggested in the way that it was asked, that the Vice President really didn't have in mind the carrying out of his responsibilities. And I think that the way it came back with the overtone of resentment was "What would you suggest that I do?" See? And now this is just impressions.

I don't even have any recollection of the words of the conversation, and I think that Sayre didn't have any real good answer, but I can tell you what was motivating Sayre. Sayre felt that the Committee did not meet frequently enough, that the members of the Committee were not kept advised, that they were not passing on things, that they were, therefore, more or less window dressing and whatnot. He wanted to be put to use and to work. And as I recollect it, the idea of regional meetings largely came as the suggestion of Sayre and Wheeler [John H. Wheeler], and people such as this, you see, who wanted to get something done. They were good men, their hearts were pure, they were working in the right direction, they were activists. And their pushing was helpful.

Actually, the Committee was not a good way of organizing that effort because if you put important people on it, they want to do something, and there was really nothing for them to do. And one of the jobs that I had was what was called care and feeding of Committee members, which was finding things for Committee members to do. I remember that one member of the Committee, who remains to this day a good friend of mine, was a rich man who had a lot of time on his hands, and he was saying the same thing. And I said, "Well, gosh, come down and be my assistant, and work in the office. And I'll give you a desk and a chair. You've got time." See? And he says, "No, I don't think I want to do this because it might just be about the time when we want to go to Europe," see, and things of this sort. But, no, I think that....

You ought to try to get a hold of those minutes because the story is right in them. They're probably in the National Archives [National Archives and Records Administration] and available to you. But you'll find that no one berated anybody for ninety minutes. The biggest blow-up we

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ever had was one that started between the President and Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy], and that lasted about only five minutes.

STEWART: That was to be my next question. That was at a meeting in the fall of '62.

TAYLOR: It might have been the fall of '62, or the spring of '63. Are you sure it was the fall of '62?

STEWART: Well, here again, according to Baker's book, in the first meeting, and then there was a subsequent meeting...

TAYLOR: I haven't seen Baker's book, I don't know anything about it. But I'll tell you the circumstances, then it's easy to determine. It was at the time that they discovered down in I think it was in Atlanta, Georgia, or North Carolina all these Negroes in the Post Office who had these Bachelor Degrees and who had never been promoted. Then also Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.], he was marching and giving them pure hell, I think in Birmingham.

And so the idea developed in the White House that if you were to do something about giving Negroes jobs, then they'd stop marching. And so then a great crash effort was developed in the government to give them jobs. And they promoted four or five fellows in the Dallas Post Office. Bobby ordered them promoted over the whites who were entitled to the jobs. And the whites finally got the jobs back in the courts. But this was done. And every Cabinet member was supposed to come in and say what he'd done. So then Bobby comes to the meeting to protect everybody, and he wants to lay the blame for everything that's happened on the Vice President, inferentially. This was it. Now this was the same fellow who had asked that certain things be gone slow on.

I can't remember the facts—I can't remember the instances, but the facts are that one of the very things that Bobby attacked the Vice President on was the thing which he, himself, requested be held back. These are the facts. And, of course, the Vice President had to accept, the blame you know, and to carry the weight of it. I won't say that he himself had to, but his office had to. Let's put it like this.

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It seems to me that part of it related to Louisiana, and to—President Kennedy issuing an order relating to construction. Another, see, after 10925, which was the executive order, there was a supplemental executive order relating to construction.

STEWART: Right. Right.

TAYLOR: When was that, in 1963?

STEWART: I'm not sure.

TAYLOR: But it's connected in there. I'd have to have my memory refreshed. I'd have to have my memory refreshed, I'm not able to deal with that. But, again, all of this is a matter of records. You don't have to rely on human memory.

STEWART: This meeting at which the Attorney General blew his stack, so to speak, this wasn't at a regular Committee meeting, was it?

TAYLOR: Yes, it was.

STEWART: Oh, it was. All of the...

TAYLOR: It was a kind of what-have-you-done thing, what-have-you-done about these things.

STEWART: Yes. And he, I assume, took a pretty active interest in the thing from then on?

TAYLOR: No more than formerly.

STEWART: What further contact did you have with him personally? Did you have regular contact?

TAYLOR: Yes, I had several....Not too regular, but I had several contacts with Bobby personally. And again all pleasure, so far as I was concerned.

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And one of the last things he did when I left was to write me a little note thanking me for everything that I had done for him and his brother. John Seiganthaler, who was his assistant, was a very close friend of mine and remains so to this day. Whatever problems he had with the Vice President, the then Vice President, did not rub off on me.

STEWART: What about your relationships with people in the White House, on the White House staff? Was it primarily Lee White that...

TAYLOR: Lee White and Andy Hatcher [Andrew T. Hatcher] were the people that I had the most to do with, and I relied on them a great deal during that state. Later on, of course, I came to know most everybody else, but Lee was the main contact person. I knew Harris Wofford [Harris L. Wofford, Jr.] when he was over there very well and had a good relationship with him. But I'd say Lee was the person who was consistently my contact, the fellow with whom I did business.

STEWART: What was your attitude, what was your personal policy about taking things to the White House? What kinds of problems did you feel should be reported?

TAYLOR: Well, after I became executive—of course, I didn't have any particular reason to go over there except when I was asked before I became executive vice chairman. Then when I became executive vice chairman, I took over there things that I thought affected us overall politically, or that was a little more serious and I ought not make a decision on all by myself, that...But usually I've been pretty good at running whatever it was I had to run, and so I usually just about every two or three months would call Lee up and say, "Let's have lunch, and let me tell you what I've been doing so you will know. And you ask some questions." And then after that I might send him a piece of paper, just kind of summarizing it.

STEWART: This whole problem, the political problem, of so-called white backlash, when did this, or did it ever, become very significant to you insofar as the operations of the Committee?

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TAYLOR: My work operation? Not at all. I've never considered it as a problem because it's always been there, and it's always going to be there as long as there are races and divisions. And, oh, you can give it more prominence at one stage or less at another. And the people that you are dealing with are fundamentally unaffected by it. Men who exercise great authority in their companies, once they make a decision and it goes down the line, why, the backlash doesn't mean a great deal. I mean, the people may be voting one way, but they're working together very harmoniously, eating and drinking together, carrying on their business with the people whom they have business dealings with.

STEWART: During this time, or at least till mid-1963, the Kennedy Administration in general was criticized for relying on executive action and not putting as much emphasis as was put in legislative program, a civil rights legislative program. How do you feel, if at all, your work related to this decision to rely on executive action?

TAYLOR: Well, I think the decision to rely on executive action was made on the theory that they wanted to hold the South and get reelected, and that then they were going to try to get the legislation passed the second time around. But it was Martin Luther King and the dogs in Birmingham that forced the production of the civil rights bill and made it possible for them to do it. But I don't think they would have gotten the civil rights bill, I think Mr. Kennedy couldn't have gotten it.

STEWART: At all, you mean?

TAYLOR: At all.

STEWART: Why do you say that?

TAYLOR: That's a judgment.

STEWART: Hmm?

TAYLOR: That's a judgment.

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STEWART: No real hard and fast reasons for it?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes, I've got very good reasons for it.

STEWART: You wouldn't want to go into them now?

TAYLOR: Well, I made a poll, and I guess other people made polls too, but my poll convinced me he couldn't get it.

STEWART: Polling the people in the hinterlands?

TAYLOR: What?

STEWART: That he just wouldn't have gotten in through the...

TAYLOR: You must remember that this was at a time when the Congress was staying in session to watch the President and when books like *The Deadlock of Democracy* were being written, and that maybe we should reform Congress. This was the situation in '63. There was no power in the President to get that kind of legislation out of the Congress.

STEWART: What basically, changed, bringing it about in '64? What was the big...

TAYLOR: Well, now you're asking...Let's make that the subject of another discussion.

STEWART: Okay.

TAYLOR: All right. And I'm afraid I'm going to have to close off for now.

STEWART: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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