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Nicoll, Don oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Don Nicoll by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Nicoll, Don

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

March 23, 2004

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 378

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Biographical Note

Donald Eugene "Don" Nicoll was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1927, and grew up in the West Roxbury section of the city. He is the son of George and Mary Nicoll. He attended Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School and Boston English High School and graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine in 1949, majoring in History with a minor in Government. Don met his future wife, Hilda Farnum, also a Colby student, when they worked in the resort town of Ocean Park, Maine, in the summer of 1944. Nicoll began his graduate work at Pennsylvania State College in 1949, where he received a teaching fellowship in the Department of History. His graduate studies concentrated on American history, specifically the period from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War .. His M.A. (1952) thesis was on the Alien and Sedition Acts.

Starting in 1951, Nicoll and his family settled in Buckfield, Maine where he picked apples and taught part time at Stephen's High School, located in Rumford. Nicoll began working as an announcer for WLAM radio in Lewiston, Maine. He became a reporter and then news editor for WLAM and WLAM-TV. In June 1954, Nicoll left WLAM to become Executive Secretary of the Democratic State Committee at the request of Frank M. Coffin, who has just become chairman. Mr. Coffin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Maine's Second Congressional

District in 1956 and Nicoll went to Washington, DC, as his administrative assistant, continuing in that post until December 1960, the end of Congressman Coffin's second term. Mr. Coffin ran for governor in 1960 and was defeated. After the election Senator Edmund S. Muskie asked Nicoll to join his staff as legislative assistant and news secretary. Nicoll served in that position until 1962, when he became administrative assistant. He continued in that post until 1971, when he became personal advisor to Senator Muskie. He left the senate office in mid-1972.

From 1972 until his retirement in 2005 Nicoll worked as a program and policy planner, first as a consultant (1972-73), then as chairman and chief executive officer of the New England Land Grant Universities Joint Operations Committee (1973-1975), then as coordinator of planning and vice president for planning and public affairs for the Maine Medical Center (1975-1986), then as a consultant (1986-2005). His clients were primarily in the non-profit sector and included, universities, libraries, education associations, health care organizations and social service agencies. He also worked as a volunteer, heading a variety of public policy projects, including the Maine Task Force on Government Reorganization, the Maine State Compensation Commission, the Maine (Mental Health) Systems Assessment Commission, the Maine Consortium for Health Professions Education, the Southern Maine Community Television Consortium, the Maine Special Commission on Government Reorganization (co-chair), the Board of Visitors of the University of Southern Maine's Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council and the Governor's Allagash Wilderness Waterway Working Group.

From 1998-2005, Don Nicoll was the Director of the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project at Bates College.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1954-1958 Maine labor relations; AFL-CIO; descriptions of Ben Dorsky and Denis Blais; Labor Unions relations with Muskie; descriptions of Dave Hastings and Al Page; Muskie's relationship with the railway companies; Maine economic development; and Muskie's impact on Maine environmental issues in the 1950s.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Donald E. Nicoll on March 23rd, 2004, at the Edmund S. Muskie Archives at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Don, last time we talked, which was more than a year ago, we ended our discussion talking about your time on the Democratic State Committee with Frank Coffin. And I'd sort of like to stay in that period, sometime before that and a little bit after, and talk about labor issues in terms of who were the labor people involved in the state who were really active, how did they interact politically, and what were some of the major industries that were involved?

Don Nicoll: Okay. Just a footnote on today's date, this is three days before the fiftieth anniversary of the 1954 Maine Democratic Party state convention, at which the platform that Frank Coffin developed with his committee was adopted and at which he was elected to the State Committee. So we're talking about events going back fifty years this week.

On labor, in the 1950s the AFL, the American Federation of Labor, and the CIO, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, nationally were coming together and they were coming together in Maine. I forget the exact dates, but the merger took place during that period. And there was a considerable split, at least at the leadership level, between the leaders of the AFL and the leaders of the CIO when it came to party affiliation.

Ben Dorsky, Benjamin, B-E-N-J-A-M-I-N, Dorsky, D- as in David, O-R-S-K-Y, was the president of the Maine AFL. And the leading figure in the CIO in Maine was Denis, D-E-N-I-S, Blais, B-L-A-I-S, who was the secretary of the textile workers' union located here in the Lewiston area. And Ben was a Republican for many years. I think in later years he probably dropped his Republican enrollment in Maine (*unintelligible word*) and enrolled as a Democrat,

but certainly in the early fifties he was a Republican and was close to the Republican Party. And Denis Blais was a very active Democrat. I'd like to talk first about Ben, then Denis, and then about some of the other leaders in some of the individual unions.

Ben was based in Bangor, where the AFL-CIO tends still to have its center of gravity in Maine, although I believe their offices have moved to Augusta. He, I forget what union he had been involved in, but it was one of the trade unions. And he had made a calculated decision, which he was very open in talking about, that in Maine the Republican Party was the dominant party. The Democrats didn't have much weight, and if Labor was going to achieve its goals the labor unions had to have connections with the Republican Party. So it was less a philosophical allegiance than a calculated decision to maintain potential power for the, for labor people by affiliating with the Republicans, or at least working with them.

As a consequence, Ben was viewed with considerable suspicion by the Democrats and he had a lot of trouble with the CIO members and leaders, and also with some of the specific trade unions that were headed by the active Democrats. And part of it was personality; Ben was viewed as somebody who people didn't trust. Not everybody, but the people in the unions who disagreed with him, felt that he was not trustworthy, and I don't know how much of that was their view of him as a person and how much of it was because he affiliated with the Republicans.

I clashed with Ben several times during this period, and I remember one occasion which caused a little trouble for me within the Democratic group, that is, with Governor Muskie and company. It was shortly after he took office, and I was invited to come to Madawaska to speak to the paper makers union at one of their meetings. The president of the Local at the time was Emilien, E-M-I-L-I-E-N, Levesque, L-E-V-E-S-Q-U-E, later state legislator, later member of the Employment Commission, and a good friend over the years. But at that time, Emilien didn't really know me except that I was the executive secretary of the State Committee and I happened to be the one who was available to go and speak.

As I remember, the meeting was on a weekend, and I think it may have been a Sunday afternoon. And we were at the time trying to build membership in the Democratic party and enlist more and more volunteers, if you will, and my message to the group was that they really should be joining forces with the Democrats and working in the Democratic party. And Ben Dorsky was at the meeting; this was a big meeting for the paper makers and Ben, as president of the Maine AFL, was there. Well, I made the speech with Ben sitting next to me, and part of it was a reference to an assertion I made that Labor had, for too long, sat at the Republican table hoping to catch some crumbs. And if they wanted to really gain their ends, their goals, they should start working more closely and affiliate with the Democratic Party.

Well this caused a furor. Ben was furious, and there was a little explosion and it got a fair amount of press coverage. And I forget the exact phrasing in how it was carried in the papers, but the stir reached Augusta. And the governor was not happy, because he was, at the time, trying to work with the Republican Party and get some help on legislation that he was trying to put through, and he had very few Democrats, of course, in the legislature to help. So I was

advised that after this I should not be quite so feisty in my public speeches, and particularly I shouldn't be attacking the president of the AFL in Maine. But over the years we worked with Ben and he became more supportive and found funds for the Democrats in campaigns in that period up through the 19---, into the 1960s.

AL: I want to ask one question; did you think that he was changing philosophically, or you were growing to understand his intents better?

DN: Well, we always understood his intent. It was, as indicated by the remarks I made at that speech in 1955, we understood very well that Ben had engaged in a calculated move to get some benefits, and it wasn't a new approach at that time and you see lots of people doing it today. As a matter of fact, when one looks at the contributions that different lobbyists make to candidates on both sides of the aisle, it's obvious that they're trying to get access by being supportive and by not restricting themselves to one party or the other. My objection in that case was that the Republicans in Maine, particularly at that time, were never going to be supportive of some of the key demands that Labor had on minimum wage, or on workers compensation as it emerged later, or other benefits, unemployment compensation. They would get little tidbits, but they wouldn't get what they could do if they built up the Democratic base and then expanded the number of Democrats in the legislature.

In time Ben shifted, I think, because he realized that the Democrats were gaining in enrollments, gaining in legislature representation. And obviously after the Ed Muskie reelection in '56, his election to the U.S. Senate in 1958, Governor Clauson's election in 1958, it was very obvious to Ben that the Democrats had power and were gaining more power and he'd better be working with them more and more.

In fact, in 1960 when fund raising was very difficult in the gubernatorial campaign, there was a very amusing, somewhat macabre but amusing incident that I don't think has come to light before this. We may have had one interviewee who has commented on it, but during the campaign we were trying very hard to get funds for Frank Coffin's candidacy for governor, and Ben Dorsky still had not come fully around. He was more cooperative but not as much as we thought he could be, and several people had been working on him to be more supportive. And Dorsky was very reluctant to be seen with the Democrats because Governor Reed, a Republican, was in office, and he wasn't anxious to alienate his Republican contacts.

Well, one night we arranged to get together with him. And involved in this were Tony Karahalios, who was Frank Coffin's campaign treasurer, and Dick McMahon who had been Ed Muskie's campaign manager in '54 and '56 and was close to him still, and I was involved, and I think Dick Dubord was another one who was there. And we arranged to meet Dorsky after a public event at the home of then Judge Tom Delahanty, the present judge's father, in what we jokingly had referred to for years as the passion pit. This was a basement family room that for some reason the Delahantys had painted purple, and it was a place that in earlier years I had stayed frequently when campaigning in Maine. It was a good place to go and sleep, and we were anxious not to pay for hotel rooms during that period.

In any event, we agreed to gather there, and here we were in the judge's home, the judge wasn't in the meeting but it was in the judge's home, and engaged in a discussion with Ben Dorsky on funding for Frank's campaign. And in the middle of this conversation, Ben Dorsky turned frightfully pale and fainted, collapsed on the floor. And Ben was a very dark complexion, and when he turned pale it was a startling sight. And we stood there and looked at him, it probably wasn't more than a few seconds, but the initial reaction of the men standing around him and looking down at him was, "How do we get him out of here? We can't have him found in the judge's house." And then, of course, we tried to resuscitate him and find out what the problem was. Well, as it turned out, it was temporary and we did get him back on his feet and he recovered and off to his hotel, and nothing more happened and the contribution was made. But it told a great deal about how people felt about Ben at the time.

But then Ben continued and he became much more active in supporting Democratic causes into the 1960s until he retired. But this, and Ben was a great contrast to Denis Blais. One of the things I remember about Ben, he was old school in the way he moved around. He smoked cigars and frequently when in meetings, Ben would be there chomping on a cigar, lit or not, and it may be that he was trying to emulate Samuel Gompers, who was the founding president of the AFL nationally, and had been a cigar maker by trade. But, he was old school.

Denis Blais, whom we've interviewed for the project, was much younger. And where Ben was a little overweight and ruffled and rough, Denis was young, lean, very intense, and a very strong Democrat. He came originally from Rhode Island, as I recall, was here in the Lewiston area as the secretary, the equivalent of a director, of the Textile Workers Union of America. He and Michael Schoonjans, that's M-I-C-H-A-E-L, Schoonjans, S-C-H-O-O-N-J-A-N-S, Mike was the director for the textile workers in the Biddeford area.

Mike and Denis were the two leading CIO labor leaders in Maine at the time. And the I'm trying to remember but I think, it's possible that the paper workers were in the AFL and may not have been in the CIO at the time, but someone could easily go back and check that. But the textile workers were really the most prominent of the CIO unions in the state. And Denis was, as I say, young, lean, very intense. Mike was somewhat older and much more bluff and more old school but equally intense in his own way, and Mike was sort of number two. He was not as prominent in many ways in Maine as Denis was, but he was an equally committed Democrat.

Denis was very visible during this period, because the Bates Mill in Lewiston was going through considerable troubles and there was a lot of dispute about wages, and there were some serious strikes, particularly during Governor Muskie's term. And there was one incident that became famous, came up in the later campaign, when I believe, I don't believe it was the '58 campaign, I think it may have been the '64 campaign, when the Republicans published an attack ad. In those days the attack ads tended to be in the newspapers as display advertising, not television. They had an ad attacking Muskie as a tool of organized labor and had a picture of him and Denis Blais sitting next to each other in the governor's office, so this may have been '58, [*sic* it was the 1956 campaign, when Governor Muskie was running for reelection] with very grim looks on their

faces. And in many ways when you looked at it, they looked like a couple of hoods just caught in some nefarious dealing surprised by the press. And this went along with the headline and the text that attacked Muskie as being a tool of labor, and identified Denis as a director of the TWUA in Maine, in Lewiston.

The senator took one look at the picture, or the governor took one look at the picture and said, "That picture was taken during the Bates strike when I was mediating, and there were three people in that picture: Denis Blais, Louis Laun," who was the assistant to the president of the Bates Manufacturing Company, "and me." So we went to the files and got out the print, the original print, and published it in the famous, this was the famous "cropped photograph." But it was an example of the sort of thing that went on during that period, and it was also an example of how much aware people were that we and labor, organized labor, were very close.

But organized labor wasn't always happy with Senator Muskie, or Governor Muskie and then Senator Muskie, because he refused to be pigeonholed and refused to automatically accept their point of view on a number of issues. And the fact that he disagreed led to some tense confrontations between them. But this was natural, and Denis was a tough negotiator, as was Mike Schoonjans, and they pushed just as hard and as fast as they could. They helped us a great deal on voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns in particular, and on raising money for the campaigns.

The other Labor figures I recall, one was a painter here in Lewiston. I regret that I can't remember his name, but he was an active of the painters local. And during the 1954 campaign, when we got an office on Lisbon Street, he volunteered to paint the sign on the door. So the Maine Democratic Party sign went on the frosted glass window in the door of our office, painted by this good trade union member who was volunteering his time. And they volunteered in a number of other ways. Somewhere in my files is a picture of that door with the sign on it.

The other key group of Labor leaders, oh there was one, another CIO Local leader was a Alonzo Young, A-L-O-N-Z-O, Young, Y-O-U-N-G. Lonny was the head of the union at the Bath Iron Works, and I'm trying to remember which union that was, whether it was the boilermakers at that time or one of the other trade unions. They've changed over the years as the technology and the yards have changed. But Lonny was an old-time, active Democrat who had been close to the party and was close to a lot of people in the area, and Lonny like Mike Schoonjans, was an old-timer in the trade unions.

The group that was very active and very important to us during this period was the Joint Labor Council in, or Central Labor Council, that's what it was called, the Central Labor Council, in Portland. And it was a group of unions that worked jointly and they rented space, they had joint offices at the corner of Federal and Exchange Streets. I remember the office, and at the present time is occupied on the first floor, the building is occupied on the first floor by the SALT Institute, a documentary group, and it's possible that the Central Labor Council still has its offices there. Within the last few years I saw an indication that they were still upstairs in the building.

The two key people at the time, that I recall in that union, were David Hastings and Albert Page. And I think they were both affiliated with, I know Al Page was, with the Teamsters Union, and I think Dave Hastings was also. And they were very, very active in Democratic politics and very supportive. Very different people.

Al Page was a tall, rangy sort of fellow, who I think came from Aroostook County originally, and looked for all the world like someone just off the farm, and was highly respected. Just one of these “salt of the earth” types, and he, you could always depend on him. He was not somebody with a chip on his shoulder and tended to be very relaxed in his dealings with people, but was a very ardent supporter of the members of his union and an ardent Democrat.

Dave Hastings was just as ardent, just as non-confrontational as Al, but he was neat as a pin always. Had a little moustache, and he usually wore a jacket and tie and was the image of precision, and very quiet, low key demeanor and very active supporter of the party. And I can remember going to meet with them in Portland and getting help on a lot of projects including, particularly, voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

There were other union leaders. The strength of the unions at the time were concentrated in the textile workers union. There was a smaller group of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers; and the paper maker unions, and there were a couple of those. And the shoe workers were active but they were relatively weak at the time, because the shoe factory at the time had started much earlier and there were more non-union factories than there were textile factories.

The industrial base at the time was slipping, this was the first outsourcing, if you will, because the cotton and woolen mills, the textile mills, had started their migration to the south, particularly in the period immediately after WWII. And the shoe workers had started somewhat earlier doing the same thing, and by the sixties there was the movement of mills overseas. The pulp and paper mills were very prosperous, very powerful, and the workers were staunch union members and were well paid, tended to be well paid and very strong.

There were a number of trade unions in the AFL and they were concentrated primarily, as I recall, in the carpenters and the plumbers, the printing trades. But in the, those trades you found that many times you couldn't distinguish between the employees and the employers. The employers were members of the union. That's frequently the case with a small plumbing companies or plumbing contractors, or carpentry contractors, etcetera. But we didn't, we would deal with them as individuals, but not in terms of getting a substantial participation by employees, large numbers of union workers.

AL: In terms of, what was it that Governor Muskie and then Senator Muskie was able to do for the unions? What sorts of things did he take up as issues that, I mean wages and things like that, were there particular issues that he took the mantle for and went with?

DN: In terms of economic issues, as I recall, the immediate and most important ones were

unemployment compensation, minimum wage came up at some point in the fifties as I recall, and I don't recall any major battles at that time over workers compensation. I think it was there as an issue, but it was mostly improvements around the edges, it was not the big fight that occurred in the eighties and nineties. And for Labor, at the time, some of the larger issues really were tied into general economic conditions, economic development, and advocating on behalf of community economic development and education, opportunities for their kids, and on occasion, well And an ongoing fight about the Labor Relations law and particularly the open shop versus the closed shop or a union shop, and the senator supported the union shop concept as governor. And I'm trying to remember the name of the, there was an effort to institutionalize into, to protect the open shop, that is non-union employment, and I'm trying to remember the name given to the laws. It's escaping me for the moment, but there was a constant effort to undercut the union shop or a closed shop situation.

AL: Can you talk a little bit about how Sen-, Governor Muskie handled some of the groups in the state, such as the paper companies, the electric companies, and the railway companies politically?

DN: I'll start with the last one first. The railroads at the time, up until the end of the fifties, you began to see by the mid-fifties the erosion of the railroads. During the war a lot of their rolling stock had deteriorated because of the limits on materials and what could be expended on them. And after the war, particularly with the construction of the Interstate and the efforts by the automobile manufacturers, the automotive manufacturers I should say, to get more emphasis on shipments by truck and transportation by bus.

You may recall that the automotive companies were constantly undercutting the subway and street railway companies and districts in the cities and getting conversions to busses, and on the highway they were moving to get more goods transported by trailer trucks. This was undercutting the railroads in both passenger, on the passenger service and on freight. And so you began to see some weakening of the railroads, and the railroads, in an effort to salvage their economic value and salvage some of their income, were trying to shed unprofitable services during the 1950s and into the sixties.

And, for example, by the 1960s Maine Central Railroad wanted to get rid of Union Station in Portland, and I believe they owned the Union Station in Bangor. Both were torn down. And Ed Muskie had been a part time lobbyist for the Central Maine Railroad at one point, Maine Central Railroad, excuse me, and actually had a pretty good working relationship with E. Spencer Miller who was the president of the railroad at the time and was the one who made the decision to tear down Union Station in Portland. But by the 1960s he really had broken with them over the issue of historic preservation, and also abandonment of railroad lines. And the feeling that the railroads, instead of responding as they might have with more vigorous and more imaginative efforts to build business, were abandoning their responsibility, particularly in the rural areas.

During the gubernatorial years, there was a struggle with the companies, including the railroads, Central Maine Power in particular, Bangor Hydro to a lesser degree, and the pulp and paper

companies, over control of the economic development policies of the state. The state had had for some years the Maine Development Commission, which was the economic development tool, the promotional tool for the state. That commission was a quasi public agency with a membership on the commission of somewhere between nine and fifteen members, as I recall, and an executive director. And it was supposed to promote new industry and the development of new opportunities; mostly it focused on tourism, although there was a tourist bureau in addition, and was not very vigorous or very effective in bringing in new industry.

There was a feeling that this was because the commission was really there to protect the interest of the existing, dominant industries. Now curiously enough, the chair of the commission was a man named Harold Schnurle, H-A-R-O-L-D, Schnurle, S-C-H-N-U-R-L-E, who was a vice president of Central Maine Power Company. He was the vice president for public affairs or a title similar to that, and he was the spokesperson both for CMP and for the commission. The executive director of the commission was a fellow named Everett, E-V-E-R-E-T-T, Greaton, G-R-E-A-T-O-N, who was a mild mannered, rather pleasant, but I guess if I were reflecting my view at the time I'd say a pleasant nonentity. And Schnurle was the one who was really running the show.

AL: Let me pause right here and flip the tape.

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

DN: During the campaign for election in 1954, the Democrats had called for a revitalized organization of the economic development efforts of the state and the creation of a department of economic development. And the Republicans, and particularly the people around the Maine Development Commission, vigorously opposed it saying, "We're doing just fine." And there was a certain amount of arrogance, particularly on Schnurle's part. Interestingly enough, I mentioned that Governor Muskie had, at one time, been a lobbyist for the Maine Central Railroad. He had also been a lobbyist, at times, for the Central Maine Power Company, which was headed by a classmate of his, [William H., Sr.] Dunham, D-U-N-H-A-M. I'm trying to remember, I think it was Bill Dunham, who was a classmate at Bates and a good friend of his, but they disagreed on policies very soon, because of the difference and perspective on economic development.

I've always felt that, in all probability, the Central Maine Power Company and the Maine Central Railroad were, and the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad which was the other large railroad in Maine, were heavily dependent on the pulp and paper industry for their business, and this was true also of Bangor Hydro Electric. And as a consequence, many of the public policies that those two industries, the electric industry and the railroad pursued, was dictated frequently more by the agenda of the pulp and paper companies than it was by CMP and Maine Central Railroad, and Bangor Hydro and Bangor and Aroostook. The pulp and paper companies weren't eager for competition for labor. They were not eager to be sharing power in the State House with other

industrial leaders. And therefore, the pulp and paper industry tended to dominate a lot of the public decisions on everything from economic issues such as workers compensation and minimum wage, etcetera, as well as the obvious issues for them of environmental legislation and protecting the waters of the state.

But in that first term of Governor Muskie, he pushed hard for an economic development program and there was a lot of public support for it. And a bill was drafted for legislation, and I remember the first name of what is today the Department of Economic and Community Development was, without a doubt, one of the worst titles ever conjured up for a department of state government. It was to be called and was called finally, the Department of Development of Industry and Commerce. A much too long name and much too hard to pronounce. But the legislation was in and the Republican Party, particularly the more conservative members of the party, were vehemently opposed, the Maine Development Commission was opposed, the Chamber as I recall was opposed.

AL: Was opposed to developing this department within state government?

DN: Yes, they thought that the Development Commission was fine, thank you very much. Associated Industries of Maine was the lobbying arm in the state. And the Chamber of Commerce at that time was a separate but much smaller organization in many respects, representing primarily the retail companies in the state, and some professional firms.

But at the time, Robert Haskell, president of the Bangor Hydro Electric company, was the president of the senate. And a fellow named James, Jim, Jim, oh, Jim Reid, R-E-I-D, of, I think Jim came, he came from Augusta or Gardiner, and he was the majority leader in the senate. And Jim was firmly in the pocket of the Maine Development Commission advocates. And the house, if I remember the history, the house passed the legislation, it came to the senate, and Jim Reid was determined to defeat it, and the governor was campaigning in the state for passage.

And Haskell was watching this with growing concern, because Bob Haskell was probably one of the most independent-minded business executives in the state legislature and frequently would make decisions that no timid business executive would ever make. And he saw that the Republicans were losing the battle for public opinion and put the arm on Jim Reid to modify his position, and Jim wasn't budging. And I remember this vividly, because at the time we were acting as voluntary staff to Governor Muskie, who had a very limited professional staff on the state payroll, and that legislation was one of the things that I got for an assignment to work on.

And I recall one day we got word that the Republicans had a caucus to talk about this issue. And Bob Haskell, who was known for his salty language, was reported to have gotten up in the caucus and to have said to, after Jim Reid made a statement in support of holding the line against Governor Muskie on this, "If you stupid S.O.B.s block this legislation, you'll be blamed for every f***ing chicken that dies in this state for the next twenty years." And after that sunk in, the caucus decided that they would seek a compromise with the governor and it was immediately after that that we started some negotiations. And I was the staff person, not so much negotiating

but doing the writing and participating in the negotiating sessions as we redrafted the legislation, working with Bob Haskell and with Jim Reid. And Haskell was a kind of flamboyant fellow, and Jim was very dour at the time.

AL: Now, you mentioned Bob Haskell feeling that the public opinion tide was turning in favor of the Democrats. When you said that, do you recall, did Ed Muskie have a direct involvement in speaking to the public in a persuasive manner, do you recall how he presented it publicly? I mean did he have, in other words, a personal effect on turning the tide?

DN: Oh yes, in several ways. One was, during the 1954 campaign this had been one of the major platform efforts. Not the specific legislation per se, but the idea of reorganizing the economic development effort of the state and creating a department. And this had been one of the things he talked about during the campaign.

And he really promoted the idea in at least three different ways. One was through giving speeches. And the governor, before and during his term as governor, would go out and speak to groups on a fairly regular basis, particularly the service clubs where one influenced even more than today public opinion in the community, because you'd be talking to the business leaders in the community. And those speeches would get reported in the local press so you were reaching the general public, and usually the speeches were reported fairly extensively, particularly governor speeches. And the second way was to talk about the issue with the press in the news conferences and to make very specific points, which in turn were carried regularly in the press. And the third method was individual lobbying, both directly and indirectly. That is, directly with legislators, talking with members of the house and the senate on both sides of the aisle and encouraging members to change their perspective. And indirectly through community leaders, going to a number of the communities where there were economic development efforts under way and enlisting the support of the mayors, the town managers, the economic development directors and Chambers of Commerce and other community leaders and getting them involved in lobbying their representatives and senators from their district in the legislature. So it was, he used all of the techniques that were available to him.

AL: And do you recall if during his period as governor that he really started addressing issues of the environment?

DN: Yes, this started before he was elected and in the campaign, it was one of the sets of planks in the Democratic platform of 1954. And he went to work on it in the legislature. The first issue being the classification of streams which was both a method of establishing a baseline, if you will, on what the condition of the waterways were, and second, starting a plan for upgrading.

AL: And of course that would involve the pulp and paper industries. Did they have, did he make much progress as governor in terms of -?

DN: Limited in the, in the 1950s it was very difficult to get very far because you had two

sources of, two major sources of pollution in Maine. One was the industrial pollution, the bulk of which came from the pulp and paper mills. And secondarily you had very specific problems in different communities with either tanning waste, for example, from the leather tanning operations and indirectly from the shoe industry, and from the textile industry where certain chemicals were used in processing the wool or the cotton. And you had a certain amount of organic waste coming from food processing plants, and then lesser amounts from other industries. So industry, particularly the pulp and paper industry was one major source.

The second source was municipal sewage, and most of the municipal sewage was simply dumped directly into the rivers through waste pipes. And you couldn't deal with one and not the other, and there were no federal funds available for building the treatment plants and the sewer lines that were necessary. And as long as you had the problem of municipal sewage, it was difficult to get really effective leverage on the pulp and paper companies, particularly. And the federal program didn't come in until later, the grant program. So there were limits on what he could do, but he did what he could and inched it along as far as he could.

AL: Yeah, he made the foundation. I know we're sort of, starting to run out of time, so I think we should probably end here for today and we hopefully will pick up again soon.

DN: Okay, good.

End of Interview