

David L. Hackett Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 10/21/1970
Administrative Information

Creator: David L. Hackett
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Biographical Note

Hackett was a personal friend of Robert F. Kennedy [RFK]; a staff member of the John F. Kennedy [JFK] for President campaign in 1960; a Special Assistant to Attorney General RFK; the Executive Director of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime from 1961 to 1962; and a staff member of RFK's Senate campaign in 1964 and presidential campaign in 1968. In this interview Hackett discusses working in the Justice Department under Attorney General RFK, specifically on the issues of juvenile delinquency and poverty; getting the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act passed and processing the related grant applications; traveling with RFK to impoverished areas; experiencing friction with R. Sargent Shriver, Jr., as head of President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty; and RFK's approach to poverty programs, among other issues.

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Second Oral History Interview

With

DAVID L. HACKETT

October 21, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By John W. Douglas

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program of the Kennedy Library

DOUGLAS: Dave, do you want to state again the conditions under which this interview is taking place? And when it's to be released?

HACKETT: What was that?

DOUGLAS: The previous one was that it would not be released until after your death and the death of Mrs. Robert Kennedy [Ethel Skakel Kennedy].*

HACKETT: Right.

DOUGLAS: Well, let's start Dave with your role in the Justice Department, when you were asked to join it and what your first assignment was.

HACKETT: After the election, and after we had a vacation in Acapulco, and prior to the

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* These restrictions have been superseded by Mr. Hackett's 1991 legal agreement.

Inauguration, Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] asked me to look into juvenile delinquency. So I started to work on that working out of his office, prior to the Inauguration.

DOUGLAS: What was that office?

HACKETT: That was a little office—you went through his big one, then there were small offices way in the back.

DOUGLAS: In the Justice Department.

HACKETT: In the Justice Department, yeah.

DOUGLAS: Do you know why he was interested in juvenile delinquency?

HACKETT: Well, his sister Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] had previously spent time in the Justice Department working on it and she had some influence on him. But I think it was an area which he thought was a problem without knowing a great deal about it.

DOUGLAS: Did he give you any specific instructions as to what he wanted you to do?

HACKETT: No. No, what I did was I spent the, really next three months, or almost six months, just talking to people, starting within the Department of

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Justice. I went to the Bureau of Prisons and the FBI and began to talk to people in HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] and the various federal agencies—because I knew nothing about it. And I certainly didn't know anything about what the federal government involvement was.

But it is interesting at that time there were maybe ten people in the whole federal government who were involved with youth and youth related programs. What was very striking was the lack of coordination between any of the agencies, that was true even within the Justice Department. The Bureau of Prisons never talked to the FBI and vice versa. Yet, they both had a jurisdiction which they should do something about.

One of the early things right away that in talking to the Bureau of Prisons, for example, we did was get a halfway house program going. The Bureau of Prisons had been thinking about it for a

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long time and no previous Attorney General had paid any attention to them or to their problems. Through Bob we got a half million dollars appropriation to the Bureau of Prisons for a halfway house program. That was the initial thing that happened; it happened very quickly.

DOUGLAS: Did you deal with any foundations at all?

HACKETT: I talked to everybody who'd been involved within the government and outside the government. We talked to, very early, the Ford Foundation who during the fifties had what they called a "grey area" program with David Hunter [David R. Hunter] and Brown [Dyke Brown]. Dyke Brown was in charge there; we talked to them. We talked to Lloyd Ohlin [Lloyd E. Ohlin] very early.

DOUGLAS: How do you spell it?

HACKETT: O-h-l-i-n. And Dick Cloward [Richard A. Cloward] who had written a book on delinquency and opportunity.

So I tried to talk to as many people as possible. I just very simply asked the question, if you had thirty million dollars what would you do with it to solve the problem of delinquency?

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My initial job was to become educated and then try to educate Bob as to the scope of the problem and how the federal government should involve itself in it. What subsequently happened is that we recommended really two things: We set up a Cabinet-level committee which became known as the President's [John F. Kennedy] committee on delinquency [Commission on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime].

DOUGLAS: When was that set up?

HACKETT: That was set up in 1961. Concurrent with that there'd been a bill, a delinquency bill, that started with Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] which they hadn't been able to pass. We redrafted that bill and due to Bob's involvement we got the bill through Congress. We have to remember that thirty million dollars in those days was a good deal of money. So in 1961 we ended up with a juvenile delinquency bill which was in the amount of thirty million dollars and a Cabinet-level committee—fifteen of them from the Labor Department, HEW, and Justice—with the Attorney General as chairman. This was due to, as I earlier said, that there were four or five different agencies within HEW and within

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Labor and within Justice that had some concern and some mandate to do something about youth-related problems. This was an attempt to bring those agencies to work together on a cooperative basis.

DOUGLAS: In the bill that was enacted, what were its primary features?

HACKETT: Well, it had two sections, one “training” and one “demonstration.” The significant part was the “demonstration” part, which was roughly fifteen million dollars. What we decided to do with that was—since delinquency, there is no single cause for it—was begin to mobilize within a city all of the resources available to attack it across the board. The word “comprehensive” was one we used a good deal in those days; a “comprehensive” approach to it.

Basically, our concept was that any particular city who wanted money from the federal government would have to come up with a demonstrative plan that they could pull together all their resources. We requested

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planning grants so that anybody who wanted to qualify for our money had to demonstrate that they could plan for up to twelve months to show how they could attack the problems across the board. We ended up giving sixteen planning grants to sixteen different cities across the country.

DOUGLAS: In working out the bill, was it modified as a result of discussions with Bob Kennedy, or was it pretty much as you had disclosed?

HACKETT: Well, I think that he always left us a good deal to our own devices, but he was involved, I would say, from the very beginning. I talked to people during that first six months trying to decide what to do. Maybe once a month I’d take him.... We went to Harlem, for example, and visited people there. So he was involved during the whole process and we didn’t really do anything without his okay. We developed the approach among ourselves and then certainly cleared it with him prior to doing anything.

He was instrumental in getting the

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bill through. It would have never gotten through without him.

DOUGLAS: Who worked with you Dave?

HACKETT: Well, the key person probably was Lloyd Ohlin. We brought Lloyd Ohlin in from Columbia [Columbia University]. He went in as a special assistant to Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] who was Secretary of HEW. Dick Boone [Richard W. Boone] from the Ford Foundation came to work directly with me. We had a budget of \$250,000—the President’s committee did. I tried to get the best people available. But Lloyd Ohlin was the key architect of both the bill and the philosophy behind the program.

DOUGLAS: When you went to Harlem, what was Bob’s reaction? What did you do specifically and how did he react to it?

HACKETT: Well, I think that he and I were quite similar in that we'd never been involved with close poverty before, and certainly never had been involved with—up-close—Negroes. I was shocked as I began to see what the conditions were around the country and I think he certainly was.

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DOUGLAS: Do you remember when you went up there?

HACKETT: Yeah, I'd met some people prior, and we talked to some gangs. It was set up by a member of the New York Youth Corps, Aaron Schnais, who ultimately came to work for us. But he'd been working with youth gangs and they were very colorful. He arranged for the Attorney General to visit with a number of these gangs and go out and talk to them. I think, at that time we were very green in understanding the problems, this was, maybe, his initial exposure to some of the problems as they were in the country. His reaction to them was similar to mine, and we both just learning.

DOUGLAS: Well, was he shaken?

HACKETT: No, I don't think he was shaken, I think we had a tendency to think of young people as like when we were young and sort of looked upon the solutions of their problems as like the solutions to our own. So, the conversations at the beginning were, perhaps, naïve in talking to them. The solutions to their

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problems were at that time perhaps naïve.

DOUGLAS: Was the bill, as finally passed, identical or virtually similar to the one that you proposed or were there some major changes?

HACKETT: No, there was not major change of the bill. I think that the key words.... We really just changed the preamble to the bill in which we began to use words like "total." I think that Congress passed it without really understanding what those words meant or what we meant by those words. Subsequently we had a real problem with Congress on that problem. I think most people in those days wanted to take that thirty million dollars and put it into Boys' Clubs [Boys Club of America] and various things like that. What we were talking about was a wholly new approach.

We felt that you could spend thirty million dollars in one city and not have any impact whatsoever. We were trying to bring about a major change in how the federal government operated towards these problems, and also how local communities operated.

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I don't think that anybody outside of the small group that we worked with really understood what we were up to, and we suffered two or three years later because of this misinterpretation, misunderstanding.

DOUGLAS: Well, after the act was passed in September '61 do you recall what happened? I think there was a period there when you were making grants.

HACKETT: We made grants. As I say, we made sixteen grants in sixteen cities. There were two, perhaps, critical grants we made which had a real impact; one was Mobilization for Youth on the lower east side of New York, and the second one was in Harlem. Well, perhaps a third one which had some real significance: in Los Angeles we saw that right away one of the major problems was all the jurisdictions. In Los Angeles we—developing their comprehensive program—persuaded them to put together the joint powers agreement, and we set up a board between the state, the county, and the city, and between two school

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systems, one in the county and one in the city, to administer the planning grants. This was going towards the whole concept of trying to break down the number of jurisdictions and pulling together all the jurisdictions to work on a particular problem. I think that was rather significant. But the two major ones were HARYOU-ACT [Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited-Associated Community Teams] and Mobilization for Youth.

DOUGLAS: Dave, in passing, on the grant applications, what were the mechanics of it? What was your role? What was the role of the Attorney General? How did you go about processing the applications?

HACKETT: We had to set up a twenty-one man review committee to the President's committee. Then in both the training and demonstration areas we set up technical review panels. So, the proposals would come in, they would be reviewed by the staff, and then they'd be reviewed by the technical review panels. In almost every instance, I think there was only one, perhaps two instances, where politics played a role. One was in Houston where we made a grant

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that we might not have made on technical grounds. In most every case they were technically reviewed by experts in the field. Then the grants committee okayed them—the three secretaries—and they were made. At that time the Mobilization for Youth one was made at the White House which was the first real commitment on the part of the federal government to this type of problem, which was fairly historic. The others were made, certainly, in the Justice Department by Bob.

DOUGLAS: Did you have any other studies or planning sessions going on to determine

where else you should move?

HACKETT: During that period, the first couple years of the program, we learned a great deal, first of all, about the federal government and how it operated, and, certainly about cities and how they operated. Then, thirdly, perhaps the major thing we learned was how ineffective all federal programs were in really reaching the poor. There've been a great many critics of the program, that it was not successful; that's probably right.

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The success of it is what we learned from it.

In November of 1962 we set up a committee, which I think was very significant. The Peace Corps had been very successful and Bob thought that we should set up a "domestic peace corps." So we did. We set up a Cabinet-level committee of all the people having any domestic programs. I became executive director of that also. We pulled together an independent staff of people from the various agencies to study the best ways to adapt the overseas peace corps concept to this country.

Now the significance of that was, again, following the philosophy: to achieve anything within the federal government what you had to have was really three things. You have to have the power of the President; you have to have an independent staff of professionals, drawing from both within the federal government and outside of it, and, third, you have to have some money. In the development of this "domestic peace corps,"

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this task force, we had all three. We had the power of the presidency. For example, during the course of that study—which ended up in legislation—we had four or five full domestic Cabinet meetings on Saturday where the bill was used by the domestic Cabinet which was significant.

Our idea, basically, was to expand the President's committee—where we only had three secretaries—expand that concept. And through the domestic service corps prove to us that you could—even though this was a very small program; it was five million dollars—effectively help the decision-making process within the federal government. That it could be done; that it would work if these three criteria were met. There had been hundreds and hundreds of Presidential committees on various subjects, which never did anything and never accomplished anything.

DOUGLAS: Going back to what the grants were supposed to accomplish under the Juvenile Delinquency Control Act [Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act]; what kind of things were the two

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projects which you funded? What were they supposed to do?

HACKETT: Basically, each community would get a planning grant on the order of a hundred to two thousand dollars to plan for a year. Then after that year they would go into "demonstration." What the programs involved with education and employment.... I think most of the programs that we have today got their origins in this delinquency program, a great many of them came from the Mobilization for Youth effort. There was the project's legal services, the halfway house concept, the decentralizing in welfare departments, and services to the poor. Most of the Manpower [Training and Development Act of 1962] programs got their origins in this program. There were many, many programs. The concept, again, being that there wasn't just a single program, it was a question of how you administer a great number of programs. So we ran the gamut of programs from employment, to education, to legal services, to....

DOUGLAS: Was that really the first of the legal services

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type programs that have now emerged into the Legal Services [Program]?

HACKETT: Yeah, I would think that most people who have written on it would give credit to.... Most of the programs that are in OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] now and almost all in Model Cities [Program] got their ideas from the JD [Juvenile Delinquency] program.

DOUGLAS: Do you recall who came up with the Legal Service idea?

HACKETT: No, but I can check on that, I can check on that.

DOUGLAS: Do you recall discussions with the Attorney General about that?

HACKETT: No, not specifically.

DOUGLAS: Well, the National Service Corps legislation never got enacted?

HACKETT: No, we introduced it as separate legislation and it got through the Senate; it didn't get through the House, but it ultimately was included as a part of OEO, the economic portion of that bill.

DOUGLAS: It was blocked in 1963, got through the Senate

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then.

HACKETT: Right.

DOUGLAS: When did a task force start to work on drafting ideas?

HACKETT: At the very beginning, say, in 1960, as I said before, there were maybe ten people involved in youth. They were very uncoordinated and they were doing fairly traditional types of services, so that by 1963, I think the President kind of got the idea to mount a war on poverty. We, during this three year period, had put together a group of that I called “the guerillas” and we used to meet in the Justice Department maybe, once every two or three weeks. The discussions were based on the experiences we’d had in these sixteen cities with these “demonstration” projects. These people were drawn from various federal departments—we had a couple of people from Labor and HEW, people familiar with Indian problems, etc.—to examine some of our successes and some of our failures and, starting

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to think about a larger federal involvement mainly based on the attitudes of our present program.

So when President Kennedy began to think about a war on poverty we had this group and we had done a good deal of work on the idea ourselves, really independent from our own experiences. We discussed this with the Attorney General. He was aware of what we were doing, and so was Heller [Walter W. Heller], who President Kennedy put in charge of the task force to investigate it. We sent him a memorandum on November sixth giving our ideas on what ought to be done and they were very specific ideas.

DOUGLAS: Dave, can I go back just a minute? Do you have any knowledge as to how the President reached his decision to get involved in this effort?

HACKETT: No, I really don’t. I would think, though, that Bob’s involvement with the types of things that he was doing, through the JD efforts and just through their conversations that that had some influence on him.

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I can remember seeing one of his.... Just writing down the work “poverty,” “war on poverty” on the yellow sheet. But I had no idea exactly how he arrived at it.

DOUGLAS: Well, in ’63, now, do you have any sense or feeling or knowledge as to how the Attorney General’s attitude was evolving, changing in the whole poverty area?

HACKETT: Well, I think, yes. Because I, obviously, was devoting my full time to this and was very deeply, deeply involved. I thought it was a complex problem, there was no question about it. So, when he would make an award or he would announce a grant and have to make a statement, I would always be

nervous about what he might say. We were talking about the development of a comprehensive program and we were talking about coordination and we were talking about involvement of the poor in this process. They were all fairly new ideas. He would always surprise me because when he did make these announcements and short speeches and statements, he

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would always be current or ahead of us. I think there's no question that as we learned, he learned also. I think ultimately on hindsight, he had a lot more understanding than any of us.

DOUGLAS: Who else worked with you in Justice?

HACKETT: Really nobody else in Justice. Well, Jules Sugarman [Jule M. Sugarman], who was in the Bureau of Prisons, was very helpful. He had been experienced in working at the Budget Bureau, and experienced with legislation. He was perhaps the only person that we worked with.

DOUGLAS: The Juvenile Delinquency Control Act, who did the drafting of that?

HACKETT: Well, Jules Sugarman, and Lloyd Ohlin. Jules Sugarman did all of the legal parts and Lloyd Ohlin did the substantive parts.

DOUGLAS: Well, could you describe the memo that you sent to Mr. Heller? Maybe we should send this over to the Library with the recording.

HACKETT: All right. We wrote two memorandums, one we sent to the Attorney General. They're both dated November sixth, but the one to

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Heller was in response to a memorandum that he'd sent to the various departments entitled the '64 Legislative Programs for Wider Participation and Prosperity, that was the title of it. Very simply what we recommended was based on two major experiences, which I've referred to. One is our whole involvement with the JD program and the second, the whole involvement with the "domestic peace corps" task force. What we recommended was that we were not going to involve ourselves—that they were going to involve themselves—in a "war on poverty" at this time, basically because we just didn't know enough. One of the major problems with the federal government itself—what we felt had to happen is that we had to bring about reform within the federal government. We thought the best way of doing this would be to set up a Cabinet-level committee very much based on the "domestic peace corps" framework, appoint an executive director of that committee with a staff to study how the federal government should involve

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itself with this major, major problem, and rather than just have all talk and analysis put on four, five, or six “demonstration” projects in various parts of the country attacking particular problems.

DOUGLAS: What did you visualize as the role of the existing departments?

HACKETT: We envisioned—most departments would be on the Cabinet-level committee—they would appoint a special assistant to the Secretary who would represent the Secretary and that they would be a staff drawn from the various agencies who would compose the staff. They, in effect, would become a decision-making group. For example, the rationale behind this was that one of the two real problems.... One was the Office of Education which was archaic and the Department of Labor, which was also; particularly the employment service.... It’s the question of how you bring about change in the employment service and one way you don’t do it is to look at Labor and say that the employment service is archaic and ought

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to be completely changed. We thought the likely way of doing it would be if we brought the Department of Labor into this committee, and presented to that committee the employment problem as a part of a much larger problem, that the decision be made by the various departments, that changes ought to be made in the various federal programs. We thought this was as much an educational process because we knew what programs we felt should be changed, radically changed.

We thought this was a process by which, over a twelve-month period, we could begin to expose some of the real problems. It was conceived that if the decision-making thing were illuminated the United States would make a decision to bring about the changes, then also come up with a bill that made some sense. We envisioned that this, in effect, become a permanent thing, that the bill be written around this Cabinet-level committee. We thought this would become self-evident as time went on.

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DOUGLAS: Dave, were the memos accepted by the Attorney General and others as the basis for the meeting?

HACKETT: No, I think not, there was no question, the Budget Bureau was very supportive of Bob’s whole approach to it. They’d been involved in it and they, of course, were frustrated by the lack of coordination within the federal government. They knew that we had the most experience; they’re actually the ones that got us involved in it. I think there’s no question that our concept, perhaps not in the form that we presented it, but in some form, would have prevailed; there’s no question in my mind about it.

What we were really talking about it that—if you use St. Louis as one example—what somebody would do is come to the federal government department by department, to get its money. This was not in the best interest, we thought, of St. Louis, who was complaining about the federal government being made without the knowledge of the major,

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or whatever nor in the best interest for the federal government, and certainly not in the best interest of the people for whom those programs really were meant, because it was fragmented. [Interruption]

DOUGLAS: Can you say whether or not the programs that were adopted by the President and the Attorney General were before the President's statement?

HACKETT: No, I think they certainly weren't adopted by the statement, November sixth, but I think that they would have been. I think that our approach would have been much more serious than the one that prevailed simply because I think the Attorney General of all the Cabinet members, was the closest to what we had done and I think that our approach was cautious. Both substantive-wise and politically, I think, it was correct. I think we would be very nervous if any big agency were going to solve the problems of poverty in this country, which subsequently President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] did which we thought, critically, was a useless aid.

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DOUGLAS: Did Heller respond to your November '63 memo?

HACKETT: No, but the Budget Bureau did and the Budget Bureau, as I said earlier, was very supportive of the effort.

DOUGLAS: Who did you deal with in Budget?

HACKETT: The key person we got was Bill—I'll think of his name. He's now at the University of Chicago.

DOUGLAS: Okay, we can come back to that.
How about that Presidential task force and the floods in eastern Kentucky? Do you remember anything about that? Apparently there was something done about that in October, 1963. Does that strike a bell?

HACKETT: No. That was.... No.

DOUGLAS: You didn't have anything to do with this effort?

HACKETT: I think what strikes a bell there is really another example of what we were

advocating with a particular problem like that: to put together a task force that made some sense. It should have the power, again, of the presidency; it did have an independent staff to investigate the problems. I think this is

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where the Attorney General began to get exposed to larger.... JD is very, perhaps, confining. It's considered by most people to be a very small program and I think we got criticized for thinking of it as a much larger program. I think the "domestic peace corps" began to expose both ourselves and the Attorney General to much wider problems: the problems of the Indians and the problems of Appalachia, the problems of rural poverty as well as the urban problems—urban poverty.

By the time of the Heller memorandum both our groups had been expanded a great deal by the number of people we involved in our conversations, to a much wider and broader number of problems. Again, I think that both he and we were very struck by the ineffectiveness of the federal government.

DOUGLAS: Did you travel with Bob when he was Attorney General, Dave?

HACKETT: I traveled only with him when we went into areas of our concern. I never traveled with him on other problem areas.

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DOUGLAS: Do you recall how many trips you would have made, say, before November '63?

HACKETT: Oh, a good many, a good many. I sometimes would travel with him on other areas. I went to Toronto once. He traveled a good deal with us. He went to Los Angeles, the Mexican-Americans, and Appalachia.

DOUGLAS: Do you remember when he went to Los Angeles?

HACKETT: Yes, that was in 1962. I think this is where, again, both of us became aware of the Mexican-American problem, which was then completely neglected.

DOUGLAS: Do you recall anything he said after those tours?

HACKETT: Yeah, I think that his reaction was very similar to ours in that it was one really of shock. I can remember very distinctly his beginning to talk about the riots and that what we were going to have them in this country were riots. It didn't take very much genius; it's just the fact that we went into ghettos and heretofore nobody else, really, had done it. As he became exposed to Watts and Harlem and Appalachia it didn't take a genius to figure

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out that we were.... But nobody really, at that time, listened and nobody was, again, very concerned about these problems.

DOUGLAS: Did you go to Watts in '62?

HACKETT: Yes.

DOUGLAS: You also went into the Mexican-American....?

HACKETT: Right, east Los Angeles, because we had a grant to Los Angeles. So we were exposed to those two very distinctly.

DOUGLAS: Well, what would he say to you? Would he say, "This is absolutely unbelievable," or "It's outrageous," or would he just shake his head, or what kinds of things did he say after....?

HACKETT: Well, I think, all those things he mentioned, because he'd been very involved, of course, helping there so much in the South, in the problems of the South. But I think that anybody who saw these problems would come away from them very displeased—and, I think, some frustration. I think that we were able, and I think what he agreed with us on is what we had to come up with. One was to talk about them and sometimes really, "We're going to do something about them."

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He was very action-oriented so he would always, after each visit, be extremely helpful to us in doing our day-to-day work, strictly between departments, in getting things done.

DOUGLAS: Dave, do you remember the birthday party they had for Bob in the Justice Department in November '63? It was the largest there in the Attorney General's office? I went to that and I must say I didn't really know a great deal about Bob at that time, but it struck me that he was quite depressed. Did that come through to you? Or not?

HACKETT: Was that before the assassination?

DOUGLAS: Yes, it was. It was the late afternoon before there was a reception at the White House for the Judiciary.

HACKETT: I can't remember. Why did you think he was depressed?

DOUGLAS: I didn't know.

HACKETT: No, I can't remember.

DOUGLAS: Well, after President Kennedy's death, how long was it before Bob got back into the poverty—

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these areas?

HACKETT: Well, it's difficult because I'm not sure really, but I think that we got back into it very quickly. I was his representative on the second task force which Sargent Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] headed up. President Johnson very quickly announced that he was going to have a "war on poverty" and very quickly announced that Sargent Shriver was the head. So, although he didn't directly get involved in it immediately, we did. He still had tremendous influence and we knew that they were on a different type of program; it was a rearguard action we were fighting, but he was able, through that period, really using us as his staff, to accomplish a great deal. Really, what we accomplished was to get Title II of the poverty bill written which we, in effect, drafted and wrote.

DOUGLAS: What was that Title about?

HACKETT: Well, Title II, basically, had two arguments to it. One was that local communities would organize themselves into one representative

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group and that the federal government through OEO would organize itself. The local community would come up with a comprehensive program that the federal government would review the program and fund it. We saw Title II as being, basically, encouragement to the community to organize itself to eradicate poverty.

Secondly, it really requested of that community that they involve the poor somehow in that process. One significant phrase that came from it was the "maximum feasibility"—"maximum participation"—of the poor in that process. We envisioned that OEO not operate programs and that Title II really be the heart of it. We wrote in the elementary education bill that education money going through that bill should be coordinated through the Community Action Program in the city.

This, of course, became very controversial, because what Shriver decided to do was to operate programs and rather than being a coordinator,

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he would, in effect, mount programs such as the Job Corps. Once he'd decided that, the chance of coordination of federal programs, which Title II would have permitted, were then impossible.

DOUGLAS: Well, what was the basic difference? Was that....?

HACKETT: Well, we saw, again, based on all our experiences—and again this is the way that bill.... If President Kennedy stayed in office I think that after a year's experience this Title II would have been what the poverty bill would have been, which would have been basically, a coordinating mechanism at the federal level that would have had very simple criteria going out to cities. That criteria really would have two major points. One is to mobilize all your resources into one plan and secondly to involve the poor in the process. The plan would then come into the federal government and be reviewed by an independent staff and each piece of the program would be reviewed by the appropriate agency.

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But a decision would be made by the federal government in total on the program so the responsibility on the part of the city and the responsibility on the part of the federal government would be clear.

What happened, in effect, was that Title II, because of Bob's influence, was really, in effect forced upon Shriver. I think if he had had his way he would not have included it in the bill.

DOUGLAS: On what do you base that?

HACKETT: We had put a JD program into Chicago, for example, and even in those very early days, it caused some political repercussions. In certain other cities we ran into—and particularly Chicago where the mayor did not encourage participation on the part of local communities within the Chicago area. We'd heard some rumbles about that. I think secondly that he really wanted to start from scratch and put his own imprint on the whole thing. He was, one, completely inexperienced

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about domestic problems. And was actually naïve in his approach to it. He had to make some very immediate decisions, and I think that he made the wrong ones.

DOUGLAS: What were the major decisions that you felt were not correct?

HACKETT: Well, a major decision which I think has had a tremendous impact subsequently.... I think that, in 1964, if Johnson had followed our

approach and maybe have a year of study with some major demonstration projects to learn really how the federal government ought to involve itself, rather than quickly launch a program in haste, we might be in much better shape than we are today.

I think what Shriver decided to do.... He had two choices. One was to become a coordinator and a changer of both how the federal government operated—and how local communities operated, and begin to set up a basic decision-making framework between the federal government and local communities. Then he would have

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impact on all federal spending within the United States through this mechanism. I think that was one choice. The second choice was to begin to operate his own program and not be the coordinator; he chose the second one. The best example of that was leading in the Justice Department with Bob Kennedy and Willard Wirtz [W. Willard Wirtz]; they persuaded Shriver through the Task Force [on Urban Politics] to set up a Job Corps based on the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] concept which was, in our judgment, outmoded. He was sold on the “fresh air” concept which really didn’t make an awful lot of sense, but he was sold on it and so told Willard Wirtz that he was going to run the Job Corps.

DOUGLAS: Who sold him on the Job Corps?

HACKETT: I think that Adam Yarmolinsky and Pat Moynihan [Daniel Patrick Moynihan] sold him on it. I think that he had his own people that he listened to on that Task Force. He tolerated us and our groups and, as I say, tolerated to the extent that he was forced to include VISTA [Volunteers in Service to America], which he did not

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want to do. Bob Kennedy’s great force was responsible for VISTA being a part of it, and really, I think, forced Title II to be a part of it.

DOUGLAS: Well, why was Shriver opposed to including the VISTA?

HACKETT: Well, again, he was against that whole concept, because, I think, he saw the overseas Peace Corps program as being uniquely his and uniquely successful and he really didn’t want to have a same concept operated by other people, perhaps, in this country. But he was definitely opposed to it during the early stages of its study and he was opposed to having it included in the bill.

But, I think, following through, that the significance of the decision made in 1964 is what has happened since: we knew this was going to happen. We argued: As soon as you set up an operating agency which is considered to be a competitor to HEW and the various federal agencies then you can’t coordinate. Legislatively, legally OEO had the res-

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possibility to coordinate the federal government's efforts in poverty, and we knew that, from our experience, one agency cannot coordinate another agency. The only way you can coordinate is to follow our approach of a federal cabinet with an independent staff, some money, and the power of the presidency to force that coordination. What happened with OEO, in its brief history, is that it could not coordinate various other federal agencies. Very quickly Model Cities came into being, which is another attempt of having HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] be the coordinator of the federal government's effort. So, I think we've gone through maybe seven years, or six years of sort of frustration where we don't really have successful programs locally. We have not made, obviously, any significant progress in these areas.

I think the argument that money was the answer—all we needed was more money—was not an accurate one. So, I think, in effect what Shriver's

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decision did was to lose six years. The people writing the poverty program achieved some success. There's been involvement. Many more people are now aware that the problem exists, but I think he did a great disservice to all domestic programs in the choice he took in that decision in 1964.

DOUGLAS: Dave, were there arguments back and forth between Shriver and Bob Kennedy?

HACKETT: Yes, I think so. Yeah, I think that there's no question. There were very short conversations and I think that Bob won every argument. I think that there's no question about the two people who would.... And this was the period where Bob Kennedy was not as influential as he was prior, obviously. Sargent Shriver, when he came head to head, would back off, and then Bob would win. The proof of it is the Title II, just to be included in that program.

DOUGLAS: Well, on the other hand though the basic economics which you and Bob were urging

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and the coordinating role, apparently went down the drain.

HACKETT: It went down the drain; we really couldn't push for that because President Johnson was President. The only way that would have worked was you would have to have the President of the United States take an active role as really being the convener of the domestic cabinet and relying directly on the staff to bring about change. I don't think that Bob Kennedy—where he could have do it with President Kennedy—could not have done it with President Johnson, so there was no hope of that course being followed.

DOUGLAS: I gather that Shriver was opposed to that aspect of it. He wanted to offer it as a program.

HACKETT: That's right, yeah. I think that's the critical....

DOUGLAS: Well, did he...

HACKETT: He could have. We argued—I argued. On six or seven occasions I tried to persuade him to take that course of action. He'd become President Johnson's special assistant and he'd

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become the coordinator and convener of the domestic cabinet.

DOUGLAS: Did President Johnson have a position on this or did Shriver persuade him?

HACKETT: Well, I think President Johnson didn't have a position.

DOUGLAS: Did or did not?

HACKETT: Did not. I don't think I've ever reached him. I think that Sargent Shriver could have done anything that he had wanted to in this early formation. He certainly could have influenced the Task Force; he certainly could have made the decision and had it work. Bob Kennedy could not have done it, but I think Sargent Shriver could have. And, as I say, I think that we'd be in much better shape today.... The irony of the whole thing is that President Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] has, in effect, done exactly what we had recommended. He has put as much teeth into it, but he had a domestic cabinet now. OEO now is divesting itself of operating programs and it's going to become a research arm. What, in effect, we have done is waste,

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in my judgment, six or seven years, and an awful lot of money in the process.

DOUGLAS: Of course if you spread those out, as the Nixon Administration is doing to the various cabinets, you would have a way of daring them to.

HACKETT: I talked to Rumsfeld [Donald H. Rumsfeld] and, again, the irony is that he and I.... I think, if he had complete power within the Administration he would follow this concept through because it's very—it was then and it is now—a sensible and logical. This is something we've got to move towards, which is basically to have a framework whereby the various jurisdictions at the local level can work

with the federal government, and vice versa. The greatest effort was to get that framework within which decisions could be made. That would be “opportunity,” and that was the one that was....

DOUGLAS: Well, were there differences on the substantive nature of the program, or was it just differences with Shriver on the way the procedures would be worked? In other words, were there differences

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about whether it should be manpower training or job training or VISTA or neighborhood legal services, things of that kind?

HACKETT: Well, I think there was. He never fully understood; he was apprehensive about the Community Action concept. He thought that would be nothing but problems. I think that the Community Action concept was never fully explained to anybody, and “participation of the poor” was never fully explained to anybody.

It became a question of massive employment programs, guaranteed incomes, versus Community Action and that was never the issue. The issue was.... You would get arguments, discussions on which one of these substantive program areas you would implement on a massive basis—within the framework of the domestic cabinet. [Interruption]

In our concept it was never an issue, either one or the other, it was a question of

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decision making on any of those programs within a framework that we were trying to establish. We were looking for a coordinating mechanism, a rational decision-making framework within a city and within the federal government and then between the federal government, and between the cities, this was all. I don't think he ever understood that.

Therefore, I think he did see—which was in effect what happened—the Job Corps versus Community Action. He saw Community Action as one program among many. That's, again, why we felt that the year's study was an education, was absolutely essential. Before you launch a huge program you should very carefully think through what the implications are. I think Bob Kennedy understood it.

DOUGLAS: Dave, you worked in the '64 campaign in New York. Thereafter you weren't in government, I guess?

HACKETT: Right.

DOUGLAS: Then, during the period that you were not in

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government and that Bob was in the Senate, did you work with him on

some of the poverty areas and the youth in Indian—and minorities?

HACKETT: No, no, not really. I think that we had maybe some influence and I did work briefly on the Bedford-Stuyvesant concept; I think the Bedford-Stuyvesant concept really came from his experience in these programs.

DOUGLAS: Did he talk to you about that concept?

HACKETT: Yeah. I think that would be more sophisticated than HARYOU-ACT and HARYOU-ACT was more sophisticated than Mobilization for Youth, but I think that was a national progression. I went to the whole area of participation to say nothing of the corporate group which was in Bedford-Stuyvesant which was black. The innovation there is another thing we learned through our whole process. It's one thing to set up a corporate group within a low-income community, it's a question of developing successful programs, and, of course, most of the programs were unsuccessful, particularly if the group got the huge sums of money which HARYOU-

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ACT got. They learned very quickly they couldn't administer that money effectively.

Bedford-Stuyvesant was, again, based on a lot of our experiences and failures. I think the tragedy, perhaps, is that we had done something, and we had tried something, and we had learned from that subject, and we ended up with a cadre of people including Bob Kennedy; he was the key to the whole thing. Then we had some knowledge of how then to proceed. I think the crucial thing was which way to proceed on it. I think that he would have won out on his approach to it which I think was the most the rational, logical one and in the long-run would have had some impact.

DOUGLAS: Well, if you had to sum up that approach, how would you describe it?

HACKETT: Actually restructuring the government. This was the major approach that we really developed.

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It wasn't really a question of money because there has been sufficient money. I think most of that money is wasted. Therefore what had to be done was to restructure at the local level how the government operated and how it reached and restructured the federal level. Then, within that restructuring, within the new type of framework and the new type of relationship between the federal and the state and the county and the city and the, probably the Harlems, there would be a new type of relationship.

So the critical thing was to look at the restructuring and the reorganization. Secondly, is to develop programs within that framework that would have some impact.

DOUGLAS: When you say "restructuring," what do you have in mind?

HACKETT: Well, again, based on our experience, the actual type of restructuring would have come out of a domestic cabinet meeting with an independent staff beginning to

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analyze programs within the federal government, where they failed and how they could be made better. If you're talking about employment, for example, how many different programs are there within different agencies within the federal government that impinge on _____, not just in the Labor Department? If you begin to think about it, when you set up a new agency how do you begin to coordinate all of the various pieces? We didn't necessarily have the answer but we felt the way to arrive at that answer, was to bring together those people responsible for domestic programs into a rational framework. You could not do this in a Cabinet meeting because each person would think of his own self interests and investments; you have to have an independent staff.

We felt, from this process of setting up a Cabinet-level committee and an independent staff the restructuring would come. I told them where there would have to be new legislation. This could be done by subject order

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at very little cost. Actually, the same thing has to be done.... Obviously we have to move towards metropolitan government. Obviously, the federal government can't deal with many jurisdictions; it would have to be restructured.

DOUGLAS: In 1968, during the primary campaign, did you talk about any of this to Bob or were both of you too busy?

HACKETT: Oh, no. Really what happened to him, and it was a bad thing to watch, is.... From 1960 when he first appointed me to work on JD, to 1968 he was probably the most knowledgeable person, really, in the country on the problems we were talking about. He was much clearer ahead than we were. He could articulate the problems; he really understood the problems. The people that he was talking to both the people that represented power and also the blacks and the Mexican-Americans really understood that he understood. His evolution of concern,

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which I think he gained—concern and compassion—toward people who fall—but he also had a very realistic approach to restructuring, the “delivery of programs.” It would have some impact to resolve some of the problems. I think that he by 1968 really

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[-END OF INTERVIEW-]

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