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Nicoll, Don oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

Interview with Don Nicoll by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Nicoll, Don

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

May 3, 2004

Place

Lewiston, Maine

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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: Public Works Committee; Air pollution legislation (auto emissions and automotive manufacturers); research trip to General Motors; Senator Muskie's role in negotiating the legislation for the Banking and Currency Committee and the Model Cities program; Postmaster General's trip to Kennebunkport; Don Nicoll's (almost) trip to "the ranch"; and Joe Califano's search for the number of U.S. casualties in the Korean conflict.

Indexed Names

Baker, Howard H. (Howard Henry), 1925-
Billings, Leon
Boggs, James Caleb, 1909-
Califano, Joseph A., 1931-
Cooper, John Sherman, 1901-
Douglas, Paul Howard
Gunther, John
Hildenbrand, William F. "Bill"
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973
Linton, Ron M.
McNamara, Pat

Mields, Hugh
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Muskie, Jane Gray
Nader, Ralph
Nicoll, Don
O'Brien, Larry
Quigley, Jim
Rostow, W. W. (Walt Whitman), 1916-
Semer, Milton P.
Semple, Robert
Sparkman, John
Vance, Cyrus R. (Cyrus Roberts), 1917-2002
Wood, Bob

Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Donald E. Nicoll on May the 3rd, the year 2004 at the Muskie Archives at Bates College, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. And Don, last time we were talking about some of the people who came on to the Public Works committee at the time Senator Muskie joined, and some of the changes that occurred in 1962, and you were going to go into more detail about those committee assignments.

Don Nicoll: The details on some of the changes that took place in the Public Works committee have been given quite well by Ron Linton, who became the clerk of the committee, that is the chief administrative officer of the committee when Senator Pat McNamara became chairman of Public Works. But I'll note that Senator McNamara decided to create a subcommittee on air and water pollution and asked Senator Muskie to chair it. When he did so, he told Senator Muskie that he didn't intend to spend any more money on it, therefore there would be no added staff. The chief clerk of the committee, Ron Linton, would be the principal staff member of that subcommittee. And Senator Muskie and Senator Caleb Boggs of Delaware, the ranking Republican on the committee, would have to figure out how they were going to supplement the staffing.

As a result, we decided I would provide the staff support from Senator Muskie's office for him, and Senator Boggs assigned William [F.] Hildenbrand, who was his legislative assistant, to represent him in the staff work. So in effect, the subcommittee was staffed by a triumvirate of Ron Linton, Bill Hildenbrand and me, and that worked for a couple of years until we brought Leon Billings on. Actually, Ron Linton was the one who recruited Leon and got him appointed by Senator McNamara. And again, both Ron and Leon Billings have, in their interviews for the project, given a lot of detail on that and very good perspectives on how that part happened.

From the beginning the three of us, the three staff members, worked very well together and it was a non-partisan effort at that level paralleling what Senator Muskie set down as the operating pattern for the committee. Intense effort all the way along to be non-partisan and to focus on the issues in air and water pollution, and to achieve as much as we could with as much broad support

as possible.

Senator Boggs and he were very compatible. Senator Boggs was a very pleasant and able former governor of Delaware, a middle of the road Republican moderate, and very easy to work with. And he tended much of the time to yield to Senator Muskie's judgment on a number of policy questions. And the other members of the committee tended to support Senator Muskie in what he was trying to do. As we know from Senator [Howard] Baker, he and Senator Muskie worked very well together and they used to joust a bit as Senator Baker has noted in his interview, but they were quite compatible as were Senator Muskie and Senator [John Sherman] Cooper of Kentucky.

The first order of business in the committee was to deal with air pollution legislation, and then we went on to water pollution legislation. And I won't try to give the details of that history, because a lot of it is in the written record. I can recall a few anecdotes along the way that may be useful. I think it was probab--, it was not in '73, it was, goodness gracious, I'm jumping around here,'63. It wasn't in '63 but it was later in the sixties that the battle over air pollution from automobiles became more intense.

And I remember, particularly, the first real concentration on alternative technologies for the automotive industry and the push by the committee to get the auto companies to step up the pace of reducing emissions from automobiles. We held a hearing in Washington and the Johnson administration testifying first. I think that James Quigley, an assistant secretary of Health and Welfare, Health, Education and Welfare, testified for the administration, supported generally the aims of the subcommittee which was pushing for some deadlines on achieving pollution controls, but said that the administration thought that the deadlines suggested by the committee were too short because the auto industry wasn't going to be able to provide the technological changes that were needed.

The very next day the automotive industry came and testified and they said, in essence, the same thing, that the deadlines were too short. But their response was, they were perfectly capable of achieving the technology that the committee suggested was needed, but the cost was too great for the public to bear. And so, and in addition they questioned the judgment of the committee on the reductions that were needed for the public health and welfare.

So the committee was faced with the administration saying on the one hand: it was absolutely essential to work toward those goals, but we should be cautious about the timetable because the industry wasn't capable of matching the requirements; the industry saying: well, we're perfectly capable of meeting the requirements but you're wrong on the rest of it. So the next thing to do was to go to Detroit, the Detroit area, to check out the industry and see what they actually had accomplished and what they felt they could accomplish. And that trip, which took place very shortly after those two days of Washington hearings, was a real eye-opener, both about the thinking that was going on in the industry and the literally different personalities of the corporations.

I remember going first, I believe, to the Ford plant and their research center which was in Dearborn, Michigan, I think. And it was an old building, one of those early industrial buildings

with lots of windows, not very energy efficient. And Ford and American Motors had automobiles there for us to look at because American Motors was based in Milwaukee and they simply brought the vehicles down for us to examine. And it was something like stepping into the past and getting a lecture from Henry Ford. And the Ford technology and the American Motors technology seemed to us to be made up of hobbling together old pieces of machinery and putting them together with baling wire. It was not a very impressive showing and it did not give us much confidence in the route they were pursuing at the time.

The next stop was the Chrysler research and development headquarters, and they were located in Hamtramck, Michigan which is an inner, sort of an inner city suburb of Detroit. It's a separate municipality but within the city of Detroit, the metropolitan city of Detroit, and it was in an old building also. Not as old as the Ford building, but old. And I have never seen such a collection of very stuffy engineers and managers as we encountered in the Chrysler shop. And they were doing more advanced work than Ford appeared to be doing, but very, very resistant to any suggestions of change from the direction in which they were heading. And it would be worth a researcher going back and looking at what was laid out in that site visit and is contained in the reports from the committee.

We then went to General Motors, and General Motors had its research and development facilities on a big campus, as distinct from the other two companies, in the suburb and spread out over a number of acres. The buildings were very modern: concrete, steel and glass. And the first thing I remember about that visit was walking through the facility where the engineers were located and noticing that the engineers had individually very small offices, almost cubicles, and as you walked by you noted that each door to an engineer's office had a full glass panel bottom to top. One could check as you went by to see what they were doing in their office; everybody was under scrutiny.

And the second impression from that visit, again sort of an illustration of how people were dealing with the problem, the campus was so large that they had to transport us from one building to another in a bus. And we came out of one building on our way to the next appointment and went to an urban bus, urban style bus, got on. And we were told that this bus had the latest technology that General Motors was trying out, a gas turbine instead of a traditional internal combustion engine, so they were proudly going to show this off.

We got in and sat down, and when everybody was in place the driver started up. He stepped on the gas, the bus moved to about ten or fifteen miles an hour, and there was a terrible bang in the back of the bus, and the bus jerked so that our heads were snapped. And we said, "What the hell was that?" And the driver said, "Oh, that's a hydramatic transmission that's been adapted for the engine and there's such a gap between the rpms, the revolutions per minute, of the engine, this gas turbine engine, and the drive to the wheels. They took out the middle ranges in the hydramatic transmission so you have only low and high, and there's such a jump from the low to the high that you get this jolt when it shifts." We said, "Do you mean to tell us that when General Motors was developing this technology, they didn't design a transmission to go with the gas turbine?" He said, "No." And we took a lesson back to Washington with us: they were not that serious, number one, and number two, the much vaunted industry was not that smart either in its PR or in its engineering, from our perspective.

Well, we came back from that session and from the hearings in Washington and the committee agreed to move ahead with setting deadlines for them on improved technology. And that was the story throughout the 1960s in dealing with the auto industry. It was a matter of pushing them, prodding them, getting them to go much farther than they were willing to go on their own in controlling emissions.

The, it's worth noting in terms of the style of that committee and the way the senators looked on it, to note that most committees in the Senate, in that time at any rate, would turn over legislation that had been drafted to the Senate counsel. And the attorneys there would go through the legislation checking on cross references to other legislation to ensure compatibility and checking words of art in the legislation so that that was accurately done and appropriately done. And the legislative counsel had a habit of injecting, from time to time, their own views on what the legislation should look like. Neither the staff nor the members, of the subcommittee on air and water pollution, was very happy about the prospect of having the legislation modified by legislative counsel. And so, the committee worked very hard at drafting the legislation in plain English, getting agreement from the committee, or the subcommittee, on what the legislation should do and what it should look like, and then giving the draft legislation to the legislative counsel with some very strict instructions: you may correct any errors related to either compatibility with other legislation or words of art, but you may not touch the substance.

So the three staff members, none of whom was a lawyer, acting on the instructions of the subcommittee members, would draft the legislation in plain English and then give it to the legislative counsel with these very strict constraints. And it worked. I think some of that legislation was among the clearest written, and it so happened that all three of the staff members were former reporters and had very strong views about clarity in language.

AL: Yes, and you yourself having been a reporter, do you have some insight as to what it is about that position that helps in writing such as what you were just talking about?

DN: I never wrote for newspapers, but I had, from my high school days, and I guess actually from grammar school days, I'd had very fine teachers who were very firm in teaching clarity in writing. And then when I went to work for WLAM in Lewiston as a reporter, first as a copywriter and then as a reporter in television, I learned very quickly that if you're writing for radio you have to write so that people can understand what's being said on one hearing. It's not a case of being able to go back and read it again to figure out what the writer meant, and so your writing has to be exceedingly clear and logical in order for the listener to understand it. It's more than, it's more than how well the person reading the news articulates, it's a matter of having a sentence structure straightforward and being very careful in your use of language so that there can't be any confusion. And I've found that exceeding useful ever since.

AL: I would say, also especially with speech writing, because that has the same sort of ear that you'd have to give it.

DN: Now there the difference, the only difference between expository writing and speech writing is that you have to add the ingredient of the voice of the speaker. And you've got, if you're going to do it well it has to be written in such a way that the speaker can say it naturally.

AL: I think that comes also to a point you made a little bit earlier on talking about the auto industry and their claims that it was too costly to upgrade the technology, and the whole debate that has gone on. Have you seen that debate has moved significantly forward, looking at it today? In some ways it seems we're still having the same debate with the auto industries and the technologies.

DN: Oh, yes we are. And I think that's, with very few exceptions, that's what you're going to find, because the people who are running the industry, whether it's the auto industry or electric power industry or chemical factories, etcetera, they are looking at the way to get maximum production at the least cost and the greatest potential profit for their stockholders. And so they are going to resist any kind of a requirement in the manufacturing process or the product itself that may cost the industry more than they think is warranted, and there's a natural tension there. And that's not a bad thing in and of itself. It becomes a problem when an industry or a company hide the costs, other costs, or try to distort the record in terms of what the cost would be, or try to downplay or distort or cover up the adverse consequences of continuing to do business and to manufacture and to produce products that are harmful. And we've seen, particularly in the chemical industry and the petroleum industry, cases of that going on. And we've seen it, apparently in several of the auto industries, with respect to safety measures. I'm not thinking of pollution so much as the safety, auto safety.

The industry is starting to do more in the way of real reductions in automotive emissions through the use of hybrid technology. There's ample evidence that they're playing games on the whole hydrogen question and how one gets hydrogen, and there's a tendency to hype the things they do. But I think there's also a certain amount of excitement and a certain amount of recognition that consumers are demanding more in the way of economical operation and reduced pollution, and this is helped considerably by the high price of gas these days.

But, without having a conspiratorial view of history, which has been the motivator for people like Ralph Nader, I think it's possible to have a healthy skepticism about the claims of the companies and to pressure them constantly to either change their perspective, change the way they do business, or to modify the products and to adjust their timetables, and not simply to accept their claims. And that's essentially what Senator Muskie did. He never took a conspiratorial view of why auto companies behaved as they did. And indeed, he had problems with Ralph Nader who, through his air pollution project, attacked Senator Muskie because he was more interested in producing results than fixing blame.

And the big shifts that took place in the pollution legislation over the years, and which I had some disagreements with, essentially with Senator Muskie, and with Leon Billings later in the sixties and into the early seventies. It had been our view, generally, that in order to solve the pollution problems confronting us we had to think about it in terms of ambient standards, achieving ambient quality standards and not [*sic* DEN, in rereading this sentence believes he mis-spoke. "Not" should be deleted from the sentence to reflect his meaning.] thinking in terms of water sheds and thinking in terms of air sheds, and adjusting the regulatory requirements and the design of systems to achieve cleaner air, cleaner water. You had to design to achieving those results, that is the cleaner air. And you didn't start by trying to make the basis of your system, regulatory and economic incentives, the emission, individual emission standards. You had to

think about tail pipe emissions, controlling them. You had to think about the number of tail pipes that were going to be out there, so you had to think about restricting the volume of cars. And you had to think about such things as increasing public transportation so that you were less dependent on the individual automobile or individual truck.

By the end of the sixties and the early seventies, the committee turned more and more to imposing restrictions on tail pipe emissions and on discharge emissions, or discharges in the case of water pollution. And the, I think there were arguments on both sides. I felt pretty strongly that in moving away from ambient air quality standards we were setting ourselves up for endless battles on specific emissions, and a focus on reducing emissions rather than, from individual tail pipes, rather than on what the total air quality would be, or in the case of water, water quality. On the other hand, as long as you focused primarily on ambient air quality, it was hard to get something measurable in terms of individual performance.

So somehow you had to strike a balance. And I'm not sure we've reached the point where we have the right mix of policies and laws to combine ambient air quality standards with enforceable requirements, tied as much as possible to incentives, and tied as much as possible to maximum flexibility for deciding what solution makes sense.

I think, I can't think of any other immediate anecdotes. I can remember we did a lot of field work. We went to the west coast in connection with the oil spill, the Santa Barbara oil spill. We got some vivid illustrations of the smog problem in Los Angeles. We did some work in the south, at one point looking at what the pulp and paper was doing in Mobile and in Arkansas and Louisiana. We participated a lot in exchanges with the administration at senior levels and also at the mid-level, with people in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Department of the Interior, and it was a great education through that period.

The Banking and Currency Committee, that's the second committee on which Senator Muskie was very active. His involvements in the 1960s ranged from straightforward public housing and housing programs in general, to urban planning and development and ultimately Model Cities. And currency matters, that was general economic matters and some in banking regulation, as a part of the work of the committee.

I worked primarily during that period on the urban planning and development legislation, and housing legislation, and on historic site preservation. We got involved very early on in the efforts to establishing a national program for historic preservation, participated in a couple of conferences, and actually got involved in the editing of a book that was published called With Heritage So Rich, and was an early study of historic preservation efforts and the needs for historic preservation in a number of communities around the country. And that was a great experience working with some architects and planners on the development of a what would, became a coffee table book that was designed to motivate people to support federal legislation that would encourage and indeed lead to more preservation of historic sites around the country.

Then the major involvement for us was Model Cities. Before that we were engaged in work in the committee on urban planning and development which included one of the more amusing incidents in my career as a legislative aide. We worked with the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

John Gunther, who was the director, or president, of the Conference and his chief lobbyist Hugh Miels, M-I-E-L-D-S.

Hugh came to me one day and said that they would like Senator Muskie to sponsor an amendment to the Housing and Urban Development Act, or Urban Planning and Development Act, that would enable groups of communities to plan together on a regional basis, and would help rationalize water pollution control, parks, transportation policies, and do it on a voluntary basis but nevertheless be able to effect the quality of life in the communities and the quality of services and the cost of services. And they had a simple amendment to the Urban Planning and Development Act that would permit councils of government, formed by the municipalities in a region, to undertake general planning, and they would have a subsidy for that planning. This simple sentence for the Act.

I said I thought it was the sort of thing that Senator Muskie would support, and said I'd check with him and get back to Hugh, which I did. And he agreed to submit the amendment. [We] sent the amendment to the committee and a date was set for markup on the legislation generally. There were a large number of provisions in the legislation, and Senator Muskie was given the date on which his amendment would be taken up. Plans went ahead for him to do that, but then on the day that the subcommittee was to meet in that markup session, he got called away on a meeting that he couldn't avoid so he was going to have to miss the markup session. We got in touch with Senator Douglas, Paul Douglas of Illinois, who was chairing the subcommittee, and asked if he would be willing to put the amendment to the subcommittee in the markup session so that they could act on it. He agreed, and Senator Muskie told him that I would be there for any backup for the discussion.

I went over, and we were in the Banking and Currency committee full room, that is the hearing room. And the dais where the committee sat was horseshoe shaped with the desk up against the, sort of the center of that horseshoe looking out over the general audience, and the tables where that morning the subcommittee staff was seated, with the members of the committee seated at their desks on the dais, and then a row of chairs behind the senators where staff could sit. So I went in and went up, sat down sort of in the back of that dais area, and the committee started with its work, Senator Douglas presiding. Got to the Senator Muskie amendment and Senator Douglas said, "Senator Muskie has offered an amendment to Section 501G," I believe it was, of the act. "And unfortunately Ed can't be here today, but Don's here and he'll explain it."
(laughter)

So all of a sudden and totally unexpected, I was put in the position of having to stand up and explain this amendment to the subcommittee. Which I did. I think I managed to do it in about three sentences and sat down and the subcommittee, without any debate or discussion, voted it. And that little sentence is still in the law and I believe, unless they trimmed out the funding for it, that councils of government such as the Greater Portland Council of Governments, the Androscoggin Valley group here, are still receiving money under that little amendment.

We were also engaged in a number of public housing issues, urban development issues, and our engagement in that arena came to full fruition in the Model Cities legislation. The Johnson administration, thanks to work by Robert Wood, who was undersecretary of Housing and Urban

Development at the time, was trying to overcome many of the problems that had emerged from the experience with urban renewal where the emphasis was on the demolition of decayed housing and businesses, and replacement of those with new either commercial or housing structures that were supposed to renew a community by getting rid of the old. That was frequently carried out, all too frequently carried out, in ways that damaged the people who lived in those older communities. There was almost no emphasis on rehabilitation and we ended up, particularly with some of the public housing, with enormous structures that had no personality, were very destructive of family life.

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

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

DN: The team, led by Bob Wood, had developed a proposal for dealing with the problem and submitted it to the administration. It was legislation designed to provide much more involvement by members of the community in the redesign of the areas, and provided them with much more flexibility in making use of existing stocks of housing or existing buildings, and developing social services and educational services that would strengthen the sense of communities. The Johnson administration, that is the White House staff, liked that. He had wanted, however, not to spend too much money, so they were going to do this as a series of demonstration projects. And I believe, as I recall, that the original proposal was to have something like fifty cities that would serve as demonstrations, and someone came up with the title Demonstration Cities, for it. Well this was 1965, and demonstrations in those days were demonstrations against the war and demonstrations for civil rights, etcetera, and they were just coming into their heyday. And when the legislation came up it was called the Demonstration Cities Act. And most of us looked at that and said, "That's not what you want to have on that legislation." But Lyndon Johnson and his staff, including particularly Joe Califano, were committed, that was what the president had asked for and that's what they wanted.

Well the legislation moved for a while in the House pretty well, and then got bogged down and was not getting anywhere. In the Senate it was in trouble, because the chairman of the Senate Banking and Currency committee [*sic* Housing Subcommittee] was Senator John Sparkman of Alabama, and he was not about to champion a "demonstration" cities project. The next logical person to take it on was Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois, but Senator Douglas did not carry much weight, if any, with southern senators. They regarded him as terribly liberal and they were not likely to follow him. And it appeared that Demonstration Cities was touch-and-go legislation in the Senate. And they reached a point where the House prospects were very dim, it had gotten bogged down there, the Senate chances were very, very dim, and they tried to figure out how they might rescue the legislation. They concluded that they were going to have to move it first in the Senate and then apply some leverage to the House.

The next logical person on the Banking and Currency committee to take this up and manage the legislation was Senator Douglas of Illinois, but as I said they couldn't really depend on him. And

so they turned to Senator Muskie. Well, Senator Muskie general agreed with the philosophy that was being advanced, but he had some problems, specific problems, with the legislation in part. And, he said he had to resolve the substantive issues he had with the legislation, and furthermore he had to be sure that he had a reasonable chance of being able to win. He didn't mind losing, but he didn't want to expend a lot of time and energy on behalf of legislation that went down by a 98 to 2 vote. The administration, through Joe Califano and through Bob Wood at Housing and Urban Development, agreed that they'd negotiate with him on those two questions. So we did a little survey to see what it looked like and whether there were members of, sufficient number of members of the Senate to provide a core and to see what you could do to adjust the legislation to attract supporters and votes.

Well, the first thing was to look at Demonstration Cities, and Demonstration Cities, we tried to get changed, tried to get changed, and through the whole negotiations the White House wouldn't budge. And so that remained in place through the enactment of the legislation. The other thing we did was to do a little canvassing to see whether there was a chance of bringing people along; concluded that we could. Then the question became, what about the substantive changes. And there were a number that we worked through and, again, it's one of those cases where someone might as well go back and read the record to find the detail, and find it more accurately than I could recall today. The major question, however, was the number of projects that would be allowed. Maine, needless to say, was not on a list of prospective states for a Model Cities, or Demonstration Cities program, in light of the number of very large cities with enormous problems that the Johnson administration wanted to tackle. Senator Muskie let them know that one of the conditions would be that there had to be at least one project in Maine, and so finally they agreed to that bargain.

And we moved forward with redrafting of the legislation, he agreed to manage it, and as a matter of fact the agreement was reached on a July 4th weekend. Senator Muskie was home in Kennebunkport, at his summer place, over the July 4th recess. The White House was looking for an answer on managing the legislation, and agreed that they would send a team up to talk with him at his summer place. The arrangements were made and Joe Califano, Larry O'Brien who was then the Postmaster General, Milton Semer who was an attorney with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and a native of Auburn, Maine, Bob Wood, no, Bob was not on that trip, Bob did not go, Milt I think represented, yeah, Milt represented the department, and there was a fellow from the Office of Management and Budget, and I. I think that was the whole group. And we were to fly from Andrews Air Force base to Portsmouth, which was still an Air Force base at the time, and then we'd be driven from there to the Kennebunkport vacation spot. And I was told to be ready on the morning of the day for a chauffeur from the White House, who would pick me up and drive me to Andrews Air Force base, where I'd meet the others in the group.

At the appointed hour I went out of the house and there was the White House car sitting there waiting for me. And the driver took me to Andrews Air Force base, pulled out onto the tarmac in front of the operations building, and almost up to a small jet, corporate jet size. I got out and headed for the plane carrying my briefcase. I was greeted by saluting Air Force personnel, went up the small set of steps into the plane, the steward stepped forward, offered to take my coat. And as I turned to take off my coat I could see into the cabin of the plane and there noticed a

couple of people that I didn't think were going to be flying to Maine. One of them was Walt [Whitman] Rostow, and somebody else from the Defense Department.

And I turned to the steward and said, "I think I'm on the wrong plane." He said, "You're not going to the ranch?" I said, "No, I'm supposed to be going to Maine for a meeting with Senator Muskie." "Oh," he said, "you're supposed to be on the Kingair over there, or Queenair," it was a Queenair, a Beechcraft Queenair. So I took back my coat, left that plane, and walked across the tarmac to a much smaller propellor driven plane heading for Maine. I laughed over the time I almost went to the ranch in Texas. So I got on the plane. It turned out, by the way, that the White House had charged the plane to the Post Office Department, so Larry O'Brien had to pay for that plane going to Maine, not the White House.

We flew to Maine, went to the senator's summer cottage where Mrs. Muskie served us wonderful lobster stew, and negotiated the final agreement on Senator Muskie managing the legislation. There was a lot of work to be done still, and I'll talk about that, but the basic agreement was reached.

Then Senator Muskie decided that he wanted to take the group to the Kennebunk Beach post office and off we set, including the Postmaster General of the United States. Walked down sort of the road along next to the beach to the post office which was in an old cottage like, large cottage like building that had at one time probably been a store and home combined, with a front porch and big windows on the front, on the door into the post office. And you went up the stairs sort of in front of the door and the two large windows. And as we came up you could see that the postmaster himself was cancelling mail, outbound mail, and had a little machine in which you stacked up the letters and then cranked the handle and it sent the letters through one by one and cancelled them at the same time. And he would catch them in one hand and put them in a box on their way.

Well, as we came up the stairs he first saw Senator Muskie and sort of nodded and smiled at his old friend. The next thing he saw was the Postmaster General. His mouth dropped and his hand dropped, and the envelopes were spewing, and he was still turning the handle and the letters were all spewing out onto the floor as his boss entered the post office. And that pretty much wrapped up that day on the beach in Maine, and we headed back to Washington. And there followed a series of very detailed negotiations at the White House, at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and ultimately with the committee.

AL: And that's where we'll pick up next time. I think you have to run.

DN: Okay, well let me just finish this up, we can take a couple of minutes. There is a very good sort of contemporary description of the nature of those discussions and what went on in the *New York Times*, an article written by a reporter named [Kirk] Semple, and I commend that to anyone who is doing research on Model Cities.

The upshot was that with the amendments pushed by Senator Muskie, and with his advocacy in the Senate both before and during the floor debate, the legislation passed overwhelmingly and ultimately was enacted. And as a consequence of the senator's bargain, Portland had a Model

Cities project and Lewiston also had a Model Cities project. And I'm less familiar with the outcome in Lewiston, but in Portland it played a vital role in the restoration of the west end of the city, in the development of the Reiche School, which is a primary school that is now the receiving school, if you will, for a large number of immigrants moving from Africa, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe into the Portland area. There's also a project that provided a marvelous experience for new immigrants in learning about the country and learning the English language and getting assistance in the community. And finally, it served as a great training ground for a number of leaders in Portland, some of whom are still actively engaged in work for the community. So it was a, a great time to be working in a field that was going to transform, in many ways, urban policy.

It also had a side effect which was to teach the Johnson administration a lesson. We did so much work on negotiating the details of legislation, it wasn't your usual sort of pork barrel bargaining, that they concluded that there was some merit in trying to work with legislators before the fact as well as in the middle of consideration of legislation, on improving it. And for the remainder of the Johnson administration, we spent a fair amount of time working on specific problems with them. And in connection with that, I had one of my other marvelous, amusing experiences.

I went to the White House from time to time to meet with Joe Califano. Joe was somebody who enjoyed exercising the power of an assistant, senior assistant to the president. And I can remember going into his rather large office and seeing him with his feet up on the desk, in his shirt sleeves, talking with gusto about what they were doing. And on one evening when I was there, in the middle of one of his riffs, if you will, on life in the White House, the presidential phone, that is the phone connected to the president on his desk, rang, at which point Joe's feet came off the desk and he leaped to his feet and practically saluted as he picked up the phone.

Well, it so happened that the president was in Korea at the time on his trip to Korea and Vietnam, and it was not the president but one of the president's staff calling from the plane, or, no, from the, yes, I guess it was either from the plane or from the embassy in Seoul. The president was on his way from downtown Seoul to Kimpo Airfield where he was to give a farewell set of remarks before heading off to Vietnam. And they were calling, because they wanted to include in his remarks the correct figure for the number of U.S. casualties in the Korean conflict. And Joe said, "Okay, I'll get it for you." They had to have it within ten minutes because he was on his way out there.

Hung up the phone, hollered to his secretary, "Get me Bob McNamara." And I was sitting there and scratching my head, saying, because he had told me what he was after, "Why in the world would you call the secretary of Defense to ask for a, an historic number?" But I shrugged my shoulders and got up and walked out to his secretary's desk. And she was by this time telling Mr. Califano that Secretary McNamara was not in his office, not at home, and there was no way that they could reach him. So, "Then get me Cy Vance!"

And I in the meantime said, "Do you have a copy of the World Almanac?" And she said, "Yes." And I said, "May I borrow it?" Borrowed it, took it back, sat down in the corner and thumbed through it until I found the page. Joe had gotten Cy Vance, Cy Vance had asked him to wait a minute while he went to get something. About the time he came back to the phone I had found

the page and gave Joe the world almanac, pointing to the figure on the number of casualties during the Korean conflict. And Cy Vance gave him, over the phone, essentially the same number. He thanked Cy Vance, got on the phone, the presidential phone, called, and gave them the figure for the president's speech just in time.

Some years later I was in New York with Cy Vance and I asked him if he remembered that incident, and he laughed and said, "Yes." And I said, "Well I was in Califano's office at the time and I thought it rather strange to be calling first the secretary and then the deputy secretary of Defense on an issue like that, but while he was calling you I was looking up the figure in the world almanac." And Cy Vance laughed and said, "Where do you think I found it?" It's a cautionary tale about not taking too seriously everything that happens in the White House. We'll end there.

AL: Okay, thank you very much, Don.

End of Interview