

Oral History Interview
with
DAVID E. BELL

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New York City, New York
August 20, September 12, & October 16, 1968
by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: Mr. Bell, for the record, would you relate a little of your personal background, where were you born, where were you educated, and what positions did you hold prior to your service in the Truman administration?

BELL: I'd be glad to do that. I was born in North Dakota. My folks moved to California when I was about five and I went through primary and secondary school in Palo Alto where my father was on the faculty at Stanford, and I went to college at Pomona College in southern California. I

graduated in 1939. I went to Harvard for graduate work in economics, completed the M. A. in June of 1941 and had started to work on a Ph.D. when the war started, and my draft deferment was cancelled, as it should have been. For a few months in early 1942 I worked as a junior staff

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man in the Bureau of the Budget. But in the middle of 1942 I enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve, as an officer candidate. I was called to active duty and sent to OCS at Quantico in late '42, was commissioned in early '43 and was assigned as an instructor there until '45 when I was assigned to California briefly and then for several months to the G-2 Section at Marine Corps Pacific Headquarters in Hawaii.

After the war ended, I was returned from Hawaii to the States and put on inactive duty in about November or December of 1945. I had acquired a wife and baby during the war and returned to the Budget Bureau in late '45, rather than returning to Harvard to finish my economics Ph.D. In the Budget Bureau I had been assigned in 1942 to work in the War Organization Section, as it was called, which was headed by Bernard Gladieux. When I returned at the end of the war, I was assigned to the division of the Bureau that handled labor and welfare matters, and worked with Dave Stowe and Bob Clark on some of the agencies in the Labor Department and in what was then called the Federal Security Agency and later became the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. I worked with that group through 1946.

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In late '46, I think it was, Jim Webb, then Budget Director, sent to Clark Clifford in the White House some ideas on labor legislation which we had been thinking about -- it was a very important issue in those days -- as material for the January 1947 state of the Union message. It happened that Clifford was more impressed by the ideas about labor legislation that came out of our group in the Budget Bureau than he had been by any of the material that he had received from the Labor Department, or the National Labor Relations Board, or any other Government source. So he asked Stowe and me and Ross Shearer to work with him on that section of President Truman's state of the Union message in January 1947.

During early 1947 the Taft-Hartley Act was under consideration, and Clifford used us as his personal staff to keep track of the progress of the legislation, and to analyze the various provisions that were under consideration during the legislative process. And then we assisted him in drafting the Taft-Hartley veto message after the bill had been enacted. All this, incidentally, was and is not extraordinary but a frequent type of service that Budget Bureau staff members become

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involved in, because the Budget Bureau is part of the Executive Office of the President and serves as an augmentation staff for the White House. In this way I became known to Clifford and to Charlie Murphy, and in late '47 Murphy asked me to come over full-time on the White House staff working for him.

HESS: As a man who was associated with the Budget Bureau for a number of years, including a period of time as head of that Bureau, I'd like to ask you a few questions about its operation. Just how has the role of the Bureau of the Budget changed since its establishment in 1921?

BELL: Well, as I understand it -- I'm no expert on the detailed history of the Budget Bureau -- in the early days it was thought of primarily as an organization concerned with the efficiency of Government operation. They used to tell a colorful story attributed to Charles Dawes, who was one of the early Budget directors, to illustrate his conception of the Budget Bureau's work. He said, it is alleged, that the Budget Bureau was not concerned with the purpose of governmental activities, it was concerned with whether they were

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efficiently executed, and if one of the purposes, for example, of a Government agency was to dump garbage on the steps of the United States Capitol, it would be the Budget Bureau's job to find out whether this garbage was dumped at the least possible cost.

HESS: What was your view of that?

BELL: I think that's silly. I think that Government efficiency is an important part of the interest of the Budget Bureau, but I think that how much money the Government spends is influenced far more by decisions as to what the Government will undertake, and the most important questions that the Budget Bureau is involved in are questions of what the programs of the Government should be, and whether they should be enlarged or diminished. The Dawes view was, by and large, the view through the twenties and thirties.

HESS: The view that was accepted at that time?

BELL: As I understand it. I don't want to minimize the importance of the Budget Bureau in those days. It was a great step forward in the efficiency of the United States Government to have in one place the anticipated

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expenditures of the Government all accurately assembled, related to the same time period, and made available where anybody could look at them, compare parts of them, add up the totals, and so on. That had not been possible before the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, so that it was an important step forward to have a Budget Bureau at all, and to have the President required to submit a single budget to the Congress each year.

But in the late 1930s, with the Brownlow Committee -- Louis Brownlow, Charles Merriman, and Luther Gulick -- that Roosevelt appointed, a new and broader concept of the Budget Bureau came into being, which was that the Bureau ought to be a major staff arm for the President advising him on overall budget questions, policy questions related to the budget, fiscal policy, and matters of the organization of Government, and that it ought to be taken out of the Treasury where it had been up until that time, and put into a new Executive Office of the President, which was invented by the Brownlow Committee. All of this was done in about 1939.

HESS: This was the Reorganization Plan Number One of 1939.

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BELL: That's right. And the first director of the Budget Bureau under the new arrangement was Harold Smith, who had been budget director for the State of Michigan. He remained as budget director through World War II, and it was under him that I served first in the Budget Bureau in 1942. He resigned in 1945 -- I think this is right -- and went to work for the World Bank. He died shortly thereafter. He was a very fine man, an excellent budget director, and he established what is essentially the modern view, the modern role, the modern organization, and the modern methods and procedures for the United States Budget Bureau. He was succeeded, I think, immediately by Jim Webb, and later by Frank Pace, and Fred Lawton, all during Mr. Truman's term.

It isn't part of the answer to your immediate question, but it's worthy of note, I think, that in Mr. Eisenhower's two terms, the Bureau declined in importance somewhat because it was placed in the charge of accountants. Accountants are estimable people, but the particular accountants who headed the Budget Bureau during the Eisenhower years did not have the same broad conception of the Budget Bureau and its role as Smith and Webb and the others had had. So

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when I became Budget director in 1961 under Mr. Kennedy, we quickly restored the broader view which had been held earlier, which was not a novel view and was a very simple thing to do, as most of the senior staff members felt the same way I did because they had all been there in the Truman days, as I had.

HESS: The four men that you named: Smith, Webb, Pace and Lawton, did they carry out their duties in any noticeably different manner?

BELL: Well, you understand that I was a relatively junior member, first of the Budget Bureau staff and then of the White House staff in those days, and also that this was now twenty years ago. My impression is that Harold Smith had more impact on Government decisions than any of the other three, which is, I'm sure, largely due to the fact that he was in the job a long time, and he established a very intimate and effective relationship with FDR during World War II. There were a lot of issues having to do with the organization and reorganization of Government for war purposes, which were natural issues for the Budget Bureau to take

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the lead on, and many issues of war and postwar fiscal policy, on which the Budget Bureau had a good staff, and had a lot to say, so that Smith, and the Budget Bureau in Smith's day, were very significant.

Webb was also a very active Budget Director. He was in office in a crucial time, up through Mr. Truman's first term, until January 1949, I think, when he became Under Secretary of State. Webb was a vigorous figure, used the Bureau imaginatively, and in my own observation was second only to Smith in the impact that he made.

Mr. Pace and Mr. Lawton were, I think, less influential. In part, I suspect, that's because the issues that came along in their terms were less significant issues than Smith and Webb had had to deal with. In part also, I think, they are different people, and Pace was perhaps not as comfortable in the job of Budget Director as the others. He was a natural executive and, I think, was much more at home after he became Secretary of the Army with a major operational responsibility.

Fred Lawton is a superb person. I admired him greatly as a Budget Bureau staff member. He was the

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first career man to become Budget Director. He had worked in the Bureau for a long time, and in the Government for a long time. It was a significant reward for a longtime Government official to become Director of the Budget Bureau. I think Fred did a good job. He was not at home -- it was not his natural milieu -- working on major issues of Government policy. And he would, I'm sure, be the first to say that he had less impact on, say, the economic policies of the Government than his predecessors had had. But he ran a strong Budget Bureau and was a strong, effective man.

HESS: Are there any changes that should be made in the Bureau today, either in its organization or basic functions?

BELL: Well, I'm out of date somewhat, and I cannot really comment in any detail on how the Budget Bureau is organized or how it operates today. I left it in December 1962. I've known the subsequent Budget Directors well, but I'm not in any sense familiar with the organization of the Bureau today. I thought when I left -- that is now nearly six years ago -- I thought the

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Bureau had not successfully adapted -- this is obviously, as far as it's a criticism, a criticism of me more than anybody else -- had not successfully adapted to the necessity for using modern management techniques. The Bureau had done useful work on the adoption of computers in the Federal Government, standards for doing that efficiently, minimizing costs, and so on. We had successfully restored in the Kennedy years -- this is a very important matter in my opinion -- we had successfully restored the concept of direct responsibility by the operating head of each agency, and the elimination of Government by committee, which was so pernicious during the Eisenhower years, with the National Security Council machinery, and all sorts of other committees being the normal way to proceed, wasting enormous amounts of time and producing the least common denominator of results. The fact that this was done in the early Kennedy years was in significant measure a return to the system which had been followed most sharply and markedly under Mr. Truman. One of Mr. Truman's most characteristic attitudes was that he wanted to place responsibility

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clearly on an individual, to give him leeway and opportunity to function, to carry out that responsibility, and he wanted a sense of the direct line relationship between himself and the

principal officers of Government, so that they could get on with their work and he could know exactly who was responsible for any given issue.

We restored that concept easily and effectively in the early days of the Kennedy administration. And the Budget Bureau's role in doing that was significant and useful. But there is a lot more than that to the effective operation of the Government of the United States today. It's very large, very complex, and the problems it deals with are increasingly hard to handle by simple concepts of Government organization. Relationships between the executive branch and the Congress are increasingly tangled; I don't think the Budget Bureau did anything particularly useful about that when I was there. Relationships between the Federal Government and the states and localities are also increasingly tangled; again, I don't think that when I was there, the Bureau was contributing very much toward the solutions to those problems. The relationships between

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the United States and international agencies and other countries are very complex and difficult to handle efficiently and effectively. And the Bureau did a lot of work on those areas when I was there and has done more since, but they remain stubborn and intractable.

So that all of this which is really organization, communication, structure, lines of responsibility, the ways to establish a well-functioning modern Government, this is the area in which, it has seemed to me, the Budget Bureau could do more than it has done. The work that the Bureau did then and has done since on programming and planning and budgeting has been very valuable and very good, but its work in this other area has, I think, been less impressive.

HESS: What we have just covered is probably part of the answer to my next question, but what did Mr. Truman seem to believe to be the proper role of the Bureau of the Budget during his administration?

BELL: He thought of it as a strong staff agency. It was not, in any sense, positioned between him and any of his subordinates -- any of his Cabinet officers or his

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agency heads -- but he regarded it as a very valuable source of advice, information, questions, crosschecks on what the departments were doing, or said they were doing. He thought of the Bureau as providing the extraordinarily valuable services of keeping track of the budget itself, the financial side, and providing backup for the legislative process, the preparation of legislation to go to the Congress, watching the legislation while it was there, and clearing the testimony of executive branch witnesses to be sure it was consistent with what his program was and what he wanted them to say. All in all, my impression was that Mr. Truman relied heavily on the Budget Bureau for staff services of great significance to him.

HESS: Checking through the enrolled bill file at the Truman Library, I have found that Mr. Truman often placed great weight on the advice of the legislative reference service of the Bureau of the Budget, even many times as opposed to the majority of the advice from the other agencies.

BELL: That's right. And you'll find, I think, that that's probably true of every President. As I remember the process, the Budget Bureau collected the views of all

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the agencies in town concerned with a given enrolled bill, prepared a summary memorandum, and prepared, if asked, its own recommendations. It did this in very close collaboration with Charlie Murphy in the period when I worked with Murphy in the White House. He was Administrative Assistant to the President in charge of the legislative coordination process. Later he was himself Special Counsel.

I think in those instances in which the views of different departments and agencies were overridden, the President would want the views of Murphy, or sometimes Murphy and Clifford when Clifford was there, and it would be their views rather than the views of the Budget Bureau which would be given the most weight, but they relied on Budget Bureau staff work before they made up their own minds, and often the Bureau memorandum wasn't written until there had been preliminary discussions, so that the view the Budget Bureau would be stating -- the Budget Director's views -- and Murphy's or Murphy's and Clifford's views, would be the same and therefore the recommendation of the Budget Director in a sense was in line with and part of the recommendations of the President's staff.

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I'm sure there would have been cases in which the Budget Director's views were different from those of Murphy, or Murphy and Clifford, and it would be interesting to check through the files for such cases. In such a case, I would have assumed that normally the President would have agreed with Murphy, or Murphy and Clifford, rather than the Budget Director, but I don't recall any such instances offhand.

HESS: Fine. The following quote is from your sketch in the 1961 *Current Biography*

Bell also explained to the committee (the Congressional Joint Economic Committee) the Kennedy administration's concept of the budget, which, in effect, is regarded as an instrument of national policy rather than a bookkeeping device to discourage expenditure.

Was that any different than Mr. Truman's view?

BELL: I'm sure he would have agreed that the budget is an expression of national policy. He would have felt that he made policy in many instances by making budget decisions, that policy questions came to him very often in the form of budget questions. But the significance of that 1961 quote probably relates to the question of whether the size of the budget and the relationship

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between budget receipts and expenditures should be deliberately directed to influence the total economy. These are questions that have grown out of so-called Keynesian economics. On those questions, the state of understanding and acceptance of modern economics was much greater in 1961 than it was in Mr. Truman's day.

I don't recall at this late date -- I can't give you direct evidence of Mr. Truman's views on the question of whether the budget ought to be deliberately unbalanced in order to stimulate the economy or -- well, now, wait a second. Maybe I can recall something that bears on this. It seems to me that in the early days of the Korean war, one of the questions that arose was what the tax policy should be, whether taxes should be raised in order to limit the extent of the Federal Government's deficit in order in turn to limit the degree of inflation which would follow. And President Truman did recommend quick and sizable tax increases in order to limit the degree of inflation that would follow from larger Government expenditures during the Korean war, so that this was, in fact, a direct application of modern economics. So that's a piece of

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evidence, I guess, that he would have seen the matter in that way.

I don't think the question arose during his tour of office -- I don't recall it offhand, at least -- what should be done in case of a recession. There wasn't really any recession in the years immediately after the war, except for the temporary and brief hesitation in 1945, which was a result of the conversion of the economy from war to peace.

HESS: What do you recall about the press conferences that the President used to hold exclusively about the budget?

BELL: Well, I can recall some of them very well. At least one of them I remember was held over in the theater-like area alongside the corridor between the East Wing and the White House. I can't remember whether he held them there each year. It is significant, I think, that President Truman held those press conferences personally. I can remember him sitting there with John Snyder on one side, and in the one that I remember most vividly, Jim Webb was on the other. So, it would have been in

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Webb's term.

I remember Mr. Truman took great pride, and justified pride, in his knowledge of the budget. He spent many hours on it during its preparation. The practice was for the Budget Director, after he had held the appropriate internal hearings in the Budget Bureau, to prepare a memorandum on each department of Government or major agency, take it to the President, and discuss it with him. Then, of course, there was an opportunity for the head of that agency to appeal to the President if he wished to do so, so that the President frequently had to go into the matter in some detail in order to decide between the views of his Cabinet officer and the views of the Budget Director. So, Mr. Truman was thoroughly acquainted with the Budget by the time it was put together, and he took great delight in having these annual press conferences on the budget and answering the reporters' questions himself, or asking Snyder or Webb to augment what he had said, or to answer a question if there was something in greater detail than he wanted to answer himself.

HESS: Would it seem to you that President Truman had a

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greater grasp of the budget itself than most Presidents have had?

BELL: I don't think he had a greater grasp. I don't know about Mr. Roosevelt's grasp because I never had a chance to observe him closely. I have had personal experience with President Kennedy and President Johnson and both of them, like Mr. Truman, considered each budget issue as a very significant issue. They went over the agencies one by one, carefully, they listened to appeals from Cabinet officers and agency heads, and they knew the budget in considerable detail, Mr. Johnson, perhaps, in a little more detail than either Mr. Kennedy or Mr. Truman, because Mr. Johnson is a man who has an enormous capacity for detail, but with no more attention to the big questions, the important major issues, than Mr. Truman or Mr. Kennedy displayed.

HESS: What do you think the President would do if he received conflicting advice from the Bureau of the Budget and the Council of Economic Advisers? Whose advice would he take?

BELL: Well, he wouldn't normally get conflicting advice

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from those two sources. This is an important point, incidentally, which I should have mentioned earlier in response to your question about the role of the various budget directors in the war and immediate postwar years. One of the important changes in Government machinery which was made right after World War II, was the passage of the Employment Act of 1946, the establishment of the Council of Economic Advisers, and the assignment to that council of the responsibility for advising the President on overall economic policies intended to achieve full employment, and whatever the phrase is, purchasing power, or something like that.

Until that was done, the Budget Bureau in a sense combined the responsibilities of advising the President on the budget and advising him on economic policy. Under Harold Smith, those duties were taken very seriously, and the fiscal division of the Budget Bureau included such people as Gerhard Colm, J. Weldon Jones, Gardiner Means, and others, who were significant economists in their own right, imaginative, strong minded men who participated deeply in the decisions on economic and fiscal policy during World War II.

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When the Council of Economic Advisers was established, part of the Budget Bureau's earlier responsibilities in effect were transferred to the new Council of Economic Advisers.

This was a matter, incidentally, of considerable concern among the people in the Budget Bureau who had worked on these matters. I can remember during the time when the Employment Act of '46 was under consideration, there were some internal memoranda within the Budget Bureau which put forward the view that while the act itself was a useful thing, the duties that it established should be placed on the Budget Bureau, and not on a new and separate organization; that it was a mistake, in concept, in government organization, to establish a different agency. The functions should be left with the Budget Bureau.

Well, that was not the course that was taken. The new Council of Economic Advisers was established. After it had been established it was logical and appropriate that the views of that council would be the views that would be sought and listened to by the President on major issues of economic and fiscal policy. It would still be possible, indeed it would still be

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necessary, for the Budget Director and his staff to come to views on, say, the size of the budget, the size of the budget expenditures, the relationship between expenditures and receipts, whether or not there should be a deficit or a surplus, and it would also be necessary for the Council of Economic Advisers to come to views on the same set of questions. There would be other issues on which the Budget Bureau and the Council would both be appropriately involved. And in those cases the President might well get advice from both sides. I would say that under those circumstances there would be no automatic answer to the question whose views a President would pay more attention to. It would depend on what he thought of the individuals involved, it would depend on what he thought of the weight of the arguments, it would depend on the advice he got from the White House staff members.

When I was in the White House under Mr. Truman, one of my jobs was to work with the Council of Economic Advisers in the preparation of their annual economic report, which meant to participate in the raising and settling of the issues which were considered and commented on in that annual economic report. And as I

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said a minute ago, many of those issues would be of concern also to the Budget Director, so that as a White House staff member, I was often involved in this kind of argument. The Budget Director might have a somewhat different view than the Council of Economic Advisers, and sometimes I would be involved in taking an argument like that to the President, or more often, in being present when the President considered it, and I don't think he would automatically have taken the views of one over the other. He would want to listen to the views and see where he came out on the specific question that was at issue.

HESS: On the subject of the state of the Union message for 1947, which you mentioned a while ago, would you describe the relations between the White House staff and the staff of the Bureau of the Budget in drafting state of the Union messages?

BELL: In those days, you mean? Under Mr. Truman?

HESS: In those days. This particular message for one. Other than their loaning you to the White House.

BELL: I can't recall an awful lot about it. If I'm not

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mistaken the pattern of events was something like this: Jim Webb was Budget Director and he had become acquainted with Clark Clifford. Clifford was short of staff and asked Webb if he

could have somebody to help him during the preparatory stages leading up to the state of the Union message, because Clifford wanted to ask for recommendations from all of the various Government agencies, recommendations as to what should be included in the state of the Union message and what positions the President ought to take. That involved a lot of work, getting in touch with the various Government agencies, collecting and collating their reports, pulling out the important matters and the issues to be resolved and all the rest of it. Jim Webb -- I believe my recollection is correct -- made available to Clifford a man by the name of Charles Stauffacher, who was then in the Budget Bureau, a very able man, incidentally, who later during the Korean war was staff assistant to Charles Wilson in the office of Defense Mobilization, and worked there for General Lucius Clay, who offered him a job thereafter with Continental Can about 1952 or 1953 and he's still there. He's been an executive vice president of

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Continental Can, and financial vice president in recent years.

HESS: Was he assigned a specific portion of the message to write?

HESS: My recollection is that he was not assigned any portion of the message to write. He was to assist Clifford in gathering material for the message. I was a personal friend of Stauffacher's. He was from Pomona originally as I was. We had been graduate students at the same time at Harvard, and Stauffacher knew that Dave Stowe and Ross Shearer and I and others on the Budget Bureau staff had been worrying a good deal about the question of labor policy. He suggested, I think to Webb and Webb to Clifford, that Clifford might be interested in our views on that subject, so that our suggestions about labor policy for the January 1947 state of the Union message, I think were transmitted to Clifford through Stauffacher. Thereafter, Clifford called us in and talked to us and we worked with him directly. So the part of the state of the Union message which dealt with labor policy -- I see it appears here under

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the heading, "Labor and Management" and it goes on for about two pages plus* -- was originally drafted by us. That is, we prepared a draft of it for Clifford, and I'm sure he would have revised it very substantially, quite possibly rewritten it thoroughly, I can't recall at this late date. I don't know exactly where drafts of the other parts of the state of the Union message came from.

HESS: Did James Sundquist help on that message?

BELL: I don't think he helped on that one, at least I don't remember him. He was certainly around the Budget Bureau and the executive office in those days. I remember him much more vividly at the time of the Korean war. I'm sure he was on the Budget Bureau staff in the early years after the war, but I don't remember him in connection with this particular message.

HESS: What part did George Elsey play in the writing of the 1947 message?

BELL: I can't recall, but it was probably extensive because at that time Elsey was Clifford's principal personal assistant, and he probably -- although you can

*Reading from the state of the Union message for 1947, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 1947 volume.

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ask him, obviously -- he probably prepared the initial rough draft of large parts of the message, perhaps put a complete draft together from the various sources. But that's speculation.

HESS: I've heard the 1947 state of the Union message -- this was, of course, the one that was delivered at the opening session of the 80th Congress -- described as the "opening gun" for the 1948 presidential campaign. What do you say about that?

BELL: Well, I don't know. I don't think I have any useful comment on that. I do know something about later events leading up to the '48 campaign and during it, but as far as we were concerned, what we saw of the message was what I indicated. It was plain that in the President's mind the single most important issue was labor policy, and we were very pleased to have been involved in preparing that part of his policy and message, and very proud, as a matter of fact, that Clifford and the President had liked our suggestions well enough to incorporate them very largely in what was finally included in the message. But how far they saw that message as the opening gun in the 1948

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campaign, I just have no way of knowing.

HESS: Fine. I've heard that, and also the 1948 state of the Union message, referred to an "issue-making and record-building," but I didn't know exactly how much part that played in the thinking of the men who were working on them.

BELL: Well, that's a slightly broader question -- at least I would interpret it as slightly broader. There's no doubt that President Truman perceived the annual messages as a means to put before the Congress and the country the President's views of what was called for in the interest of the nation. He wanted to make his positions strong and clear. He believed that is what the Constitution requires of the President in the state of the Union message, so he tried to make those messages clear-cut and to make his recommendations stand out.

This also seemed to me thoroughly in keeping with Mr. Truman's character as a person. He liked to make an issue clear, make his statements clear, and he conceived that as part of his job in leading the country as President.

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Now, that comment is a different thing from trying to assess, which I do not have the background to do, how far the President in making the state of the Union messages in '47 and '48 was setting forth both a program of action for the Congress and the country, and a political platform for himself and his party. I would suppose that he was largely serving both purposes, and, particularly in 1948, that he paid great attention to the political effectiveness of his policy positions, as stated in the state of the Union message, because after all he would be appealing to the country and running later that year on the program that he set forth.

HESS: I think that pretty well brings us up to the 1948 state of the Union message. Did you help write that one too?

BELL: Well, by 1948, or by the end of '47, I was actually a member of the White House staff. I've forgotten the exact date on which I joined the White House staff, but it would have been sometime in the late fall, perhaps, of 1947 that I went to work for Charlie Murphy. It was the practice in the White House in those days for

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Clifford and Elsey and Murphy and myself and David Lloyd, who also worked for Charlie Murphy at that time, for the five of us to be involved in preparing messages to Congress, veto messages, public statements of various types, and speeches, so that my guess would be that I was involved in the January 1948 state of the Union message. But I have no independent recollection of what part I played in it, or indeed whether I was in it at all.

HESS: One question that is often raised about the 1948 message, instead of incorporating all of the things that were sent to Congress in the next few months, it seemed to be a broader policy, and then as you recall on February 2nd, Mr. Truman sent his ten point civil rights message in. He sent his recommendations to Congress in several special messages and didn't send them all at once that year.

BELL: I don't remember what the practice had been previously, so I'm not trying to suggest how far the arrangements you just described were invented in 1948, but it is certainly true that as the years went along, it became the practice for the President to lay some sort of a

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broad, general framework in his state of the Union message, and then to follow with a series of specific messages on different subjects: civil rights, foreign aid, defense policy, conservation, education, whatever subjects were important and on which he wanted to send special messages that year. This became so customary as to seem almost routine. It was continued through the Eisenhower years and has been continued to this day. I found it natural and customary to move back into this process when I went back into the Government in 1961 with President Kennedy. He followed the same practice. A whole string of special messages went up in the spring of 1961 on the various subjects he thought important. I hadn't remembered that that process was begun in 1948, but maybe it was. Maybe it became clearer at that time than it had been before.

HESS: You mentioned that you worked in the White House for both Clifford and Murphy. Did they conduct the business as Special Counsel in any noticeably different manner?

BELL: I've been impressed over the years with the degree to which those White House jobs respond to the demands

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of serving the President, any President, more than to the personal characteristics of the individual incumbent. So that when I went back to Washington to work for Mr. Kennedy, and saw Ted

Sorensen in the role of Special Counsel, I was astounded at the degree to which the range and nature of his duties were identical to that which I had come to know when I was with Murphy in that job, and saw Clifford in that same job. And more recently, I have had some acquaintance with Joe Califano, who today holds a very similar job, and the main substance of the work is the same.

Each of these persons as an individual is different. Clifford is different from Murphy, is different from Sorensen, is different from Califano, and in that sense their style in carrying out the job was of course substantially different. Clifford was very much at ease and at home with the senior members of the Cabinet and of the Congress and spent more of his time with such people. Murphy was more of a quiet backroom type, who was not at all afraid of working with such senior people and spent a lot of time doing it, and was very effective with members of the Cabinet and with members of the Congress as appropriate and necessary, but if he had

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a free lunch, he wouldn't necessarily choose to call up a Cabinet officer or a member of Congress, whereas Clifford would be very likely to do so. But I emphasize my first point that the nature of the job dictated what the man did, and what Clifford spent his time on in that job and what Murphy spent his time on in the job were virtually identical.

HESS: Did Clifford and Murphy hold staff meetings with their staff or did they deal on a person to person basis? There would be more members of Murphy's staff as I understand, than there would have been in Clifford's. Is that right?

BELL: Well, yes, in the limited sense that I think Elsey was the only person to work directly for Clifford. But that was in part because Murphy existed, and Murphy, while he didn't technically report to Clifford, was, in fact, a member of Clifford's wing, so to speak, at the White House, and so were those of us who worked with Murphy. So that in that sense, the size of the staff was not very different. Neither of them as I remember it held regular, formal staff meetings. They worked with individuals or they worked with groups as appropriate

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for the particular question under consideration. I remember very vividly the session in Clifford's office, after the Taft-Hartley Act was passed, when he had his final discussion as to whether or not we all thought it should be signed or vetoed. Murphy was there and myself and Stowe and I think there were one or two others, probably Elsey and Ross Shearer and maybe Harold Enarson. We discussed it at some length and then Clifford asked each of us for his opinion. I remember it in part because that was a rare thing for him to do.

HESS: What was your opinion?

BELL: I was the only one in the group who thought it was a close question, that I wouldn't have been at all adverse to seeing the President sign it. The others were very strongly of the view that the demerits greatly outweighed the advantages and that it definitely should be vetoed. I thought it was a close question then, and I still think it was a close question, on the merits. I think that if I

had been the President and been influenced not only by the merits but the politics and what it meant symbolically in terms of which direction the country ought

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to be going, I would undoubtedly have decided as he did that it ought to be vetoed. There was no problem in identifying major errors. It was a bad bill in many ways. The veto message, I thought, was a convincing and effective document. But there were also a number of provisions in the bill which in effect redressed the balance between unions and management which had been weighted pretty heavily toward the unions. In considering the bill, we also had -- this is all in the files, I'm sure -- the views of a number of the leading labor relations scholars: George Taylor of Pennsylvania; Nat [Nathan Paul] Feinsinger of Wisconsin; Ed [Edwin Emil] Witte of Wisconsin. I've forgotten them all now, but they were all polled, they all wrote down what their views were. Anyway, I recall this case not only because of the importance of the issue, but because it was rare for the matter to be considered so formally, for individuals on the staff to be polled by Clifford for their own recommendations.

HESS: In your opinion, what weight was given by Mr. Truman to the political considerations, the fact that there was an election coming up in the not too distant future

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and that he would need labor's vote?

BELL: I have no way of answering you. I don't remember having been in a discussion of the Taft-Hartley issue with Mr. Truman himself.

HESS: I'd like to ask a few questions about some of the other members of the White House staff since we've discussed Clifford and Murphy, and if you would tell me just a little bit about what their duties were, what seemed to be their relationship with the President, and with the other members of the staff, starting off with Matthew Connelly?

BELL: Matt Connelly was the Appointments Secretary. There again is a job which seems to me to be heavily influenced by the nature of the service the President requires. The job that Kenny O'Donnell did for Kennedy was very similar to the job that Matt Connelly did for Truman. I never knew Connelly very well as a person. He always seemed to me to be a rather odd fish. He was astute and clever and obviously politically sensitive. His main role, as far as I could see, was to schedule the President's appointments, to have a big voice in scheduling what

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he did on trips and so on, particularly with a view to the political relationship involved, the visits he made with members of Congress and with party leaders. It seemed to me that Matt was very little involved in the substance of policy issues. He may well have expressed his views to the President on private occasions when I wasn't there, but the times when as a staff member I was involved in meetings that Mr. Truman held to discuss the substance of policy issues, or the meetings that he held to go over speeches, messages to Congress and so on, to go over the drafts, Connelly was usually not present. So, my recollection is that he was not a significant influence

on policy and positions that the President took, but that he was very significant in the scheduling of the President's daily activities and in relations between the President and political leaders.

HESS: The next man is William Hassett?

BELL: Bill Hassett was one of the world's most pleasant people. He was the Correspondence Secretary, so-called; President Truman had inherited him in that role from Mr. Roosevelt. Hassett was a kindly, gentle, wise, witty

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person, with great charm, who handled the President's correspondence in the literal sense that he answered most of the letters that did not involve anything significant. He prepared the rather formal letters, communications that the President would send to the annual meetings of the Boy Scouts, and all that sort of thing, and he had almost nothing to do with anything of substantive policy. All of us had great affection for Bill Hassett as a person. We enjoyed talking to him, we enjoyed his company, he was a very unobtrusive person who was a constructive influence around the place because of his charm and good manners, but almost never was he involved, that I can recall, in policy questions.

HESS: The next man is Joseph Short.

BELL: Joe Short was one of the Press Secretaries. Charlie Ross was the first, that I remember.

HESS: He died on December 5, 1950.

BELL: Charlie Ross?

HESS: Yes.

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BELL: Ross, I thought, was a wise and sensible person. He was a constructive influence on the President, in bringing to him a sense of how actions would look around the country, what people would think. Ross, it seemed to me, had very high personal standards of integrity. He also, incidentally, had high standards of English style. To this day, I feel strongly about certain matters of English usage that date from some of the matters that Charlie Ross used to snort about when he went over drafts of material that we had prepared for the President. For example, Ross was highly scornful of the use of the word "presently" to mean "now." As far as Charlie Ross was concerned, the word "presently" meant "in the near future." I have not forgotten that and I have the same bias today.

Ross was like any press secretary, currently and constantly involved in the flow of news, of the day's headlines, what somebody had said that the President needed to answer, whether the President should answer a particular comment and so on. It is a strenuous, active job that involves ducking in and out of the President's office, and all of the White House offices, all of the time. I thought Ross was very good at it,

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and was a man of really great capacity.

Joe Short was, I think, Ross' successor. Short was a good man, an able man. I think he was a lesser man than Ross. I don't mean to sound derogatory. He was a man who thought easily in terms of the meaning of the Presidency to the nation, and how the President's press relations and general public relations should be conducted. He was a man of high standards. I don't think he had the breadth of experience that Charlie Ross did, and he certainly didn't have the same influence with the President, in part because Ross and the President were old friends from Missouri days; they may even have been to school together, I'm not sure.

HESS: They were in the same class in high school.

BELL: Right. And Short also died, of course, in office, and was succeeded, I think, by Roger Tubby.

HESS: Roger Tubby and Irving Perlmeter, for a while, and then Irving Perlmeter had a heart attack, I believe, during the 1952 campaign on the west coast, and then Roger Tubby was made Press Secretary, I believe, in December of '52 .

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BELL: Right. Irv Perlmeter had come over from the Treasury, if I remember rightly. Tubby and Perlmeter were much younger men. They were vigorous, sensible, active, but they didn't have nearly the seniority and status that Ross and Short had.

HESS: John R. Steelman, The Assistant to the President.

BELL: The Steelman role is an extremely interesting one, and I hope that some historian some day gets it straight. It would be difficult to do. It would be hard to tell what was the exact situation. There were times in the White House when it looked as though there was a constant, continuous and rather disturbing jockeying for position and influence between Steelman and Clifford, the two senior substantive policy advisers on the President's staff. To some extent this continued when Murphy succeeded Clifford, and it sometimes looked like and indeed sometimes was something of a contest between Steelman and Murphy.

HESS: Who was the main protagonist in the conflict?

BELL: I'm not sure what you mean by that.

HESS: Who was the one who carried the brunt of the contest?

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Was it about even?

BELL: Well, it's hard to say. Let me make one other point before answering you. At other times, the relationship did not appear to be that of a contest, but one of effective, strong and useful

cooperation between two members of the President's staff, and their respective assistants. The relationship was curious. I personally felt, and still feel, that Steelman was not nearly as strong and useful an adviser as either Clifford or Murphy. I may have a somewhat jaundiced view of Steelman, but that does not mean that he did not have and does not have, considerable capacity. He does. He came out of a much narrower background than either Clifford or Murphy. He came out of a labor relations and mediation background. He had been found somewhere by Frances Perkins, when she was Secretary of Labor, and had come up through the Labor Department Mediation Service, had ended up in the Office of War Mobilization

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and Reconversion, I think under Judge Vinson, and when Vinson left, right at the end of the war, Steelman sort of inherited that office.

There were some very good men in that office Don Kingsley, who is now with the Ford Foundation; John Thurston; Robert Turner, who was later a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers in the Truman days and more recently was Assistant Director of the Budget Bureau for fiscal policy when I was Director. I asked him to come and join me in that position.

Steelman continued to have able staff members David Stowe and Harold Enarson, who had both been on the Budget Bureau staff at the same time I had, and indeed we had all worked together in the same group, went over to the White House to work for Steelman. It was possible for those of us on the staff to work together very easily. There was never any animosity among Stowe, Enarson, Turner all of whom worked for Steelman, and Elsey, Lloyd, Neustadt, and myself, when we worked for Clifford and for Murphy. So it should by no means be understood to have been a feud or continuing struggle or battle in the simpleminded newspaper column sense, but nevertheless it was true that the organizational arrangement was

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unclear, responsibilities were unclear.

It was to some extent out of character for Mr. Truman to have left them unclear for so long. I don't know why he did it. It may well be that he felt himself somewhat at risk of being dominated intellectually by people as strong and able as Clifford and Murphy, and he wanted to have a counterweight to them. This is pure speculation on my part, and may be entirely wrong. It may be that he found advantages in Steelman for other reasons.

One of the things that Steelman brought to the White House, of course, was great expertise in labor matters at a time when labor issues were very important. All through Mr. Truman's tour there were big, complex, labor questions and Steelman was naturally the man to whom he turned very largely for the first assignment of a labor issue. At the same time, he did not give any exclusive fief to Steelman on labor issues and when legislation was to be drafted or when, as in some of the titanic clashes with John L. Lewis, there were court cases involved, or seizures to be contemplated, Clifford and later the Murphy group were always involved. At those times there was frequently a continuous teaming up of

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the Steelman group and the Clifford-Murphy group to follow and to handle and to make recommendations to the President on the issues that were involved.

What Steelman did besides labor matters was always somewhat obscure to me. There was in some sense an attempted distinction between the Clifford-Murphy type of assignment, which was to look forward and to make policy, and the Steelman type of assignment which was supposed to be to deal with on-going, current activities of Government as distinct from forward policy and program building. But this distinction is not an effective one in a governmental setting and always broke down in practice.

I remember, for example, at one time Bob Turner who was on Steelman's staff, was the White House man working on rubber: synthetic rubber, what should be done with the Government's synthetic rubber plants, what should be done with the Government's stockpile of rubber, and so on. All these questions, which are in a sense questions of current Government operation, also involved questions of legislative policy and recommendations to the Congress, so that there was no way in which the distinction between policymaking and current operations

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could be carried out.

HESS: Did you think that Mr. Steelman was a particularly effective labor negotiator?

BELL: I didn't see him close up in actual negotiations. It seemed to me that he was a vigorous negotiator. He worked hard and long, and when I heard him report, for instance at the morning staff meetings, on the current state of a labor situation, or when during some of the major crises, the Steelman group and the Clifford-Murphy group would meet together to bring each other up to date and talk about what should be done next, it seemed to me that Steelman frequently described the situation succinctly and crisply and with great accuracy. But whether he was an effective negotiator, I don't know. I would suppose that he probably was.

HESS: Did you ever hear where he picked up the title: "The Assistant to the President?"

BELL: No. I have a vague recollection that I once knew something about that, but I don't recall it now. Charlie Murphy or Clark Clifford would probably remember. I'm sure it was to distinguish him somehow from the various

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other assistants that were around.

In those days, of course, there were a series of "Administrative Assistants" to the President, a term which had been invented by the Brownlow Commission at the same time the Executive Office of the President was created. It was a position of considerable honor and respect, as I remember vividly because I was later made one myself. Later on, of course, especially in the Eisenhower years, there was an inflation of titles, and by the time I went back to the Government in '61, the title "administrative assistant" described a rather low man on the totem pole. By then

everybody wanted to be a special assistant to the President, and most people were. Nowadays, I'm sure, very junior staff men are called special assistant to the President.

Well, this was beginning way back then, and I suppose somebody figured out "The Assistant" as indicating some sort of seniority and status as against the Special Counsel to the President who was Clifford, the Appointments Secretary to the President who was Connelly, the Correspondence Secretary, the Press Secretary, and so on.

HESS: A few moments ago we were discussing the disagreements, to use the word, between Dr. Steelman on one side and Clifford and Murphy on the other. I was trying to get across the point of who seemed to be carrying on the brunt of the antagonism, was it more on one side than the other?

BELL: I don't want to give you the impression that there was a lot of antagonism. I don't think there was. I didn't see significant personal antagonism. They all were friends

HESS: Was it more a fight for power and status?

BELL: Perhaps. There were frequently times when there was a question as to who should handle a particular piece of business for the President, and there was often a great deal of jockeying on such an issue, and there was normally a very strong view -- which I shared -- in the Clifford-Murphy group that Clifford or Murphy, either one, would be more competent to work it out, and get a rounded judgment and a strong position, if it was a policy question or a program question, than if the job were handed to Dr. Steelman. As I said

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earlier, this does not mean that any of us had any personal antagonism to Dr. Steelman, or that we didn't think he had a lot of talent in other lines, but the job of analyzing a policy or program issue, and putting it into form first for the President to face it and decide it, and then into action form in a message to the Congress or a position on a piece of legislation or a public speech -- that job, we thought, was done in a superior manner by Clifford and Murphy. And while, of course, I can't quote them, it's my impression that they thought so too, as opposed to the same job being done by Dr. Steelman. That led, naturally, to jockeying for position, and I suppose to some polite discussions with the President, which occasionally, no doubt, would have gotten a job reassigned, or gotten somebody else into the act if it had been assigned in the first instance, say to Steelman, and Clifford or Murphy wanted to be in on it also.

HESS: Just a question on Clifford and Murphy. In your opinion, which of those two gentlemen carried out the job in a more competent manner? Who was the best man of the two?

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BELL: Well, I rate both of them extremely highly. I think they are two of the very best men I have ever known anywhere, let alone in Government. I think Clifford and Murphy and Ted Sorensen are all extremely able men, and the respective Presidents for whom they worked were very fortunate to have them. I think that if I had to rank them I would probably rank them Sorensen, Clifford, Murphy, but that's like ranking people on a scale of a hundred at ninety-nine,

ninety-eight and ninety-seven. It's no slur on any of them. Murphy was certainly the easiest of the three to work with. They were all courteous and gentlemanly. Clifford was, undoubtedly, the most at home with senior members of Congress and the Cabinet. Sorensen was undoubtedly the most brilliant and imaginative. But I repeat, all of them were absolutely top-notch men in my observation, and there is very little to choose among them.

HESS: In several books that have come out recently, one of them I have here, *The Truman Presidency* by Cabell Phillips, Clark Clifford's political strategy for the 1948 campaign has been given quite a big play. How

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would you rate Clark Clifford's political advice to President Truman at this time?

BELL: I have read about that. I never saw the document at that time. I was not involved in those discussions, so I have very little to add to that. Looking back, like everybody else, I am filled with admiration for the accuracy and insight that were displayed. My guess, incidentally, is that a document like that, while it was undoubtedly prepared by Clifford and signed by him, would have been based on discussions between Clifford and Murphy, among others, in the sense that Clifford would have drawn on Murphy's advice, as well as that of others. And my observation of Murphy is that he has extremely shrewd views on political issues. I say that not in the slightest to derogate from Clifford's competence or achievement.

HESS: I believe at that time they were holding meetings on Monday night at Oscar Ewing's apartment, at the Wardman Park.

BELL: Quite possibly. I was never involved in any of those. But I do know that Murphy as well as Clifford

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was a close friend of Jack Ewing and of Oscar Chapman and Charlie Brannan and the others who were involved in all that.

HESS: Just what was your involvement in the '48 campaign? This is getting off the subject a little bit.

BELL: That's all right. It was fairly limited. I did not travel, as I remember it, on any of the campaign trains. I did go with the President to the convention. I was in his party when he went to the hall where the convention was held in Philadelphia.

I have an extraordinarily vivid recollection of that night. The President was, of course, regarded as a sure loser at that time. Dewey had been nominated, and was already assumed to have been elected. The evening that the President went up to Philadelphia, some of the southern delegations had walked out, Alabama and half of Mississippi, or Mississippi and half of Alabama, I've forgotten, and they were, of course, later to nominate Strom Thurmond.

It was miserably hot, and the hall was not air-conditioned. The proceedings continued all through the evening. It was perhaps two o'clock or two thirty

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in the morning before the President was called on to make his acceptance speech. We had been in Philadelphia since early evening. While the President was in a room backstage, those of us on his staff were wandering around the hall and observing what was going on. The delegates that evening were a tired, dispirited, soggy mass of beaten humanity. And when President Truman started his acceptance speech, they were listless and exhausted.

I'll never forget the beginning of that acceptance speech. I can't recall the exact words, but the President said, with enormous vigor, something like this: "I want to thank you for your nomination, and Senator Barkley and I are going out and win this election and don't you forget it." And the crowd suddenly came to life with a roar.

It was in that speech that the President announced that he was going to call the Congress back into session -- the Turnip Day session -- to see if it would support the positive program that had been written into the Republican platform, but which the Republicans in Congress, of course, had been refusing to enact for the previous two years.

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HESS: Where did that idea originate?

BELL: I'm sure it originated with the President and his staff. As I recall it, we hadn't prepared a full text for that speech. We prepared notes for the President to use. It had already become clear that the President spoke better from notes than when he read a text throughout. I don't remember whether this particular announcement was in the notes or not. That's obviously available in the records. But the absolutely dazzling way in which the President brought that crowd together and to its feet with a fighting speech at two thirty in the morning, is one of the great recollections that I have of that time.

You asked me about my general participation in the '48 campaign. Of course, there had been speeches and activities earlier than the convention, and as a member of the White House staff, I had worked on those. During the campaign, as I said, as far as I remember I worked entirely in Washington, and late in the summer, sometime, I was transferred back to the Budget Bureau staff. This was an act of grace, I think. I didn't have anything to do with it. It was just suggested to me one day. I think

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Pace and Murphy figured that I, and perhaps one or two others who had come over from civil service jobs, and who were junior assistants on the White House staff, if we moved back into the Budget Bureau were likely to be able to keep our jobs if Mr. Truman were defeated, as it then looked as though he would be. And since by that time I had a wife and two children, I fell in with this idea very readily. Now whether, in fact, I would have felt comfortable and appropriate staying on in the Budget Bureau under Mr. Dewey I have no idea; the question didn't arise.

Later, of course, in 1953, when the transition came, I had a presidential appointment and the issue was different. As a presidential appointee, I naturally resigned and left Government.

In 1948 , when I went back to the Budget Bureau staff I was still called on occasionally, but I did not work full-time as a White House staff member. I helped now and then on drafting speeches. I cannot recall vividly what sorts of speeches I worked on. I can remember working on speeches in the atomic energy field, and on conservation matters, which were things I had been doing some work on when I was on the White House staff.

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The President, in those days, traveled by train, and what he had was a series of major addresses, all of which were prepared as full texts, although sometimes they were translated into outline form for his use. He also had a series of whistle stop speeches which were usually put together in outline form for his use in the various places that his train stopped during the day. It seems like an enormous amount of work, looking back, but we were always proud of the fact that all of his material was different. Every major speech was different, every whistle stop was different. I don't mean that some of the themes weren't repeated -- a lot of them were -- but everything was tailored for the particular audience and the particular location where he was going to be.

Much of this work was done by the so-called Research Division of the Democratic National Committee, under Bill Batt, which was a strong organization. My recollection is that Jim Sundquist worked there, incidentally, during that campaign. And it may have been that in the later stages of the campaign when Murphy needed more help, perhaps in part because I went back to the Budget Bureau, I think he got Jim Sundquist to

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work directly for him, but this is all a rather thin recollection. You no doubt have a tape with Sundquist. Also working for Bill Batt were various others. It's conceivable that that's where Dave Lloyd came from.

HESS: That's correct.

BELL: He was on Batt's staff, and it was from there that he was asked to join Murphy.

HESS: Kenneth Birkhead, who is now with the Department of Agriculture. Johannes Hoeber...

BELL: Yes, that's right.

HESS: ...Philip Dreyer.

BELL: I don't remember him. It was a very fine staff and they did a lot of work. And, as I say, the veterans of that particular campaign have always looked rather scornfully on some of the more recent campaigners, like, Mr. Nixon and Mr. Reagan whose practice it is to repeat the same speech over and over and over again.

HESS: In June of that year, 1948, Mr. Truman took his

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so-called nonpolitical tour of the West. Do you recall anything in particular about that? Did you make that trip?

BELL: Well, you'll have to remind me. I took a trip all right. I would have said it was in June 1950.

HESS: Well, there was a trip in May of 1950.

BELL: May of '50, I mean.

HESS: That was when they went out to the Grand Coulee Dam, I believe, for the rededication of the dam.

BELL: Right.

HESS: I have found some drafts -- I knew that you were involved in that, but I did not know if you were involved in the nonpolitical trip in June of 1948.

BELL: Where did this trip...

HESS: They went out to Berkeley. He received an honorary degree at Berkeley, California, and made speeches at Seattle, and Los Angeles. It was sort of a preliminary shakedown trip.

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BELL: No, my recollection is that I did not go on that trip, but I did go on the one in May, 1950.

It has always been interesting to me to think about the question of whether the members of Mr. Truman's staff expected him to win in 1948. I certainly did not, and I believe that most members of his staff did not. I remember discussing this question with Charlie Murphy after the election, and Murphy described to me a period sometime a week or two before the actual election, when the campaign train was in the Midwest, and when Jake More, who was national committeeman or state chairman in Iowa, told Mr. Truman he was going to carry Iowa. Well, if Mr. Truman was going to carry Iowa, that was a very startling and important fact, since Iowa was a solidly Republican state. According to Murphy, it was that report to Mr. Truman that convinced him that he would win, and therefore the victory was not a surprise to Mr. Truman.

Murphy and others felt that Jake More must be optimistic. They were pleased to hear it and thought that it meant that the President had much more of a chance than they had earlier felt, but that the odds were still heavily against him. At the time, I heard

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Elsey talk about the matter and report on Clifford's views. Clifford and Murphy and Elsey, as I remember, were all on the campaign train most of the way through that last month or so. I don't

mean to assert what their own views may have been by election day. It may have been that one or all of them agreed with the President in thinking that he was going to win.

But the general view in the campaign group was that he was waging a gallant and effective battle which was extremely significant in establishing policy issues which would be important to the future of the Democratic Party, that it was important that he make the best fight possible, not only for that reason, but because it would influence the election of members of the House and of the Senate, but that it was a losing game.

I recall, as of course many others do, sitting up all that night as the election returns came in over the radio.

HESS: Where were you then?

BELL: I was in Washington in our apartment. My wife sat up with me. My wife is a very strong Democrat. She

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sat up with me most of the night. We had a six months old baby and she went to bed about five or thereabouts, and I just stayed up. I can remember going into Murphy's office about nine or ten o'clock the next morning, in the old Executive Office Building, about the time that Dewey formally conceded, and the enormous delight that all of us felt at that time.

HESS: Do you recall what Mr. More based his optimism on, why he thought Mr. Truman would carry the farm state, as he did?

BELL: I've never understood what it is that allows political figures, whether they are candidates or managers and organizers, to assess the likely results of elections. I suppose their methods differ. I know that Kenny Birkhead, I've forgotten whether it was at that time, or later, asserted that he had an infallible precinct. There were something like eighteen votes in it and he counted them all and he could tell by the swing of one or two votes what was going to happen nationally. I never knew quite how much Kenny was just making a joke and how much this was a real indicator of what was likely to happen. So I

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don't know -- or at least I don't remember -- what it was that More based his views on.

HESS: One of the things that many political scientists say helped swing the farm vote was the fact that the Congress had rewritten the charter for the Commodity Credit Corporation shortly before then, and had left out money for grain storage bins, so the farmers could not store their excess wheat crop, which was a very large crop that year, and if they couldn't store it in Government bins, then they couldn't get price supports.

BELL: That's right. Government approved bins. They didn't have to be Government owned. I would have recalled it as corn rather than wheat.

HESS: It could have been. Anyway, it was grain.

BELL: Yes, grain storage bins was an important matter. It was inherently important, and it was made into an important political issue by the President. He pounded on that and every other political issue he could find, and this one was especially effective because it was so obviously correct. The Congress had

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done this foolish thing, and it was the Republicans who had done it, over Democratic objection, so they had only themselves to blame.

HESS: In that campaign, Mr. Truman seems to make the 80th Congress his main protagonist and not Tom Dewey. Why do you think that decision was made? Why did he, more or less, run against Congress rather than against the man who was the Republican standard-bearer?

BELL: I don't know the considerations that went into that. I assume it was because the "Republican no-good, do-nothing, 80th Congress" presented him with issues that were clear and effective. Tom Dewey was a fairly elusive target. He had been a reasonably good Governor of New York and hadn't taken many stands on important issues, so the Congress was a good target and Dewey was not. But this is all speculation on my part. I do not recall any discussion of it at the time.

HESS: Some political scientists like to point out, that the things that Mr. Truman will be remembered for, the Greek-Turkish aid plan, the Marshall plan, the Truman Doctrine, were passed by the 80th Congress. And that

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the 80th Congress wasn't all that bad.

BELL: Yes, the 80th Congress had a good record on foreign policy, and foreign aid. That was largely Senator [Arthur H.] Vandenberg 's doing. It was very important, and I think it would be correct to say that the President certainly did not emphasize that point during that campaign. At the same time, I think his criticism of the 80th Congress was directed at points where they were vulnerable, and he certainly didn't criticize them for supporting him on the Greek-Turkish aid, the Marshall plan, and so on.

HESS: Fine. Is that everything on the election?

BELL: That's all I remember.

HESS: All right, let's get back to our list of men, and our first administrative assistant would be Donald S. Dawson.

BELL: Don Dawson was a personnel man in the White House, roughly corresponding to what John Macy has done more recently for Mr. Johnson. I don't know what Dawson's background was or how he got into that job, but he

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worked on presidential appointments and to some small extent on personnel legislation, although most of that was handled by the Budget Bureau and the Civil Service Commission.

HESS: And David Stowe, we've mentioned a few times.

BELL: Stowe was my boss in the Budget Bureau right after the war and I've forgotten when he went over to the White House. I think he went over about the same time I did, perhaps a little later. He was a labor specialist most of the time in the Budget Bureau and in the White House. He worked on some other issues, but labor was his primary role.

HESS: He was deputy to Dr. Steelman for quite some time, until 1949 and then made administrative assistant.

David D. Lloyd.

BELL: Dave Lloyd worked for Murphy as I did. The two of us were a pair. Lloyd was an enormously gifted man who was trained in the law, at Harvard Law School, but never practiced - - deliberately, because he didn't want to practice law. He wanted to work for the Government.

He wrote a novel or two. I'm sure he was the most gifted

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speechwriter of all of us, in the sense of using the English language effectively. All of us admired him greatly, and I suppose that apart from campaign periods when so many people participated, more of the words the President used from his staff would have come from Lloyd than from anybody else. He was also a very imaginative and perceptive man. It was he who found -- what's the name of the fellow in the State Department -- Hardy, was it, who was the source of the idea for point four?

HESS: Benjamin Hardy?

BELL: Benjamin Hardy. He found Ben Hardy in the State Department. Hardy had tried without success to get the point four idea up through the echelons of the State Department and had been rebuffed at every turn. Lloyd found him and brought that idea to the President at the time the inaugural address was being drafted in early 1949. The President, of course, liked it instantly and incorporated it into the speech.

Lloyd was a strong liberal. He was, I think, attacked mildly during the McCarthy days, probably by McCarthy himself, but there was nothing significant in his record that gave McCarthy a handle. Dave had

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been a strong liberal but had never joined an organization which made him vulnerable to a McCarthy-type attack. He and I were named administrative assistants to the President at the

same time and were sworn in together, in December, 1951. He died suddenly, and prematurely, in the early '60s, shortly after my wife and I went back to Washington.

HESS: Clayton Fritchey.

BELL: Clay Fritchey was, I think, brought into the press office as an assistant press officer. I didn't realize he was an administrative assistant to the President.

HESS: The dates I have are June 2, 1952 until December 12, 1952.

BELL: I don't know how he happened to be brought in. Fritchey was not a significant figure to me until Stevenson was nominated, in '52 and visited the White House, and Fritchey and I were suddenly told that we were to go back to Springfield with Governor Stevenson and help him in the campaign and act as liaison between his staff and the White House. Fritchey worked

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essentially in the press office, or the press relations staff of Governor Stevenson, and I worked with the research staff, the speechwriting staff, while we were in Springfield.

HESS: At what time was that, was this in August?

BELL: This was in August. I don't know the exact day, but I would have said about middle August.

HESS: Fine. Well, we'll come to that and go over it a little more thoroughly when we come to the '52 campaign.

Philleo Nash.

BELL: Philleo was the civil rights specialist on the White House staff. He had been brought in under Dave Niles, and then succeeded Niles. Philleo and his wife, and my wife and I, became very close friends. After the Truman years Philleo was elected Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin, and then was brought back by Mr. Kennedy and made Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He is living in Washington now as a consultant in development.

He was very sensitive and very effective in civil rights matters, and is entitled to a lot of the credit,

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I think, for Mr. Truman's generally strong and progressive stand on civil rights issues. I've always thought this is one of the areas in which Mr. Truman is entitled to great credit, partly because of his firm convictions in the field, having come from a fairly southern background. I think he had slave-owning ancestors. But he was very clear on the issue and Philleo, and Dave Niles before him, were very effective in bringing to the President the particular issues on which he could move, such as the abolition of all-Negro army units during the Korean war, and the civil

rights committee headed by Charles Wilson in 1947, which was one of the best presidential commission reports in those years, I suppose one of the best ever.

HESS: The one entitled "To Secure These Rights?"

BELL: "To Secure These Rights," yes.

HESS: Some historians say that Mr. Truman's views and pronouncements on civil rights were taken from a stand of political expediency. What would you say about that?

BELL: That wouldn't be my observation. I saw some of them

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fairly close up and my very strong impression was that he was quite clear in his mind as to where he stood on those matters. I'm not sure I can cite you chapter and verse to back that up, but it was a matter on which my own views were very strong, and I think I would have been sensitive to any hollowness or superficiality or hypocrisy on his part. I'm sure Philleo would be a much better witness on this than I because he must have discussed it many times and many hours with the President as I did not. But I came out of those years with a clear sense that while Mr. Truman felt, as we all did, that there were limits on the rate at which these things could be changed, given our history, there wasn't any doubt that he wanted them changed and would do whatever he could to change them.

HESS: In your opinion, how successful was Mr. Truman in separating the view he thought he should take as President and the view that he might hold as an individual?

BELL: Well, I don't know.

HESS: Do you think that would arise?

BELL: I don't think I can cite you evidence on that. My

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own picture of Mr. Truman, which is one of enormous admiration, includes the feeling that he was a man of great integrity in the sense that he reacted to issues in a straightforward manner. He said what he thought about them. It was not natural for him to dissemble or to think first, "Now, how should I react to this." It was natural for him, in my observation, to react. If somebody brought him an issue he would say what he thought about it. And if the politics of his views were wrong, people would have to argue with him about it, and bring that to his attention. From my observation, he did not see an issue through political glasses first. He saw the merits first, and then, if necessary, he might modify his stand or what he said about it, in the light of political reality.

HESS: And the man who held the post as special assistant to the President, from '49 to '53, Kenneth Hechler.

BELL: Oh, yes. I'd forgotten that title.

HESS: He and Richard Neustadt both held the title.

BELL: That's right, and that's an interesting point. In those days, the title "administrative assistant" was

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regarded as higher than the title "special assistant," but there were a limited number of administrative assistants authorized, and when Heckler and Neustadt came along, there weren't any such positions -- I don't know that they would have been named to them anyway -- and so they invented the title "Special assistant to the President." Incidentally, for those of us who had been on the White House staff in the earlier years, when I first went on, they invented the title -- I think they invented it for me, maybe they had used it for others -- "special assistant in the White House office," not "special assistant to the President." That was a kind of a staff assignment, but I'm sure you're right that Heckler and Neustadt were called special assistant to the President. But, as I say, it was a junior title at that time, lesser than administrative assistants, although the two titles became reversed later on.

Heckler -- where had we heard of Heckler? I'm not sure but what Murphy found him at the time we were preparing for that 1950 trip west. He had been working on the Hill. I think he was a political science student, or something like that. He turned out to be an enormous

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worker, a very pleasant and effective fellow, and he became a member of the Murphy team. He's now a Congressman from West Virginia, in his third, or fourth, or fifth term, still fascinated by politics.

We had gotten to know Neustadt because he worked in the Budget Bureau on the legislative reference staff under Roger Jones. He took a year or so off to finish his Ph.D. on the subject of the legislative reference process, up at Harvard, and after he came back, he again worked, I think, in the Budget Bureau. He was at one stage, I think, a personal assistant to Jim Webb. He was one of the bright young guys around the White House and Budget Bureau and executive office complex; and he came to work for Murphy, exactly when I don't remember.

As I remember it, the most important piece of drafting that Neustadt did was on the President's farewell message, in 1953. This was a very interesting occasion, an interesting speech, because the President's candidate, had, after all, been beaten, and Mr. Truman gave a kind of farewell address on the radio in January.

HESS: All right. And Rear Admiral Robert L. Dennison.

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BELL: Bob Dennison was the Naval Aide, but at that time the naval aide had quite a different role than he had later under President Eisenhower. I think this stemmed from the role of the naval aide during the war, when the Navy had the duty of establishing the information center in

the White House, the war room, the map room. The successive naval aides, therefore, were the channel through which the President received his information on the course of the war, his intelligence briefings, his classified messages and so on. Clifford was assigned to the map room, that's how he got into the White House in the first place.

HESS: And George Elsey.

BELL: George Elsey -- that's how Clifford found Elsey. Elsey was a junior officer in the map room. Well, Dennison was assigned as naval aide and inherited this particular array of activity. Dennison was an extremely able man, and became useful to the President on some issues of foreign and military policy. He was by no means as significant as Admiral Leahy had been, but he was much more involved in policy matters than, say, General Vaughan was. Vaughan was a close friend of the President's,

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and he was a man of more substance than he was given credit for at the time, but he was not involved in policy. He was jovial, friendly, an entertaining person, but not a significant man in policy matters. Dennison was, to some extent, on the communications network, and was certainly involved in that way, but I don't know how much farther.

This is a significant point, incidentally, in relation to another matter. The one big difference between the White House staff in those years and the White House staff today, as it was reconstituted under Mr. Kennedy and largely persists to this day, is that there was nobody in the Truman White House who corresponded to McGeorge Bundy under Kennedy and Johnson. That role had not yet been identified clearly.

There were people who in effect handled parts of it. The National Security Council was invented sometime in the early Truman years, and there was an executive secretary of the National Security Council, who I think at that time was Jimmy [James S.] Lay, or maybe he was an assistant, and Sidney Souers was the executive secretary. Both Souers and Lay were to some extent involved in advising the President, keeping his communication

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channels clear, keeping intelligence information flowing to him, and so on, in those years. Souers had been a Reserve rear admiral, and was a friend of the President's from Missouri, a good man, an able man, very helpful to him. And Lay was also a useful man, although much less strong on policy matters and primarily a fellow who carried papers around and made sure the President saw documents in the intelligence and foreign policy field that he ought to see. Souers I suppose was the closest to a Bundy, but he was in and out of Washington, and was actually on that job only on part-time duty much of the time.

Nobody in the Truman White House had anywhere near the influence or the significant role in the White House that McGeorge Bundy had under Kennedy and Johnson. It's interesting to speculate about what that meant for the role of the White House staff in relation to the State Department.

HESS: One question on Harry Vaughan. Mr. Truman was accused of having the Missouri gang in the White House, and it seemed that the press seemed to zero in on Harry Vaughan. Why do you think he was sought out as a target, if you do agree?

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BELL: Because he was a perfectly easy, simple target. He was a man who spoke his mind. He did some things that were imprudent. It was easy to criticize him. I always thought that most of this criticism was erroneous on two counts: first it was assumed that Vaughan was an important policy adviser of the President's, which he was not; and second, most of it did not correctly describe what Vaughan thought or what he did. I thought he was a much maligned person, and I felt very sorry for him.

HESS: And one other service aide, Major General Landry.

BELL: Bob Landry was assigned by the Air Force to be the Air Force Aide. He confined himself pretty much to being air aide, that is to say he organized the planes and carried messages between the Air Force and the President. He was neither as close a friend as Harry Vaughan nor as able or strong a man as Bob Dennison.

HESS: Your sketch in the *Current Biography* states that you wrote some of Mr. Truman's speeches on economic affairs. Do you recall which ones those were?

BELL: I don't know where they could have gotten that

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information. I worked on all sorts of speeches for Mr. Truman, but the process of speech drafting for him was such that there was very rarely a single author for any speech. It was typically a collegial process, and Mr. Truman himself did a lot of drafting in the late stages.

HESS: That's a good question. Just how were those speeches written?

BELL: There is on record an excellent description of this by John Hersey. He wrote a series of articles in the *New Yorker*. It was during the Korean war, and in preparation for the articles, he sat in on some of the speech drafting sessions and came to know some of us around the White House quite well. Our instructions were to show him everything and let him see how it was done. Hersey's pieces were excellent, I thought. I was always puzzled that they weren't published as a separate book. I thought they were one of the best things Hersey ever did.

He was very accurate: We were all astonished at how precise his memory was, because while he was

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with us in those speech drafting sessions, in the Cabinet Room with the President, he didn't seem to make extensive notes. He would make a little scribble on a piece of paper now and then. He must have gone right back to the hotel and dictated the whole thing, and he must have had nearly

total recall, because there was hardly anything in that whole series of articles that any of us would have felt was wrong in shading, let alone in general purport.

Hersey's description, therefore, stands as quite an accurate indicator of the process. Typically, there would be an initial discussion with the President to get a sense of what he would like to cover, the general thoughts he would like to get across, the policy positions he'd like to put forward, what effect he'd like the speech to have. Then there would be further discussions among the group of us, and somebody would be assigned to write the first draft. That was very often David Lloyd. Then there would be a process of going slowly over the draft several times. These sessions would last for hours. I suppose that we worked more evenings than not, and more weekends than not.

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My wife remembers those years, incidentally, with great distaste. It was a miserable time for her. She thinks of the whole five years as essentially a period when I came home to sleep, and not very many hours at that. She has great sympathy for the wives of the people who do this sort of thing nowadays.

Anyway, much of the time that we worked on speeches we sat around, two of us, three of us, four of us -- rarely as many as five, typically three or four of us -- going over the speech page by page, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, trying to improve it, make it stronger, clearer, more telling. Then at a fairly advanced stage -- I'm not trying to describe a process that went on for weeks, but it probably went on for two or three days, for each speech, or for a message to Congress -- we would take it in and go over it, the group of us, with the President. If it was a speech, he would read it aloud and would comment on it, direct what changes he wanted made, and the rest of us would make notes on what we thought ought to be changed for impact or effectiveness.

Sometimes outsiders would be brought in at that stage, members of the Cabinet or others, to see what

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they thought of it. This was a risky process, because it is very easy to criticize things like that, and frequently we would get scathing comments from Cabinet officers. We got to the point where we distinguished between the "workers" and the "drones." The drones were the Cabinet officers who would make free-swinging, strong comments to the effect that major parts of the speech ought to be rewritten or replaced, and then they would leave to go play golf. The workers -- Dean Acheson, for example, was one of them, and Charlie Brannan was another -- also would make comments that might be very scathing. I remember a classic occasion, during the Korean war. We had worked hard and prepared a draft and the President read it, and when he got through Dean Acheson said with that magnificent English manner of his: "You can't ask the President of the United States to utter this crap." And he was probably right. But he or Brannan, when they did something like that, would get up and take off their coats and say, "Where's the nearest typewriter." And they would prepare an alternate draft, something they thought would be more appropriate. We always had more respect for them.

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HESS: Who were some of the drones?

BELL: I'm not sure I should name anybody; I would hesitate to blacken anybody's reputation.

After a session with the President of that type, the text would normally be polished up in line with whatever had been decided, often by the personal ministrations of Clifford and Murphy and the President himself. And it would be wrapped up. This process, of course, is illustrated in many of the drafts which exist in the Library's files.

HESS: If the speech was going to be on labor would the Department of Labor submit the draft, or would they submit questions or their thoughts ahead of time?

BELL: It depended in part on what they were asked for. Normally they would be asked for recommendations. Sometimes they would be asked for a draft, particularly if it was thought there was anybody in the Department of Labor who could produce a useful draft. Certainly they would be invited to comment when the draft was ready. There was a process of clearing all speech drafts and message drafts, sometimes via the Budget

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Bureau, sometimes direct, using White House messengers. This might happen at night or on a Sunday or whenever, and the people would be sought out wherever they were and their comments would be requested. I'm sure this process goes on today.

HESS: On the subject of White House-congressional liaison, just how was that liaison carried on during the Truman administration? Just how did Mr. Truman seek to gain support for his proposals?

BELL: Well, I don't know too much about all that. Murphy had worked on the Hill in the office of the Legislative Counsel of the Senate, and knew a lot of people up there personally. Clifford also did a lot of personal work. President Truman didn't have staff of the kind that Larry O'Brien later organized under Mr. Kennedy until sometime in his second term, when he got Charlie Maylon and Joe Feeney.

HESS: 1949.

BELL: 1949, was it that early?

HESS: Yes, that's right.

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BELL: I think Feeney worked the Senate side and Maylon the House. They had been found effective people to work with the Congress, and they were, in a sense, the kind of staff that O'Brien later had, that is, staff who worked the Hill regularly, maintained liaison with the committees and leading members, and conveyed to the President what the attitude on the Hill was on a given subject, and vice versa. All this was facilitated, of course, by the fact that the

President himself had served on the Hill, as well as Murphy's having been up there. Both of them therefore were old hands, knowing everybody and knowing the ropes.

I remember a very painful incident that happened when Steve Spingarn was working with us on the White House staff. We all liked him very much. He was an attractive, vigorous figure, but he got himself crossways with somebody important on the Hill, I've forgotten who it was, I never knew the story in detail. It happened very suddenly. Apparently, he gave somebody on the Hill the impression that he had a very low opinion of him, or he missed a base he should have touched, and somebody on the Hill ended up feeling very insulted. He called the President and Steve was moved

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on from the White House. He was given a post on the Federal Trade Commission, for which he was very well qualified, and he did it very well, as he's an able man. But he didn't have any idea of leaving the White House staff. He handled congressional relations in some manner that was very unfortunate, and it caused him to be bounced.

The only other case of someone being bounced was George Elsey, who was bounced because he leaked the Wake Island minutes to Tony Leviero of the *New York Times*. The episode got Leviero a Pulitzer Prize which always struck me as rather funny because Leviero didn't do a damned thing to get that prize except answer his telephone. Elsey offered it to him, and he took it and put it in the *Times*. Elsey did it, of course, because he thought it was extremely important, at the time of the MacArthur crisis, that people have a correct impression of what happened at Wake Island. They were not getting a correct impression from what MacArthur was saying. The document, I imagine, was classified "Secret" or "Top-Secret," and it was strictly his own idea and strictly against regulations. I don't think he was on active duty as a naval officer, or there might have

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been a question whether he would have to be court-martialed. But the President felt he had to let him go, and I think he was probably right, and Elsey thought at the time he was probably right. Elsey felt that he had to do this. He recognized that he was acting against regulations and was prepared for the consequences.

HESS: He did this on his own without checking with anyone else first?

BELL: That is my impression, yes. He told me so, and I believed him at the time, and I have not heard anything in the intervening years to make me think differently .

HESS: That's the article that was published in the *New York Times* on April 21, 1951, shortly after the MacArthur episode?

I've heard that Mr. Truman was not enthusiastic about having a well-organized liaison between his White House aides and members of Congress. What is your reaction to that?

BELL: It doesn't sound right to me. He was an orderly

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person, and understood the value of liaison, and I would have assumed was very happy to have Feeney and Maylon added to the staff. I suspect it was Murphy's idea, and I didn't have any impression that the President didn't like.

HESS: The President usually met with the so-called "Big Four" once a week. Would he usually carry on his own congressional liaison at that time?

BELL: Yes, in the sense that that's part of the congressional liaison business. But, of course, there were lots of committee chairmen who weren't there, and lots of members who weren't there, so there's much more to the congressional liaison process than that. Incidentally, at those meetings, I believe Murphy was usually present. His staff, and later the Budget Bureau staff, prepared a summary of the legislative position of the President's program, which formed the agenda for such meetings.

HESS: How close was the President to Leslie Biffle?

BELL: I couldn't tell you. He was obviously a good friend, but beyond that I have no impression.

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Second Oral History Interview with David E. Bell, New York City, New York, September 12, 1968. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: Mr. Bell, today, let's start off by discussing two of the three big messages. In our last interview, we discussed the writing of the state of the Union messages. The other two messages that we should mention are the Economic Report, which is also supplemented by a Midyear Report sent up each July, and the budget message. What do you recall about the problems that arose in the compilation and the writing of those two messages?

BELL: I recall a good deal because it was one of my jobs on the Truman staff to act as liaison with the Council of Economic Advisers in the drafting of the Economic Report of the President, and with the Budget Bureau in drafting the budget message. In this capacity, I used to sit in on the long sessions at which the draft Economic Report was discussed each six months by the members of the President's Council of Economic Advisers. This was frequently a fairly difficult process, first of all because the members of the Council had to accommodate their views to each other. The first Council as I recall it was Dr. [Edwin G.] Nourse, chairman; Mr. John Clark

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of Wyoming; and Mr. Leon Keyserling, and they were very different individuals. Nourse was from the classical stream of American economics; Clark a businessman turned economist, quite iconoclastic about American business practice; and Keyserling, a fairly radical reformer – I don't mean Communist, he was of course not in any sense adverse to the American system. He was a disciple of the late Senator (Robert F.) Wagner, very interested in radical change and radical ideas about how to influence the economy and to make it perform better. They were all strong

adherents of the concept of the Employment Act of 1946. But they had wide divergences on specific policy issues, and of course, they had to debate those at length when the economic reports were in preparation.

The method of preparation typically was for the staff of the Council to prepare drafts of the different chapters within an outline that had been agreed to earlier and then for the Council itself to debate at length the particular policy proposals to be put before the President. It was established early on that a White House staff member would be an appropriate participant in their discussions, and I was ordinarily designated as that person, not to control their

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discussions or their findings, but in order to keep the White House staff informed as to how the discussions were trending, and what issues were going to be important for the President to face when the report came to him in draft, since it was his report that was involved, and also to raise questions from the point of view of the White House staff. I rarely, in that capacity, engaged in any straight-out arguments. It was more my role to flag issues for the Council members, and for Charlie Murphy and through him with the President.

The next stage in the process of preparing an Economic Report was for the Council, when it had a completed draft, to put it before the President. At that time, the draft would be commented on, normally by Murphy, to the President, and normally on the basis of the advice that I had given Murphy as to what the important issues would be. The Council would normally have an opportunity to discuss matters with the President, usually with Murphy and often with myself present. The President having heard the argument would leave instructions as to what he wanted done to the draft report, and then, typically, the Council members and Murphy and I would sit together and prepare the

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final draft of the report as the President desired it. It was also part of the system, before the President met with the Council, to circulate a draft copy of the Economic Report to the various Cabinet officers and to consider their comments.

The entire process was very time-consuming, with lots of discussion and argument. It was not normally an acrimonious process, but there were very important issues which arose, issues of fiscal policy, of tax policy, of credit policy, agricultural policy, labor policy and so on, and the Economic Report became in those days, and I assume still is, a major means by which presidential policy was determined in these various fields.

The budget message was prepared in a somewhat similar fashion, but it was a much simpler process, first because the subject matter of the message was narrower. It did not deal with economic policies regarding the whole economy, it dealt with the specific budget policies affecting the different departments of Government. The process was simpler, secondly, because the Budget Bureau has a director, a single man, who can make a decision as to what the draft will

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say that is presented to the President, without requiring debate among three equal members of a Council to decide what to put before the President. I suppose the process may have been simpler also, quite possibly, because in my position as liaison to the White House staff it was very easy for me to communicate with the Budget Bureau people, because I had been a Budget Bureau staff member myself. In any event, the process of preparing the budget message draft, submitting it to the President, and getting it modified as he might wish -- as far as the White House staff was concerned -- was a simpler and shorter process than the work on the Economic Reports.

There was one year, it was in the winter of '48-49, when I was on the other side of the table so far as the budget message was concerned. That was the period when I was back in the Budget Bureau as assistant to the chief of the fiscal division, who was J. Weldon Jones at that time. I was designated by the then Director of the Budget Bureau -- I think that would have been Jim Webb, just before he went over to the State Department -- as the head of the drafting team within the Budget Bureau, for the budget message. So that on that occasion

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I was the Budget Bureau staff member in charge of preparing the draft, under the direction of Jones and Webb.

I remember that occasion vividly because we deliberately tried to turn out a brief budget message, and one which was freer than normal of bureaucratize, of gobbledygook. We had some success, I recall, because we got an editorial in the *Washington Post* that complimented the President for the simplicity and readability of that year's budget message -- this was in January '49 -- and Fred Lawton, who was then the Executive Assistant Director, sent me a little note saying something like, "You have done the impossible; I didn't think it could be done," which I suppose is the incident which makes all this stick in my mind.

But most of the time in those several years, '47-'48 and then on through the messages of 1952, I was the liaison man, as I said, for the White House. It might be noted that part of that time the assistant to the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers was John Lewis, who himself later became a member of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Kennedy, and when I

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was administrator of AID, Chet [Chester] Bowles, who was then ambassador to India, and I persuaded John Lewis to go out to India as head of the AID mission to India, where he is serving today.

HESS: I've heard that there was an operation set up in the White House in 1947 to act as sort of a central clearance office in the collection of materials from the various Government agencies, for the three major messages. Do you recall what persons in the White House office were instrumental in the development of that operation?

BELL: I can't verify the year, but I recall very well that there was an organized process of asking for material and recommendations for the annual messages. I'm pretty sure that function was undertaken by the so-called Office of Legislative Reference in the Budget Bureau, which I

suspect at that time was headed by Roger Jones and the principal staff man in it was probably Dick Neustadt.

HESS: On the subject of the staff meetings that the President would hold, can you tell me about the mechanics of

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the President's daily staff meetings? Who would attend and just how were they conducted?

BELL: President Truman used the morning staff meetings to discuss matters of current staff interest. I attended them only after I became an administrative assistant to the President in late '51, so that I had personal experience of them only in the last year of the President's second term. However, I knew a good deal about them in the earlier years when I worked for Charlie Murphy, because he went to them all along.

They were not meetings at which policy issues were considered, except in the very briefest sense. They were scheduling and procedural meetings at which the day's scheduling was discussed, difficult or important meetings were identified, members of the President's staff were asked to look into questions that he might have on his mind that might have occurred to him since the previous day's meeting, questions of who should be responsible for looking into a given matter were raised for the President's consideration.

The President conducted them by stating whatever he wanted to state at the beginning, and then making

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assignments and asking people to look into this or that. Then he went around the group and asked each person if he had anything to bring up, and any of us who had something to ask him had the opportunity to do so. The people who attended included the Appointments Secretary, Matt Connelly; the Press Secretary; Bill Hassett, the Correspondence Secretary; Steelman, Clifford and Murphy, the three military aides, and the other members of the staff who had presidential appointments, that is, who were designated as being appointed by the President as distinct from having civil service appointments. At the time I was in the meetings, I believe this would have included Dave Lloyd, Dave Stowe, and Philleo Nash. That may round out the group-- oh, I believe Charlie Maylon and Joe Feeney attended also. However, there are ample records on this sort of thing.

The meetings were quite brief, usually fifteen or twenty minutes. They were conducted crisply, quickly by the President. They were almost without exception pleasant meetings, and, I thought, a very handy and useful way to start the day, making sure that everything was tidy and everybody who had any questions about who was doing what or whether a matter was being taken care

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of could raise it and get the matter settled on the spot.

HESS: If there was a problem presented during one of the meetings, would the President like to have a suggested solution presented at the same time?

BELL: Yes, he would normally expect a man to make a recommendation. You understand that any matter which involved a detailed consideration of a policy issue, would not normally be discussed at the morning staff meeting, except insofar as it might have been necessary for the President to agree that a meeting could be set up at a later time and with the proper parties present in order to discuss it, or for him to ask for a memorandum on the issue. He did not use these meetings, I repeat, to face and to decide substantive policy questions. They were simply meetings related to his own schedule and to the assignment of work among the staff members.

HESS: Did you attend the pre-press conference sessions that the President held each Thursday before his press conferences?

BELL: I attended a few of them. I was not a regular attendant. I was asked to attend only when there was a question expected to arise on a subject which I had been following for the White House staff. The ones I saw were relatively clear-cut sessions having to do with questions that were expected to arise at the conference. The press conference preparations were an attempt to anticipate what the major questions would be which would be raised by the reporters, and to think ahead as to what the President ought to say to those questions.

I later had a chance to see that the process of preparation for a press conference in the Kennedy administration was almost identical to that in the Truman administration. The press secretary and other members of the President's staff were expected to think about what questions the reporters were likely to raise. Members of the Cabinet were expected to alert the President to any issues that they expected would be raised. Where major issues could be foreseen, Cabinet officers and others might be asked to prepare a memorandum covering a subject, recommending what the President ought to say.

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Once in a while, although this was not by any means customary, there would be a reporter who would tell the press secretary ahead of time about a question he expected to raise. But most questions were entirely unknown ahead of time. However, the degree of accuracy in anticipating questions was usually very good. I've seen press conferences -- I usually went to the press conferences and stood in the back of the room -- in which every single question had been accurately forecast by somebody in the press office or on the President's staff.

HESS: Did the members of the White House staff try to plant certain questions among the press corps? Was that a common occurrence?

BELL: Not to my knowledge. I suppose it could have happened now and then. It certainly wasn't a matter of any common occurrence.

HESS: For our next topic, I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about the Cabinet. In your opinion, what did the President regard as the proper role of the Cabinet?

BELL: I'm not sure I have any basis for quoting the President on this -- in fact, I'm sure I don't. It's

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quite clear to me, however, that the President understood the American governmental system to mean that the President had individual responsibility for making decisions. It was not a system in which there was collective responsibility like the British Government. There was no voting, or anything like that. I'm not sure I attended many Cabinet meetings, but I think I was present for some. My clear impression was that Cabinet meetings weren't regarded so much as times for decision as times in which the President would talk to his Cabinet officers about matters on his mind, which he wanted all of them to know about. They were occasions at which it was expected that Cabinet officers would raise matters of interest to their colleagues.

It seemed clear to me at the time that Cabinet officers always preferred to take up matters affecting their own departments directly with the President. At the end of a Cabinet meeting, members would sort of queue up to talk with the President privately about the matters they considered important for their own departments.

This, incidentally, was again a parallelism that was very obvious with the Kennedy and Johnson administrations,

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and I assume that this is characteristic of the American system. It is natural for Cabinet officers to wish to discuss issues directly with the President. Even when an issue involves more than one department, normally it won't involve the whole Cabinet, so that Cabinet officers directly concerned would prefer to discuss the issue with the President without the presence of other Cabinet members. So that a Cabinet meeting, from my observation, whether in the Truman, Kennedy, or Johnson administrations, was an occasion for discussion of those few things which interested all members of the Cabinet.

Those things are not unimportant. For example, in a presidential or a congressional campaign year, the President could and did communicate important ideas about how the campaign ought to be conducted, and on what issues, or ideas about what he wanted his Cabinet officers to do and not do during a campaign. Cabinet meetings were occasions on which the general status of the President's legislative program before the Congress could be discussed. They were occasions on which there could be useful general discussions, say, of the economic situation and outlook, or the budget

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outlook and the general framework of policy within which the President wanted the Cabinet officers to prepare their budget submissions.

This sort of thing, often very important, is the substance of useful, general Cabinet meetings. But particular issues of foreign policy, agricultural policy, labor policy or whatnot, are not normally susceptible to useful discussion in Cabinet meetings. President Truman, like the other two Presidents I've seen at close hand, did not use the Cabinet meeting as an occasion at which policy

issues were thrashed out and decisions taken. Even if a policy issue did arise and was talked about, he did not normally decide it on the spot, but would communicate his decision later in a different way.

HESS: Asking for a comparison, which of the three Presidents that you have named, in your opinion, used his Cabinet the most effectively?

BELL: It depends on what you mean by "used his Cabinet effectively." Both Mr. Truman and Mr. Kennedy were men who believed very strongly in the delegation of authority and responsibility in a manner which is generally familiar

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to anyone who has served in a military unit. They were both very clear in what they wanted their subordinates to do. Mr. Truman was fond of showing a chart, which had been prepared in the Budget Bureau, showing the direct and straight line of command between himself and each Cabinet officer or head of an agency. And he insisted on the doctrine that each Cabinet officer and head of an agency had personal access to him anytime that person wanted it.

In other words, he rejected the notion which was used to some extent in the Eisenhower administration, that there should be somebody on the White House staff through whom all matters would go to the President. This is, incidentally, a matter on which experts may differ. One school of thought argues that the military system of having a chief of staff as in an army unit, or an executive officer as on a navy ship, would call for somebody in the White House through whom all communications and issues would flow to the President, and this is what President Eisenhower had in mind in the position that Sherman Adams and others occupied during the Eisenhower years.

Mr. Truman, and Mr. Kennedy later on, insisted

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on a different philosophy which was, as I said, that each Cabinet officer was to have direct access to the President. And the reciprocal of this was that the President delegated directly to those officers responsibility for managing the affairs of the agencies they were in charge of. As a person who headed an agency under Mr. Kennedy, I must say I found this an extremely compatible and comfortable relationship. President Kennedy -- and I'm sure this would have been the way it worked under President Truman also -- handed you a job and expected you to do it. He was ready to back you when you asked for backing, and expected you to report to him regularly as to how things were going, but it was your responsibility and you were expected to carry it out.

I stress all this as somewhat in contrast to Mr. Johnson, whose method was more to stay with you, when you were an agency head, to stay on top of the delegation of responsibility. Johnson was the kind of a man who would give you a job at 3 o'clock, and at 3:30 he would call you up and ask if you had finished it yet, and at 4 he would call you up and say, "Good Lord, haven't you done it yet?" In a sense this was an efficient method

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of procedure. It certainly made you feel that the President was right on top of you every minute, and that you had better get on with whatever it was he had asked you to do. But it also resulted in an uneasy sense that you weren't being, I suppose "trusted" is the right word, to do the job that he had asked you to do. And it made you feel somewhat less than fully responsible for the area of work of your agency. At least that was the way it seemed to me.

So that these differences between Mr. Truman and Mr. Kennedy on the one hand and Mr. Johnson on the other, seemed to me of some significance. At the same time, Mr. Johnson also did not use an intermediary in the White House, so that the White House staff role in all three administrations was essentially a role of assistants to the President: the working up of issue papers for his consideration, the transmission of questions, instructions, and so on. There was no obscurity in the minds of the White House staff or of the agency heads; they all knew that the President had not designated a White House staff man to supervise any of the Cabinet officers or agency heads. White House staff people were instructed to stay in touch with, to conduct liaison

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with, different Government agencies, but that's a crucially different thing from being in the chain of command between the President and his subordinates in the Cabinet departments and the independent agencies.

HESS: Were the members of Mr. Truman's Cabinet his prime advisers, or were there other advisers outside the Cabinet who exerted more influence on the President's thinking?

BELL: That's a question on which I'm sure I don't have all the information that would be desirable before giving an answer. It was my impression, however, that the members of the President's Cabinet, the heads of the major agencies, and the senior staff members in the White House were, in fact, his principal advisers. There's one important qualification to that. The President had worked for years in the Congress; he had many close friends in the Congress, whom he trusted and relied on -- Judge Vinson, for example, whom he had known in the Congress and whom he continued to have very close relations with. I'm sure he talked over many issues with Chief Justice Vinson.

These are all people in Government. I do not know

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of any major adviser of the President who was a private citizen. He had a close friend that I saw now and then named Tom Evans. I remember that Tom Evans, who was in the drug business, did discuss with the President some kind of a fair trade bill that affected druggists and drug stores. He had a point of view and he expressed it to the President, but I am quite sure that the decisive advice the President received on that matter was from the Justice Department, the Commerce Department, and the White House staff members concerned.

HESS: Did any of the members of the White House staff sit in on the Cabinet meetings in the role of a secretary to the Cabinet during the time that you were in the White House?

BELL: I don't recall that there was such a thing. I think I recall being somewhat surprised in the early days of the Kennedy administration when Fred Dutton was designated as secretary to the Cabinet, because I didn't remember any such official in the Truman years, but perhaps my recollection is faulty.

HESS: For our next subject, let's take up the Greek-Turkish aid program and the Marshall plan - foreign aid in general.

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Did you have any involvement in the formation of the Greek-Turkish aid program and the Marshall plan in 1947?

BELL: I don't think I had any involvement in the Greek-Turkish aid program. I was on the White House staff in the fall or winter of 1947, when the Marshall plan was under consideration, and I remember sitting in on the sessions in Charlie Murphy's office when the President's message to the Congress was written. That was in the fall of 1947, and it was one of the first major messages that I participated in as an assistant to Murphy.

I can remember that among the people who were present, who worked on that message, were Paul Nitze, who was then chairman of the Policy Planning staff (or maybe he was deputy to George Kennan, I'm not sure), in the State Department, and who is now, of course, Under Secretary of Defense; "Tick" [Charles Hartwell, III] Bonesteel, who was then, I think, a military officer on assignment to the State Department, and is now commanding general of the U. S. forces in Korea; Lincoln Gordon, who was -- well, I'm darned if I

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know what his assignment was at the moment -- later he was at Harvard, and then Ambassador to Brazil and Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs; also "Abe" Lincoln, Colonel George Lincoln, who was the youngest brigadier general in the U.S. Army at the end of World War II, and then gave up his general's star to become a full-time faculty member at West Point, where he has been ever since. The reason I remember this is that I met all those fellows at that time, and have encountered most of them many times over the years since.

HESS: I believe the message that went to Congress on the Greek-Turkish aid program was on March 12, 1947. I don't believe that any messages went up about the Marshall plan until later in the year.

BELL: The sequence was about as follows: There was General Marshall's address in June.

HESS: June 5th.

BELL: Then the European response led by Ernie [Ernest] Bevin of England and somebody from France, [Georges] Bidault, perhaps. Then there were two or three

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committees appointed in the United States: one under Averell Harriman, who was Secretary of Commerce, to look into the economic capacity of the United States to support the Marshall plan, a second I think was under Cap Krug, who was Secretary of the Interior, to consider the availability of resources to support the plan, and a third, I believe was a special report by the Council of Economic Advisers on the potential economic impact of the ideas or something like that. The Harriman Committee involved a lot of public members and members of Congress, and was the most important of the three. The reports were all made to the President in the late summer or early fall, after the Europeans made their submission to the United States asking for assistance. I believe that the message to Congress that I'm referring to was prepared in the late fall, and would have been sent to the Congress perhaps in early December, 1947. I think the act was in fact not passed until sometime the following spring, but the President wanted to get his recommendations before the Congress before the session ended in 1947.

HESS: I believe he called them back into special session at

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that time too, didn't he?

BELL: That could be. I don't recall.

HESS: I believe that he did. Asking for your opinion, but why do you think Mr. Truman decided to act with such vigor in this matter?

BELL: You mean on the foreign field?

HESS: On the foreign field.

BELL: It's a very interesting question, and I don't really have much firsthand recollection of it. I think that President Truman's actions in the foreign field were enormously significant to the interests of the United States and to our history. There is one element of it which is documented, I think, in the John Hersey series that I referred to earlier. The question was important -- is important -- about Mr. Truman: how did he happen to be an internationalist? He came from Missouri, a background which produced many isolationists, but Mr. Truman was, in fact, a strong, active, internationalist, who believed that the United States needed to act in the world, and that it made a mistake in the Wilson days by staying out of the League of Nations.

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The story Hersey records, and that I've heard the President recount, is that when the Democratic convention was meeting in Baltimore in 1912, he was plowing a field next to a railroad track. There was a telegraph station at the corner of the field and every time he went around the field, he would stop at the telegraph station and get the latest word on how the convention was going. It was a long convention, with many ballots. Champ Clark was the candidate against Wilson. Wilson was finally nominated, and the President used to end this story, "And I've been a Wilson man ever since."

Now, I suspect the story is more complicated than that. He would undoubtedly have been strongly impressed by Wilson. Wilson was a very attractive figure. But, of course, Mr. Truman was also in World War I, in France. I think it's a very important question for his biographers as to how he developed such firm, strong views on this crucial matter.

In any event, in 1947 and 1948, all of this provided part of the background against which the President made his judgments. As the various threats to Europe became evident, the economic threat of 1947-48 resulting from

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the destruction of the war and the problems of reconstruction and the danger of serious hunger and illness, as all that became clear, he was prepared to listen to Will Clayton and Dean Acheson and the others whose ideas led to the Marshall plan. This was the period, of course, in which the Soviet intention seemed to be clearer and clearer not to cooperate in the kind of Europe we thought would be sensible, but to push the expansion of Communism in Eastern Europe through the presence of Soviet troops and the installation of puppet governments, and in Western Europe through the Communist parties which, in those days, looked very strong and menacing.

American security was clearly involved in this, and the impulse behind the Marshall plan was obviously not just humanitarian, but very deeply in the interest of the United States' own security position.

The only elements of this about which I have any clear personal recollection are, first, the development of the ideas that were presented to the Congress in the form of the recommendations for American assistance to European recovery and the establishment of the ECA. All of that I watched fairly closely. Then in the spring

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of 1948, I remember very distinctly at one time, I suppose in March, being present along with Murphy and two or three others of the staff, probably including George Elsey, when Clifford reported to us some conversations he had been having with Bob Lovett. Lovett was perhaps Secretary of Defense or Under Secretary at the time. I remember Clifford saying that he personally had pretty much reached the conclusion that the President would have to recommend the extension of the draft, and two or three other things -- I've forgotten exactly what they were now. These were very controversial ideas, and they reflected his judgment that the United States defense posture needed to be maintained in a stronger position than it would otherwise have been. This made an impression on me at the time, because I had not seen up to then at first hand the process by which major figures in the Government reached their decisions. Clifford went on, on this occasion and described at some length the considerations which had led him and Lovett to this judgment. And these same considerations were persuasive with the President

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and he later made recommendations to the Congress along the line that Clifford had described.

HESS: What part did William Clayton play in the formation of the Marshall plan? As far as I can determine most of the credit that has been given to him in this matter revolves around certain

memos he wrote in May of 1947. Weren't there negotiations with some of the European leaders before that time?

BELL: You're asking me questions I can't answer. I was not involved in those matters at that time. The hearsay that I remember, but it's only hearsay, was that Clayton and Acheson in the spring of '47 reached the judgment that it would be necessary to launch a massive U. S. program of assistance to Europe, that Secretary Marshall thoroughly agreed with them, and that this led to Acheson's speech in Mississippi and Marshall's speech at Harvard and all the events that followed.

HESS: What foreign leaders did the President and the White House staff regard as the most important in developing the plan? Do you recall?

BELL: Clearly Ernie Bevin who was, I believe, foreign

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secretary of Great Britain at that time, and a French political leader, perhaps Bidault, were regarded as the key European leaders.

HESS: In our last interview, you mentioned the connection between David Lloyd and Benjamin Hardy regarding the fourth point of the President's inaugural address. Do you recall offhand if George Elsey was involved in that matter also?

BELL: You mean in the preparation of the inaugural address? Yes, undoubtedly he was. If you're asking whether he might have found Hardy in the State Department or been the channel by which Hardy reached the attention of Lloyd, it's quite possible. I don't have any direct recollection. I was in the Budget Bureau at the time. I saw drafts of the message and when I asked where this idea came from, Dave Lloyd, who was the principal draftsman, told me that it came from Ben Hardy. It's quite possible that George, rather than Dave, was the man that first found Hardy. I don't know.

HESS: The reason that I ask this is that it is placed down that way by Eric Goldman in his book, *The Crucial Decade*.

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I just wanted to ask the point.

BELL: I wouldn't rely on Goldman, but Elsey is available. I would ask him.

HESS: That's fine.

On May the 14th, 1948, the White House released a statement by the President announcing the recognition of the State of Israel. Who in your opinion played major roles in advising the President to take that action?

BELL: I'm sure that Clifford played a major role in it. It was a matter I had nothing to do with directly, so I'm no source on how it was done, but I do remember that Clifford was deeply involved. The timing of the announcement was a matter in which American politics was greatly at play, and Matt Connelly, of course, would have been one channel by which the political influences, mainly pro, I suppose some con, would have reached the President. As I recall the story, the State Department was against such rapid action, but that's hearsay. I wasn't directly involved.

HESS: What part did David Niles have in this, do you recall?

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BELL: Well, he would have been a channel, at least, for strong views expressed by many of the leaders of the American Jewish community -- that's not the right way to say it -- there are several American Jewish communities and I don't know how they all lined up on this particular issue. Niles was a man who had direct connections with many Jewish leaders, and I'm sure they would have expressed their views to him and he in turn to the President and to the President's colleagues.

HESS: Do you know if Eddie Jacobson expressed his view in this matter?

BELL: I have no knowledge on that.

HESS: We've touched on it, but just in your opinion, to what extent did the political considerations influence that decision?

BELL: The impression I had at the time was that American domestic political considerations strongly influenced the timing of the decision, but the fact of recognition involved much more than American domestic politics, and was so considered, and was deliberated on as a general issue of American foreign policy. But I repeat, this

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is all an impression. I was not involved firsthand.

HESS: On another subject, the President took a trip in May of 1950 to the western part of the United States. On that trip he dedicated the Grand Coulee Dam and we spoke briefly about this in August. What were your duties in connection with that trip?

BELL: That's something I was deeply involved in. I was involved in the planning for the trip. I was involved in gathering materials for the President to use on that trip. It was laid out very much like a campaign trip, in the sense that the various stops that the President was to make were identified ahead of time and materials prepared for them. The 1948 pattern was followed in that there were whistle stops. At the places the train stopped, and there would be a dozen stops a day, the President would go out on the back platform and make brief remarks to the people who were gathered. I went on that trip on the train, helped to prepare material for each of the short stops, and of course, at least once a day he would have a major speech. Murphy went; my secretary at the time, Colette Kennedy, went along; one of Charlie's secretaries, either -- oh, I've forgotten

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the name of the very nice lady who was Murphy's secretary -- he had two; the second was Toi [Toinette] Bachelder. I think she went along on that trip. She was crippled, had had polio, but she got along fine. It was an extraordinarily intense experience. Murphy, of course, had been on the campaign trips in '48, but for the rest of us, this was something new and different. For years afterward, I could have recited to you the exact itinerary every day of that trip. I still remember that the first stop on the western part of the trip was Casper, Wyoming. The train went out to Grand Coulee or to Spokane, and then came back across Montana and North Dakota, and in Fargo, North Dakota, the President addressed a large depot audience on the esoteric subject of the International Trade Organization, which was an issue then pending in the Congress, and the people of Fargo were good enough to give the President a warm round of applause although I'm sure ninety-five percent of the audience didn't have the faintest idea what he was talking about.

HESS: Why was that speech given in that place?

BELL: The President tried to include significant policy

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recommendations in all his major speeches.

HESS: He knew the newspapers would pick it up?

BELL: He knew the newspapers would pick it up. And this was a good issue in North Dakota because the International Trade Organization was intended to free up and increase world trade, and a large proportion of the wheat grown in North Dakota was exported. Therefore, the President was quite right in saying to the crowd in Fargo that they had a significant stake in the issue of whether or not the Congress approved the International Trade Organization.

Incidentally, I think I'm wrong about where that trip started. Casper, I believe, was where the first major speech was given, but it wasn't the first whistle stop. I can't remember where that was.

HESS: In some papers at the Library I found a memo from you to Charles Murphy, dated March 6, 1950. And according to the memo, several people wanted the President to appear in their city or state because of the upcoming congressional election. Was that one of the main reasons for the trip?

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BELL: I couldn't tell you at this late date exactly what the reasoning was behind the trip. I'm sure it was primarily a test run or an initial stage for the campaign of 1950. It's quite likely that looking ahead to the fall, the President had concluded that he would not have time to make any extensive visits to the northwest during the campaign, and therefore it would be helpful if he could make a visit during the late spring. It's quite possible that somebody had looked at the map of where some of the tightest races were going to be in the Senate, and in the House, and the trip was laid out to pick up as many of those as possible -- to pick the sites, for example, for the main speeches, where they would do the most good for the Democratic candidates. I doubt very much

that a group of members of Congress came to him and said, "Mr. President, will you please make a trip to our area?" I think it was probably envisaged more as part of the overall strategy of the campaign. Of course, this was all upset later on by the events in Korea, and the Chinese breakthrough just before the election, which most of us thought at the time swung the election away from the Democrats.

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HESS: You mentioned in the memo that the President had indicated that he did not want to go into California on the trip in view of the primary fight there between Senator Downey and Mrs. Douglas, and there were no stops in that state.

BELL: I have no independent recollection of that now, but that's undoubtedly the case. Senator Downey was the incumbent. It would have been improper for the President to oppose Senator Downey, and yet Mrs. Douglas was clearly a candidate whose position would be much closer to that of the President than would the position of Senator Downey. So it was best for him to avoid having to be involved in a primary fight. In general, Presidents try to stay out of primary fights under almost all circumstances. Once in a while there's a special reason for breaking that rule, but it's a very firm rule and a very sensible one.

HESS: On the trip the President spoke in Chicago on May 15th at the National Democratic Conference and Jefferson Jubilee. In that speech he made reference to the fact that on the trip he had been followed around the country by a representative of the Republican politicians. Mr. Truman

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said that the way he showed up reminded him of a little poem:

I have a little shadow,
That goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him
Is more than I can see.

The man was identified in the press as Victor A. Johnston, an employee of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. Did you see or talk to Mr. Johnston during that trip?

BELL: I don't remember that I did. I remember the poem. I think Charlie Murphy suggested that the President use the poem. There was a lot of fun made, mostly in the press, about Vic Johnston trailing him, and my guess is that it was members of the press who called Johnston's presence to the attention of Murphy, or somebody.

HESS: Did any of the members of the President's party talk to him, do you recall?

BELL: I have no idea.

HESS: For our next subject let's take the situation in Korea. The Republic of Korea was invaded on June 25th, 1950, and by eastern standard time, it was Saturday, June 24th in

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Washington. And on that day the President dedicated Friendship Airport in Baltimore and then flew on to Kansas City. What do you recall about those times?

BELL: I recall the Korean war, of course, very well. That particular weekend, I was not involved at all. If I remember rightly, the President flew back to Blair House on the Sunday, and met with the Secretary of State, the Joint Chiefs, and all of the appropriate people, but I wasn't in it. It was Monday or Tuesday, or sometime the following week, when the President decided to commit American troops. I saw that on the ticker or read it in an extra edition of a newspaper. Of the early hours and days of the Korean war, I know nothing, except what was reported in the newspapers.

HESS: How long was it after the invasion that you saw President Truman, a matter of a few days?

BELL: Probably a few days, yes.

HESS: What seemed to be his reaction when you first saw him?

BELL: I have no independent recollection of that at this

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time. You know, he was a man, one of whose outstanding attributes was that when a decision came along and he had to make it, he did so. He had a little motto on his desk: "The Buck Stops Here." And I always thought it was a very significant element in his makeup that he accepted responsibility, took the necessary decisions, and was able to sleep afterwards. He didn't go over and over past decisions worrying about whether they had been right or not. He tried to be as careful and thorough in considering a decision before it was taken as he could, given the time and information available, but once the decision had been taken, he went ahead from there. So I would not have expected to find him careworn or fretting over the decision to enter the war once it had been taken.

But as I say, I'm not trying to report what he actually looked like. I just don't remember.

HESS: In our last interview when I asked a question about James Sundquist on another subject, you said that you remembered him much more vividly at the time of the Korean war?

BELL: Yes. During the Korean war there was established an Office of Defense Mobilization. under "Electric Charlie"

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Wilson and that office put out a report, quarterly or maybe monthly, on the status of mobilization of resources for the war, and Sundquist was the editor of that report. It was published in magazine format. In that capacity, he gathered a great deal of information, and we were closely in touch with him, both to help him get the information he needed and to review the material in

draft form before it was printed. This, of course, was a public document, and what was said in it was a very significant statement of how things were going. Naturally, the President wanted to be sure that matters were stated accurately and didn't give his political opponents any undue ammunition.

HESS: On September the 1st, 1950, the President made a radio and television report to the American people on the situation in Korea. Did you help write that message?

BELL: It's entirely possible. Yes, now that I look at it, it looks to me like something I would have been involved in. I can recall being involved in writing several messages and speeches during those months. And this certainly looks like one of them.

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HESS: Do you recall who else worked on this particular speech? Any of the events surrounding it?

BELL: I can recall who usually worked with us on speeches and messages during that period. I can't be sure that I can name the people who participated in that particular one. On the White House staff there were Murphy and myself, Elsey and Dave Lloyd.

From the State Department the man who worked with us most commonly was Marshall Shulman. He was then an assistant to Secretary Acheson, and prepared speech material and drafts for Acheson. He was usually assigned to help us on the White House staff in speech and message drafting for the President. Incidentally Shulman left the Government in '53 and worked at Harvard for a long time in the Russian Research Center. He is now the head of the Russian Research Center at Columbia University, and one of the leading American scholars on Russia.

From the Defense Department there was Frank Nash, who was then the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs -- at least that's the title of the job today and I assume it was then also. Nash was a very able man, who unfortunately died not too

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long thereafter, three or four years later, still relatively young. Also from Defense we were often joined by Marx Leva, who was, I think at that time General Counsel of the Defense Department. Leva and Nash and Jack Ohly I believe had all been assistants to Forrestal, and Nash and Leva were still in the Defense Department. Leva, Nash and Shulman were all extraordinarily able men and very easy and effective participants in the White House speech and message drafting process.

HESS: In September of 1950, Louis Johnson resigned as Secretary of Defense and General Marshall was appointed to be Secretary of Defense. What do you recall about that series of events?

BELL: I don't recall anything directly. The impression I had at the time was that Johnson was not a particularly good or able Secretary.

HESS: Why?

BELL: He didn't strike us as very able. Of course we were very young at the time and our standards quite possibly were fairly harsh, but we would have said that

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Louis Johnson was not highly intelligent, not highly forceful, not very imaginative, rather politically minded than strategically and foreign policy minded, and that he just wasn't up to a job of the character that descended on the United States when the Korean war started.

HESS: He has been accused for the lack of preparedness in the United States services at the time of the Korean war. Is that correct? Do you recall that?

BELL: I suspect that would be pinning on him blame, if indeed blame is warranted, which ought to be very widely shared. I remember some incidents bearing on that. In the winter of '48-'49, there was an enormous argument about the size of the Defense budget. I'm sure it was that winter because Jim Webb was still Budget Director. The argument was -- today it sounds ridiculous -- but it was over about a billion dollars. The question was whether the Defense budget should be 15 ½ billion dollars, say, or 14 ½ billion dollars. Webb was arguing strongly and stoutly for the lower figure, Louis Johnson was arguing strongly and stoutly for the higher figure, and President Truman sided with Jim Webb, the Budget Director.

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The implication of that recollection would be that Louis Johnson, speaking for the Defense Department, wanted a greater degree of preparedness and that he was overruled by the President acting on the advice of the Budget Director.

I remember also an incident dating from 1950. When the Korean war actually started, Charlie Murphy and I and others on the White House staff were shown for the first time some documents that had been handled in the National Security Council, which we normally did not see, because we did not attend NSC meetings. There was the famous document NSC 68, which had been put together in the spring of 1950, largely at the instigation of Paul Nitze of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department. This document said in effect that the United States was dangerously under prepared and should forthwith enlarge its defense establishment, increase its defense budget, and so on. The document was formally approved by the NSC and then locked up in a safe, and those of us who were working on matters directly related to the Congress and what the President recommended to the Congress, had never heard of the document, let alone seen it, until after the Korean war

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actually started. I assume that Louis Johnson and the Defense Department participated in preparing that document and urging it upon the President, as did the State Department. The President formally approved it but nothing happened. Who was to blame for that? Surely not Johnson. So my guess is that Louis Johnson has been given a larger share of the blame than is actually warranted. This is not to argue that he was a forceful and able Secretary of Defense. It is my impression that he was not, although I saw him very little at firsthand, and I am reporting not

so much my judgment as what the gossip was among the underlings on the White House staff at that time.

HESS: There are those that say that he received the post as a reward for serving as finance chairman of the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Party, in the 1948 election. Have you heard that?

BELL: No, I hadn't heard that, but that's not the way Mr. Truman made his appointments. He certainly believed in political loyalty, but he also believed in putting men in office who were competent to do the job. What he would normally look for was a man whose abilities he

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felt were appropriate to the job in question, and if possible was also a good Democrat and Truman supporter, if the job was one in which that was appropriate. My understanding at the time was that Johnson did have considerable support for the job of Secretary of Defense. I think he had been Commander of the American Legion. He had had a long interest in defense matters. He was regarded as, and I think he was, a successful businessman. And he had also been finance chairman of the Democratic National Committee. So that the judgment was that he was qualified for the job, not because he had been finance chairman, but because of his experience and understanding and managerial competence. I think that did not turn out to be so, at least after the Korean war started.

HESS: According to the logs of President Truman's trip to Wake Island to confer with General MacArthur in October of 1950, you went to San Francisco to carry out some duties in connection with the trip. Could you tell me about the decisions leading up to the President's trip and about your duties in San Francisco.

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BELL: The reason for the trip, I believe it is fair to say -- again I emphasize that these are matters that happened a long time ago and on which my recollection may not be precise -- was to try to improve the degree of understanding between President and General MacArthur as to what the war was all about, what the strategy was, what our position should be on matters like potential Chinese intervention, what were our military objectives, and so on. It was already plain that General MacArthur regarded himself as sort of an independent viceroy for that part of the world, and regarded the U.S. Government as sort of a backstop organization for what he wanted to do, rather than regarding himself, as Washington tended to do, as a field agent under tight control of the Government. And so the trip was laid on to try to improve the understanding between MacArthur and his colleagues, and the President and his colleagues.

It was at that meeting, of course, that MacArthur made his famous flat prediction that the Chinese would not come into North Korea, and it was that incident which made MacArthur and his intelligence chief, General

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[Charles A.] Willoughby, look so foolish not much later. And it was that incident, I'm sure, that gravely undermined the President's confidence in MacArthur. My duties -- I had nothing to do

with the Wake Island part of it. As I remember it, the President gave a speech in San Francisco on the way out, at the Opera House.

HESS: On the way back.

BELL: Was it on the way back? In any event, it was in connection with that speech that I was along. It may be that the speech wasn't quite finished before they went to Wake Island and I stayed in San Francisco and worked on it a bit., or handled the clearance of it back in Washington or whatnot. In addition to that, my being taken along was an act of courtesy on the part of Charlie Murphy because my parents lived in the San Francisco Bay area, and it would be an opportunity for me to see them. Indeed, they were invited, I remember, to some sort of small reception which was held for the President at the time of the speech. That was, I suspect, the only time I had a chance to introduce my parents to the President and it meant a lot to me. Murphy, and the President too, were thoughtful about staff members – within

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the limits of what were inevitably extremely demanding jobs.

HESS: According to the log, Matthew Connelly and Donald Dawson also went to San Francisco at that time, is that correct?

BELL: I'm sure if the log says so, it's correct. I don't remember it distinctly. It would have been entirely natural for them to go, Connelly because when the President visited San Francisco, he would be talking with a lot of the leading California politicians; the political campaign was heating up, and Don Dawson might well have been along for the same reason.

HESS: What do you recall about the President's reaction when the Chinese crossed the Yalu River in November of 1950?

BELL: I don't recall any direct evidence, but as I said earlier, I'm sure it meant a lot to his relations with General MacArthur, and I'm sure that he was unhappy. I don't know how surprised he was.

HESS: The next question we have already touched upon, but what

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do you recall about the events leading up to the dismissal of General MacArthur in April of 1951?

BELL: I was not involved in the very tightly held discussions over whether General MacArthur should be relieved. But when the decision had been taken, on the advice of General Bradley and General Marshall and Secretary Acheson, after the Joint Chiefs had been consulted and all agreed that it had to be done, I was involved in preparing whatever documents that were initially involved. I don't remember, did the President make a speech? Or did he make an announcement?

HESS: There were both. There was an address to the American people explaining the reason for the dismissal and there was a statement released by the White House on the action taken.

HESS: I was involved in preparing those, which was all done, as I remember it, through most of one night. I remember Frank Pace was in Korea at the time, as Secretary of the Army, and he was instructed to go over to Japan and inform General MacArthur personally that he

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was being relieved. Pace was not in fact able to carry out those instructions. He didn't get to the General. I remember hearing at the time why he didn't. It may well be that he called the General and was told that the General was having a nap and would see Secretary Pace when he awoke or something like that. By the time he woke up, the news was already on the ticker and some of the members of his staff brought it to him before he ever saw Pace. Something like that was the account of the matter that we heard. Anyway I know that Secretary Pace was instructed to tell MacArthur personally. The fact that MacArthur heard about it through the newspapers so to speak, was an accident, not the way it was supposed to happen.

But the day on which the news broke -- and it was, of course, a great surprise to the country -- somehow it was widely assumed that the President had done this impulsively. It happened that I was acquainted with Arthur Sylvester, who was then a reporter for the *Newark Evening News*. He was a friend of an uncle of mine. He rang me up and said what did I know about this, and so I told him that the President had, of course,

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consulted the Secretaries concerned and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Art Sylvester said this was a great surprise to him that this was not the impression he had had. He obviously communicated this information to other members of the press, and I assume they were hearing it from others as well, so that some of the press at least had the correct story by the next evening.

Not only was this a significant incident in itself, but it illustrated to me in a lasting way the importance of what are typically called "backgrounders" in Washington, which means an explanatory discussion of an action or speech or message by an authoritative spokesman at the time that the action is taken or the message is delivered, so that reporters can ask about the background for it, and more information on anything about it that isn't self-evident. Such occasions are a very important means for assuring that the story is accurate. That was not done effectively at the time of MacArthur's relief. But it was done over the next couple of days, and I think the story became clearer and clearer as time went by.

HESS: At the time the General was dismissed you'll recall that there was quite a public outcry, the White House

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received a great deal of public opinion mail, both pro and con to the dismissal, but did you ever hear President Truman say anything about that, about the fact that it seemed as if many people in the United States thought he had taken an action that he should not have taken, after this time?

BELL: I do, it was the common view around the White House, and I assume -- I can't quote the President -- but I assume it was his view also, that the relief of MacArthur was long overdue and that, looking back, it should have been done earlier.

HESS: On another subject, on July 14, 1952, the President signed H.R. 5767, the so-called Fair Trade Laws Bill. Did you help write the President's statement that was released at that time?

BELL: It is highly possible that I did, but I don't have any recollection of it now.

HESS: Did you have any duties in relation to the negotiations regarding the proposed St. Lawrence Seaway?

BELL: Yes, I did. I had some fairly significant duties

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in that respect. I don't recall the details now, but I remember that I was the White House staff man who conducted some discussions with John Burton, who was then the Budget Director for New York State and was Governor Dewey's man on the matter. Burton and I conducted successful negotiations in, I thought, a very sensible manner. I've forgotten the details now, but I remember feeling at the time that Burton and I had managed to break some sort of a log jam, and that this led on to the construction of the seaway in the immediately succeeding years. I don't remember now why I felt that way, but ever since then, I have had some small feeling of accomplishment at having assisted at the final birth of that long-delayed project.

HESS: Did you have any duties in relation to the proposed Columbia Valley Administration?

BELL: Yes, I did. That was one of the early significant jobs that I did for Charlie Murphy. I met with C. Girard "Jebby" Davidson, who was then Assistant Secretary of the Interior; Norman Stoll, who was then, I think, general counsel of the Commerce Department; a young man named Charles Luce, who was then in the Interior

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Department, and is now chairman of the board of Consolidated Edison Corporation here in New York, and others, in preparing the draft of legislation and the message to Congress that the President sent up.

HESS: Who else in the White House worked on that, do you recall? Were you in charge?

BELL: I was in charge under Murphy. It was Murphy's responsibility. I did much of the staff work for him. I don't remember any of the others on the White House staff who were deeply involved, although there may well have been some.

HESS: As you know, the CVA was not established. What were the problems there, what was the difficulty?

BELL: Well, the Tennessee Valley Authority had had a very controversial history. The mainline departments of Government, the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture, and within those departments the people in the Bureau of Reclamation and in the Forest Service, were very much opposed to handing over their responsibilities in the northwest to a new and independent

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authority. The same was true most emphatically of the Corps of Engineers. I shouldn't be quite so flat about the Bureau of Reclamation. It's possible that the Bureau of Reclamation, being in the Interior Department where the main impetus for the CVA came from, was not a loud and strong opponent.

The President decided, nevertheless, that he wanted to recommend the CVA, so the Department of the Army, of the Interior, and of Agriculture all were expected to support him -- and indeed did so, at least in a pro forma way. I think the Department of Interior was the only Cabinet Department that strongly supported the President on this issue, and as I say, I think some of the agencies within Interior were opposed. I'm sure many of the Agriculture Department people and the Corps of Engineers people actively lobbied against him. In any event, it was widely known in the Congress that many agencies of the Government really opposed the CVA.

Furthermore, many members of Congress from that area were skittish, particularly the Republicans, but some of the Democrats, too. As I remember it, some of the Democrats from Washington were for it, but those

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from Oregon and Idaho were not all that enthusiastic. Local interests were doubtful; private business was opposed.

We made a trip out to the northwest and met with people from lumber interests, fish interests, and so on. They listened politely, but I think they regarded the idea of a CVA as something fearsome, a super government, which would take over and try to dominate the life of the northwest. And so I don't think it had much of a chance for adoption.

HESS: Did you have any direct dealings with Secretary Chapman at this time?

BELL: Yes, certainly. He was strongly for the CVA. His Assistant Secretary, Jebby Davidson, was really the principal supporter in Interior. Davidson had worked as a young man -- he was still young -- as a younger man in the TVA, and saw clearly the potential benefits for the northwest of a river basin approach.

HESS: Did you have any other occasions in which you were involved in the problems of conservation and natural resources other than those we have mentioned?

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BELL: Yes, I did. I was, in some sense, the staff man for the White House on such matters. I got involved in Federal Power Commission issues, at least one natural gas question, Corps of

Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation dams and projects. A fair share of my time was taken up with natural resources projects and conservation matters during the years I was in the White House.

HESS: Anything specific come to mind, any interesting examples that could show this side of your work?

BELL: I don't think of any offhand. We got involved in all sorts of things. There was a project, the name I forget now, up on the border with Canada, which involved the question of how the Columbia River in Canada might be related to U.S. interests. I believe the question involved whether a reservoir behind a dam built in the United States could back water up over the Canadian boundary into Canada, and what quid pro quo the Canadians might expect for that.

I've already mentioned the St. Lawrence Seaway case.

I was involved in the Tennessee Valley Authority

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and issues affecting it.

HESS: What do you recall about that. What was the involvement there?

BELL: Well, just that when the TVA had a project or a legislative issue, and they came to the White House, they would normally ring me up, and I would try to look into the case and do whatever was appropriate. Marguerite Owen was the TVA's Washington representative and I used to deal quite a bit with her. She was still in that job when I went back to Washington later as Budget Director. I think we had important problems about steam plants in those days. The Tennessee Valley Authority had nearly run out of hydroelectric sites, and the question was whether they could build thermal power plants, based on the production of steam, and so on. That was a hot issue which came out successfully, as I recall it.

This was typical of the normal run of legislative and budgetary business on which we spent a great deal of our time in Murphy's staff.

HESS: On another subject, you accompanied the President to

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Key West on several occasions. What comes to mind when you look back on those days?

BELL: They were extremely pleasant trips for those who were on them. There was business done. We drafted materials and handled normal business. There was a courier plane usually once a day each way to Washington, sometimes more if necessary, and we would ask the President to look over drafts or answer a question or settle a policy issue in Key West very much as he did in Washington. But the pace was more leisurely. We didn't usually work for more than a few hours a day. Our evenings were normally free. The whole party would go down to the beach in the morning for volleyball and swimming before lunch. The senior members of the party usually

played poker in the later afternoon and early evening, and once in a while I was invited to sit in on those games, although I was not in those days as relaxed a poker player as I became some years later. There was lots of tennis. I had been in the Marine Corps in World War II, and a friend of mine, whom I had known then, was the captain of the guard company at the naval base where we all stayed, and through him I was involved

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in the usual kinds of officers' club dances and all that sort of thing.

They were relatively brief trips. I don't recall staying more than three or four or five days at a time. The custom was for junior members of the staff, like me, to rotate. Some of us would go down for a few days, and later a second group would go down and the first group come back, so that all of us got a little sunshine, but we did not ordinarily stay for the President's entire visit. I might add that while I enjoyed these trips very much, they simply increased the degree of unhappiness that my wife felt all through those years, because all of us on the staff worked endless hours, nights, weekends, Sundays, and to top it all off, so to speak, every now and then I had a nice week in the sunshine while she had to stay home with the babies. I don't believe -- I gave her as much sympathy at that time as I should have.

The Key West pattern in this respect, incidentally, contrasts unfavorably with President Kennedy's practice. When he went down to Palm Beach at Christmas time in 1961, the families of staff members who were asked to come down were invited along. Staff members and their

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families were also invited to use Camp David, in President Kennedy's time, when the President wasn't using it.

HESS: Was the President's announcement at Key West that he was not going to run for re-election in 1952 in March 1951, as Mr. Truman has in his *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 489, or on November 19, 1951, as William Rigdon has in his book, *White House Sailor*, p. 267? According to the logs of the President's trip, you were along both times and Mr. Rigdon states that you were one of those present on November 19.

BELL: I'm sorry I cannot help you on that question. I can remember being present at such an occasion, but I don't believe that I made any diary note or anything like that.

HESS: Tell me about the occasion.

BELL: If my remembrance now is correct, it would suggest that the latter date is more likely, because if I remember it rightly, what the President said to us was that he was not going to run in '52 and he wanted us to know it well ahead of time. He was going to make no public announcement at that time, and he didn't want any of us

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to say anything about it, but he wanted us to know well ahead of time so that we could begin to make our own plans as to what we were going to do after the end of his term. It's more likely that

he would do that in November than in March. On the other hand, it is also quite possible that he told a fairly large group of us in November -- Bill Rigdon might well have been present in such a group -- whereas he had told a smaller group in March, and neither Bill Rigdon nor I was senior enough or intimate enough with the President to have been involved on such an occasion. But that's just hypothesis. As I said before, I don't remember the matter well enough to give you an authoritative response.

HESS In your opinion, who do you believe the President preferred for the position of Democratic standard-bearer in 1952?

BELL: I'm not sure my recollection is right on this. I would have said that he felt early on that Stevenson was the most logical and the strongest potential candidate. On the other hand, at some stage in the '52 period, before the nominating convention, Averell Harriman either announced that he wanted to run, or

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permitted a boomlet to develop for him. I remember very vividly arriving with the President at the convention in Chicago in '52 and having Martin Agronsky, the reporter, who is a friend of mine, grab my elbow and say something to the effect that "The President has to step in here and bring order out of this convention; it's tearing itself to pieces." The President had immediately gone into a closed session, and by the time I found somebody who might have carried a message from me into that session, it had broken up and out of it had come Averell Harriman's decision to withdraw, so that what Agronsky wanted to happen was indeed happening even as he was talking to me. But whether this implies that the President would have liked to see Harriman nominated and simply advised him to withdraw when it was plain that he could not be nominated, or whether it means that he preferred Stevenson all along, but as a courtesy to Harriman, who was of course a strong friend and a very loyal associate, let him make a run to see whether he could get anywhere -- although the President would, I'm sure, have felt, as everybody around the White House did, that Harriman had no real chance to obtain a majority -- I just don't know. I don't think I ever heard the

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President discuss the matter.

HESS: As you will recall, Vice President Barkley also went to Chicago that year with the intention of trying to receive the nomination.

BELL: Yes, but everyone as far as I know assumed that Vice President Barkley was too old, too feeble, for the job. Everyone respected him, liked him. He was a very lovable man. Everybody was very courteous to him, gave him standing ovations and things like that, but I don't believe that any of the leading politicians ever regarded him as a serious candidate. Perhaps I'm wrong.

HESS: Do you remember how far back in the year it was when President Truman started thinking of Governor Stevenson as a candidate?

BELL: It was fairly early. I remember Stevenson came to Washington. I think he came to the White House.

HESS: When was that?

BELL: That would have been sometime in the fairly early spring -- March, April, maybe. And he made a strong

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impression. What I'm saying, I suppose, is in part that he made a strong impression on me. I had never paid much attention to him until then. I know there was enough talk around the White House at that time so that I'm quite sure there was serious consideration given by the President and his senior political colleagues to the question whether Stevenson would be the logical and appropriate Democratic candidate.

HESS: In his book, *The Truman Presidency*, Cabell Phillips has the following quote on the subject of Mr. Truman having second thoughts as to whether or not he should run for re-election in 1952, and I would like to read just a short passage:

One night, late in March, he invited a few of his close advisers, including the new Democratic Chairman, Frank E. McKinney, to a small dinner at Blair House. He sounded them out, tentatively, on the proposition of his being a candidate to succeed himself. But his guests, as tactfully as they could, said no. The President said "the Boss" -- Mrs. Truman -- was against the idea too, and he guessed that made it unanimous. He gave each of those around the dinner table a newly minted silver dollar to show that there were no hard feelings from their verdict.

Were you aware that such a meting had been held?

BELL: No, I don't have any recollections of it at this date.

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HESS: We have mentioned the convention in Chicago. What other recollections do you have of the events there that year?

BELL: I guess I remember principally Stevenson's acceptance speech, which was late at night. It was a very dramatic scene in that convention hall, the lighting was dramatic, and, of course, I had been at the similar occasion in 1948. I admired Governor Stevenson very much. I remember seeing on television, Stevenson's welcoming speech to the convention as Governor of Illinois, which was a very good speech. And I had been a strong partisan of the nomination of Adlai Stevenson. I don't mean I had done anything in a political way, but in our staff discussions I -- and all of us I think in the Murphy group -- had felt that Stevenson's nomination would be the best outcome, and that he would make by far the best candidate.

I say all this because my feeling about the acceptance speech was that it was quite a good speech, but marred by one, I thought, rather distasteful element. At one point, Stevenson made some

Biblical reference -- "If this cup shall not pass from my lips I will drink it," or something like that -- which seemed to me at the time

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somewhat embarrassing in that he should directly compare himself with Jesus.

Apart from that it was a good speech, and it was well accepted and strongly cheered, but it wasn't nearly as electric an occasion as the parallel situation in 1948 when Mr. Truman had brought a thoroughly dispirited crowd roaring to its feet and put them in a fighting mood ready -- for the moment at least -- to go out and fight hard for the election. The '52 situation was different. Stevenson was a very different man, and made a much more intellectual appeal. And I'm sure that there were members of the delegates to the convention who found it a rather strange political speech, not quite the usual thing they were accustomed to applauding. But it was a good, strong speech. I don't mean to sound critical of it. We watched it -- I've forgotten who was with me, probably one or two of the fellows from the White House staff -- from up high and behind the Governor. He was down on a platform that stretched out over the crowd, and the spotlights were on him, and the lighting in the rest of the hall was quite dim, so it was a very dramatic scene.

HESS: You mentioned a couple of points I'd like to draw

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out just a little bit. You stated that most of the Murphy group preferred Stevenson. Who would you classify as being in the Murphy group?

BELL: Oh, Dave Lloyd, Ken Hechler, Dick Neustadt, I think that was the principal membership.

HESS: Did some of the other groups of employees in the White House favor candidates other than Stevenson?

BELL: No, that wasn't the implication. It wasn't so much that we were for Stevenson and others weren't. It was just that I do remember that we were for Stevenson. I don't know who the others would have been for.

HESS: You mentioned in our last interview that you were as, signed to Springfield to help Governor Stevenson in the campaign. Would you tell me about that episode, perhaps starting with your opinion as to why you were chosen for that position?

BELL: Well, I was surprised by it and rather puzzled. As I remember it, I was tapped very suddenly. It seems to me that what happened was that Governor Stevenson came

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to visit the President at the White House in August, early or middle August, August 12th possibly, I don't remember. In any event, he and some of his colleagues met with the President and some of his colleagues -- I was not present. And then I was called by Murphy after the meeting ended and told that Stevenson had asked for a couple of people from the White House staff to go out to Springfield with him, and to work with him during the campaign, to provide a

liaison between the Stevenson campaign staff and the White House staff. And Murphy told me that I had been tapped, if I were willing to go, and so had Clayton Fritchey, who was at that time some sort of an assistant press secretary, or a staff member in the press office. I was surprised because I was not by any means the best speechwriter on the President's staff. David Lloyd was far and away the best writer we had. It's quite possible that there were others also who were better than I was, although most of the rest of us were about on a par, kind of medium pedestrian I would say. But in any event, Murphy said no, I was definitely the one who had been tagged to go.

I don't remember exactly how it happened -- my wife

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might recall better -- I think they gave me a White House car, I went home and packed a suitcase, and within the hour, or certainly within the afternoon, I was on the plane heading back to Springfield with the Stevenson group. On the plane, I had a chance to talk to Carl McGowan, who was sort of the Charlie Murphy of the Stevenson establishment in Springfield -- that is to say, he was in charge of the substantive staff work for the Governor, drafting speeches and messages and so on.

I was amused, incidentally, to find that the Governor's personal staff resembled so closely the personal staff assignments in the White House. There was an appointments secretary, corresponding to the Matt Connelly job, who was Bill Blair, William McCormick Blair, who was later appointed by President Kennedy as Ambassador to Denmark and then Ambassador to the Philippines. Bill Pendleton was his press secretary, and Carl McGowan, as I said, had the Clifford-Murphy job, for Stevenson. McGowan had a very young, bright lawyer working for him named Newton Minow, who was later Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

Anyway, on the plane going back out to Springfield,

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I expressed my surprise at having been selected and asked McGowan if he was sure I was the man they wanted. I said I thought Dave Lloyd was a far more suitable person to be assigned to work with the Stevenson speech drafting or research staff, as it came to be called. McGowan said no, they had definitely wanted me, because I had had broad experience in the various elements of the legislative program and was therefore a natural person to perform liaison duties in the many different fields in which Governor Stevenson would have to take a position, which would inevitably be compared to the position that President Truman had taken: foreign policy, domestic policy, civil works, labor, agriculture, education, etc. Well, from that point of view I did have some advantage over Dave Lloyd, because I had worked on a wider range of issues and had spent time in the Budget Bureau.

In any event, that's how I ended up in Springfield. I went on leave without pay immediately from the White House, and was paid during the rest of the campaign from funds from the Democratic National Committee. I was officially on leave from the Federal Government without

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pay, and returned to the White House staff after the election was over.

HESS: We have several other questions on the 1952 events, but since it's 5:30 let's turn it off until next time.

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Third Oral History Interview with David E. Bell, New York City, New York, October 16, 1968.
By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: Mr. Bell, at the end of our last interview, we were discussing your assignment to Springfield to help Governor Stevenson in the campaign, and on that subject I'd like to read another quote from Cabell Phillips' book, *The Truman Presidency*, concerning the events of that period. It can be found on page 425:

In August Stevenson paid a visit to the President in the White House in the hope of working out a modus vivendi by which the President would remain in the background until the last couple of weeks of the campaign, while Stevenson created a public image and program of his own. The conference was held in the Cabinet room with the President and key members of his staff lined up on one side of the vast coffin-shaped table and, on the other side, Stevenson and picked members of "the Springfield crowd" -- like representatives of sovereign powers at a treaty conference. It was stiff, painfully uncomfortable, and largely inconclusive.

What do you recall of that conference?

BELL: I was not present at the conference, so that I can't comment from personal knowledge about what happened. I would be surprised if Mr. Phillips' description was correct, or at least didn't need substantial modification.

It was after that conference that Clayton Fritchey and I were asked to go out to Springfield to work with Governor

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Stevenson. We had, at least I had no impression in being asked by Murphy to join the Stevenson campaign headquarters that there was any particular stiffness in the atmosphere. Murphy was at the meeting and could, of course, give you a clear description of it.

Carl McGowan, who was then Stevenson's top policy adviser, was also present, and would be another good source on what the meeting was like.

HESS: Who else attended the meeting, do you recall?

BELL: No. I'm sorry. I don't have any recollection now of who else was at that meeting.

HESS: Why in your opinion did Governor Stevenson decided to have his headquarters in Springfield instead of New York or Washington?

BELL: It was my understanding that he wanted his headquarters away from Washington in order to establish an independent posture. I don't think he was trying to repudiate the Truman years. He couldn't if he had wanted to, because he was, of course, running as a Democrat. But it was clearly to his advantage to disassociate himself from the Truman administration,

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to make it plain that he would arrive in Washington as his own man, with a policy and program arrived at independently -- within the general framework of the Democratic Party traditions and platform but independently of any control or domination by the immediate past record. There was, I think, at that time in Stevenson's mind a somewhat exaggerated impression of the degree to which there was a "mess in Washington." It was a phrase that was in common use then. It seemed to me as I came to know Governor Stevenson a bit in Springfield, that he had been perhaps overly impressed by newspaper stories and speeches which harped a great deal on that term. So that, I would suspect, he wanted to emphasize the degree of his difference, and distinction from the Truman administration.

As to why he did not come to New York, I couldn't say. I assume that being in Springfield conveyed a better impression of a man who was operating from his own home territory, Illinois, who was a mid westerner, not part of the eastern establishment, who was solidly based in a rural background as well as an urban background, and that sort of thing. This is, of course, speculation

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on my part, but I would be pretty sure it was correct. Again, Carl McGowan would be the best source that I could suggest on questions of this type.

HESS: What was the relationship between Governor Stevenson's and President Truman's campaigns and between their respective staffs? Was it a workable relationship?

BELL: When Murphy tapped me to go out to Springfield, he explained that the reason that Fritchey and I had been named was in order to provide a liaison between the two staffs: the Springfield staff and the Truman staff. My impression is that the liaison worked well through the campaign. Naturally, I have a biased view of the situation because I was, in part, the instrument of the liaison.

It was agreed that President Truman would wait a while before he undertook any major campaign trips, and that was the case. I think there may have been some discussion as to just exactly when President Truman ought to start out on the campaign trail, and it's conceivable that he went out a little quicker than Governor Stevenson would have liked. But that's a very vague recollection on my part. I don't assert it. I just suggest that it's possible, because when Truman

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did go out on the campaign trail, while he said everything that I for one would have expected him to say, his style of campaigning was, of course, a good deal more direct and blunt than that

of Governor Stevenson, and I got the impression that to some extent Governor Stevenson felt that Truman was conveying a rougher picture of the Democratic campaign than he, Stevenson, would like to see.

That's an illustration, however, not of lack of liaison, but simply of the difference in character and approach of the two men. I do not have the impression -- I'll put it the other way around -- my strong recollection is that Governor Stevenson far preferred to have President Truman campaigning even with his rough and ready manner, than to have him sit quiet during the latter part of the campaign.

HESS: Did you ever hear Governor Stevenson comment on Mr. Truman's style of campaigning?

BELL: It's possible that I did, but I can't cite you an instance today.

HESS: How would you describe your duties as liaison? Just what did you do?

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BELL: I was associated with the group in Springfield which drafted speech material for Governor Stevenson. The process of providing speech material for Governor Stevenson, was of course, very different from the same process in the White House, which I described on a previous tape. Stevenson was very much his own speech drafter. Those of us working under McGowan on the speech staff did provide material for the Governor including complete speech drafts, but the Governor invariably reworked them extensively. He spent spare time on them while he was traveling; he spent late evenings and early mornings on them; he would even sit scribbling on his speech draft during a luncheon or dinner for the length of time he was being introduced, so that when he actually gave the speech it was almost invariably very substantially different from what had been provided in draft form. The result was that his speeches were very much his own product.

Nevertheless, he obviously needed a very large volume of material to work on, and the group that worked for him in Springfield had that job. Incidentally, that was a rather remarkable group in many ways. They worked on one floor of the Elks Club building in

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Springfield, and were always referred to around there, and later among themselves, as the "Elks Club group." The group included Ken [Kenneth] Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger, John Fischer, later editor of Harper's ; Sidney Hyman, who has written some books since then, Bill Wirtz, Bernard De Voto, a fellow named Jack Reddig, John Bartlow, Martin, Robert Tufts, who is now a professor at Oberlin, and perhaps one or two more. And of course, David Cohn, although he didn't work much at the Elks Club, did provide some important material for Stevenson's speeches, particularly those he gave in the South. So this was a strong group, and Stevenson made very good use of them.

Now, my particular role in all of this was in part to be a member of the group turning out material -- material for various occasions was assigned to different ones of this group. But also, since I knew the position of the administration and was in direct communication with the White

House staff, I was concerned with the substance of the positions that Governor Stevenson took on all the major policy issues of the campaign. I was therefore involved continuously in talking with the people at the White House, mostly Murphy and Neustadt,

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as I recall it, and with McGowan, and sometimes with the Governor as well, on the nuances of the particular policy positions that were being proposed to the Governor, insofar as they were positions that he had not already staked out. Many of the things he needed to talk about during the campaign were matters that he had not previously established any posture on, so that there was a continuous process of consideration of issues -- education, conservation, foreign policy, labor, civil rights, etc. -- which came up in the course of drafting the Governor's various speeches, but which involved the policy positions he was talking. It was my role, essentially, to make sure that he was clear on what position President Truman had taken, what the legislative history was, where the various legislative leaders stood on the issues involved, so that he could make up his own mind against the background of a clear understanding of where the issue stood in Washington.

HESS: Do you recall if there were any instances when the Governor's stand on a particular policy might have been not in keeping with the administration's stand at that

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time, to a degree perhaps?

BELL: I'm not sure I can cite you a case, but I'm sure there were cases in which after due consideration the Governor deliberately adopted a somewhat different policy position from that of the administration. However, I do not believe there were any major cases of that type, any overwhelmingly important cases of that type. This was only to be expected, since in addition to myself in Springfield, Ken Galbraith who advised the Governor very largely in the field of agriculture, saw very much eye-to-eye with the Truman position and had worked extensively with Charles Brannan, who was then Secretary of Agriculture. Bill Wirtz, who was the Governor's adviser to a very large extent on labor policy, had, of course, worked in Washington with the Wage Stabilization Board during the Korean war, and in other ways was very well acquainted with the labor policy of the Truman administration and indeed had participated in helping make it. So as it turned out, I do not recall any major issues on which the Governor was inclined to come to a different view than President Truman had staked out.

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HESS: You mentioned that the Governor often wrote speeches himself. Did he sit in on some of the speech drafting sessions though with the speechwriters?

BELL: It didn't work exactly like that. The Governor was too busy to sit in on drafting sessions. He did, of course, take a strong hand in deciding what he wanted to talk about at a given place, what the general layout of the campaign would be, what subjects he would cover in Seattle, in San Francisco, in Louisville, Kentucky, and so on. Most of the speeches were drafted for a given occasion, a given place and a given audience, and to include a policy stand on a given issue. A speech, of course, would not be normally devoted entirely to one issue. It would ring the changes

on the Governor's major themes, but in addition it was intended normally that any substantial speech should stake out the Governor's stand in an important way on an important policy issue. As often as possible, it would be a policy issue which he had not disposed of on another occasion.

HESS: Do you recall if Governor Stevenson asked Roosevelt's

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speechwriters, Sam Rosenman and Robert Sherwood to submit some speech drafts in 1952?

BELL: I have a faint recollection of that. However, I would not rest very heavily on that recollection.

HESS: Did you ever see any of their drafts?

BELL: It's possible that I did. There was a great deal of material solicited from all sorts of places. The Governor was a great admirer of style, and was always searching for material which would fit his very high standards of style as well as content. I'm sure it would have occurred either to him or to some of his advisers to invite contributions from Sherwood and Rosenman and others who might be thought to have something to contribute.

HESS: There have been those who have said that Governor Stevenson's speeches were on too high a plane, too intellectual, and aimed above the general understanding of the average voter. What would you say about that?

BELL: Well, that is a matter of opinion. I wouldn't have thought so myself, with certain exceptions. I

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think it's clear that the Labor Day speech that he gave in Detroit, one of the first major speeches of his campaign, was too intellectual a speech, too much devoted to substance. I think it was about that speech that Walter Reuther made his famous comment that Governor Stevenson was in touch with his subject but not with his audience. I think, however, that everybody from the Governor down in the campaign group recognized this point, and tried from then on to make sure that the material was drafted to be thoroughly intelligible and interesting to the audience in question.

All these recollections are dim now, but we had the feeling during the bulk of the campaign that not only the immediate audience, but also the press, the radio audience -- there was little television in those days -- all of them were hearing him. The response from these various recipients of speeches indicated that most of the time he was making sense, and while he was appealing to the intelligence rather than the emotions of the American voter, the voters were responding, were listening, respected what he had to say, and had a very good impression of him. It does seem to me now that we go

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over this point, that there were one or two other occasions during the campaign when we thought that the Governor had not come across very well. It seems to me that there was at least one nationwide speech, either radio or television or both -- I've forgotten what was done about television in those days -- which did not go over very well. But by and large, it seemed to me that the Governor made his point, made it well, and attracted a very strong and devoted following of people who thought that he was a far more impressive political leader than they were accustomed to, precisely because he did speak in a more -- I don't quite know what the word is -- eloquent, perhaps, more eloquent style than they were accustomed to hearing from political leaders.

HESS: Do you recall if Pierre Salinger served on Governor Stevenson's campaign staff in 1952?

BELL: He .did not serve on the staff in Springfield. He may well have been part of the staff somewhere else, in California, perhaps. I am almost positive that I never met Pierre at that time.

HESS: You've mentioned Mr. Fritchey a time or two. What

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were his duties in Springfield, and who did he work for?

BELL: Well, the Springfield arrangements were rather complicated. I'm not sure that I can recall the details of all of them now. I've mentioned the policy staff, under Carl McGowan, located at the Elks Club. Then also in Springfield was Wilson Wyatt, who was Governor Stevenson's personal campaign manager, and who was responsible for scheduling his visits to various places, and for his contacts with political leaders in the various states and groups. Phil Stern and Jim Lanigan worked for Wyatt, I believe, and I think Clay Fritchey worked for Wyatt, and was responsible in large part for the thinking about the public relations aspects of the campaign, and for being in touch -- through Matt Connelly -- with the White House on schedules, where the Governor was going to go, where the President was going to go, and so on. However, this is only my recollection and I assume you will be interviewing Fritchey himself who will give you a full account.

Incidentally, in addition to the McGowan, group and the Wyatt group, there was also the National

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Volunteers for Stevenson of which George Ball was the cochairman, along with Jane Dick. Their headquarters officially were in Chicago, but they were in and out of Springfield a great deal. Ben Heineman was associated with that group. I remember that because sometimes during the campaign there was a big fracas about making income tax returns public, and Heineman and Ball, who were personal friends of the Governor, were involved in the decision as to what to do about that. The result was that the Governor did make his income tax return public and so did all the other candidates. The Governor was reluctant to do so, not because he had anything to hide, but because he thought it was an invasion of privacy, and that candidates shouldn't have to go through that. But, unfortunately, he had given some salary bonuses to some of his staff over and above what they were paid by the State of Illinois, and in order to emphasize that he had nothing to hide he finally decided that it was necessary to make his income tax returns public. General

Eisenhower did the same thing, and so did the two vice-presidential candidates. I suspect all of them had the same distaste for the process

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that Stevenson did.

Then, of course, there was the regular national committee staff and its chairman, Steve Mitchell, who were located in Washington. I had very little to do with them. They had a research staff -- I've forgotten who headed it -- roughly corresponding to the research staff that Bill Batt had headed up for the Democratic National Committee in 1948. The only thing that I remember about it is that one of the members of that research staff in 1952 was a young man named Anthony Lewis, whom I did not know at that time. I met him through that group, and he later went on to become a very well-known newspaperman. He wrote *Gideon's Trumpet*, and he is today, I think, the *New York Times* correspondent in London.

There were other people in and out of Springfield, of course, all the time. I remember Bill [Senator William] Fulbright came into Springfield and stayed for several days. He didn't contribute much to the campaign so far as any of us could see, and we assumed that he was there in order to try to stake out a position as a strong candidate for Secretary of State in a Stevenson administration. Whether that's true or

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not I have no way of knowing.

HESS: What seemed to be the relationship between the two campaign efforts, Governor Stevenson's and Mr. Truman's and the Democratic National Committee's, since we're on that subject?

BELL: It seemed to me clear that the Democratic National Committee was at Stevenson's disposal. Steve Mitchell was Stevenson's man, and I never heard that there was any effort by Mr. Truman to dominate the Democratic National Committee. However, these were not matters with which I was directly concerned.

HESS: In your opinion, why did Governor Stevenson lose that election? Also on the same matter, was there anything that he could have done, or that could have been done, to swing the election his way?

BELL: My impression is that there wasn't any way that Governor Stevenson could have won that election. I thought at the time, and think today, that he did remarkably well to get as many votes as he did.

Eisenhower was a national hero; the Korean war was an insuperable obstacle to any Democratic candidate

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winning over a military hero like Eisenhower, who necessarily seemed to be not only a recourse from an administration which had gotten the country into an unpopular war, but the natural man to finish off the war because of his military experience. I believe that his famous remark, I think it was in Detroit a week or so before the election: "I shall go to Korea," was the capstone, although I personally felt then and still do, that Stevenson would have lost in any event.

We were much encouraged early on in the campaign. There was a period in which General Eisenhower did not appear to be a vigorous candidate, and some newspaper made the famous remark that Eisenhower was "running like a dry creek." But that was early on, perhaps in late August, or early September, but anyway, several weeks before election day, and in consequence, there was plenty of time for Eisenhower to begin making a better impression, which he did. He was very popular.

Coming back to the Stevenson campaign, it seemed to me then, and does now, that he presented a strong policy position in terms of what the country needed, both internationally and domestically. I think he made an excellent impression as a vigorous, intelligent

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and sensitive person, who would make a good President. He got fanatical support from a whole generation of young people, many of whom I ran into years later in the Kennedy administration, who really got started in politics because Governor Stevenson persuaded them that it was a profession, or an occupation, or a part of American life which intelligent and high-principled young people ought to be connected with and ought to participate in.

In this sense I think that Governor Stevenson's campaign of 1952 had lasting beneficial effects in the United States of considerable dimensions. But to answer your question precisely, I was not surprised to see Governor Stevenson lose, and I do not see how he could possibly have won under the circumstances. Nor did I see then any major action or policy position that he could have taken which would have substantially improved his prospects. I thought we did about everything that could be done and garnered about all the votes there were to be had for a first-class Democratic candidate in that particular year.

HESS: Were you involved in Governor Stevenson's second

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effort of 1956?

BELL: No, I was not. I was in Pakistan at that time. Looked at from a distance, it seemed to me a hopeless endeavor. I was rather sorry to see Governor Stevenson undertake it. I assume he did it out of a sense of loyalty to his party. It seemed to me that the campaign itself was not as distinguished as the 1952 campaign. I gather that he was beaten more overwhelmingly in '56 than he was in '52.

HESS: We probably covered this pretty well, but I'd like to ask the question, what would be your general opinion and evaluation of Governor Stevenson as a man?

BELL: Well, he was a very complex individual, and of course any evaluation of him I would make now has to include some judgments based on knowing him during the Kennedy administration when he was Ambassador to the United Nations. I saw him at the very first Cabinet meeting of the Kennedy administration, when he made sort of a response to the President on behalf of his fellow Cabinet officers, a graceful statement that they were delighted to serve with him, that they were there to

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do what he wanted, and wanted to work together with him. That was important, of course, in a Kennedy administration, to make it plain that Stevenson did not think of himself as a new [William Henry] Seward.

That was typical of the man, in that he was invariably sensitive, gracious, and thoughtful. However, I came out of the '52 campaign with mixed feelings about Governor Stevenson as a potential President. This surprised me, because I had been a strong supporter of his all through the spring and summer and hoped very much that he would be nominated by the Democrats. I thought he was by far the best man available, and was delighted when he was nominated in Chicago.

But when I went out to Springfield, I was rather startled to find that although he had been Governor for four years, he did not really have -- or so it seemed to me -- a firm grip on the Democratic Party in the State of Illinois. That may have been an unfair judgment by the young sprout who didn't understand anything of the difficulties of Illinois politics, but the fact was that he was having a hell of a time trying to get his nominee selected as the gubernatorial candidate to succeed himself. He made it, as I remember it. His

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candidate was Otto Kerner, who won and served, I think, for two terms. Yet this was a great struggle and -- this was going on just when we arrived in Springfield that's why it made such an impact on me -- from some of the early conversations I had at that time it seemed to me that Governor Stevenson was not as adept and effective in managing the political elements of his job as Governor of Illinois as I had become accustomed to in watching President Truman in Washington. Therefore, I had some skepticism, which remained with me though that campaign, as to whether Governor Stevenson, would have turned out to have the political force which I think is necessary for any man to be an effective President.

Secondly, I was not clear as to the extent to which the Governor was reluctant to take stands. On the whole, I was persuaded by the end of the campaign that he was not a man who ducked responsibility or who was unable to make up his mind. He was a man instead who did not make up his mind until he had to. He kept his options open, and that's legitimate, proper and necessary. A campaign is not a particularly good time during which to reach a judgment about a man on this

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criterion. It is an important criterion because a President has to make decisions. Right or wrong, he has to settle matters.

Of course, I had seen in President Truman, a man one of whose outstanding characteristics was that when the time came to act he felt the responsibility to do exactly that. He took the decisions that his office called for. When I first went to Springfield, I was puzzled about Stevenson on this count. He was a very different person. He was much more introverted; he thought longer and harder probably than President Truman did. He didn't work longer hours -- President Truman too was a very hard worker. But he didn't appear to make up his mind as quickly as President Truman did, and it looked to me for a while as though he worried to such an extent that he didn't really come to any decision on tough questions.

As I say, as the campaign went along, I decided that I was wrong on that, and that, in fact, he was prepared to act and to reach decisions. And so that criticism which is often made of Governor Stevenson did not seem to me to be correct. The other point, however -- that he may not have been comfortable in

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playing the straight out political role that any President has to play, and play effectively -- that point troubled me to the degree that I almost felt a sense of relief, not a significant one, but a minor countervailing sense of relief, so to speak, to the very strong sense of disappointment that all of us felt when Stevenson was not elected. I felt that way increasingly as the years went by, notably in '56, when it seemed to me that his political judgment during the campaign was not all that good.

So my net impression is that Stevenson would have been an extremely intelligent, witty, sensitive, perceptive, attractive President, who would have been able to make the decisions that the office requires, but might have had great difficulty in accomplishing what he needed to accomplish in relation to the Congress and the political apparatus through the country.

HESS: After President Kennedy was elected there were some statements in the press to the effect that Governor Stevenson was disappointed that he was not appointed Secretary of State. Is that correct?

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BELL: I have no way of verifying or not verifying that. I assume that it's true. I assume that Governor Stevenson would have liked to be Secretary of State, and indeed I assume that he had considerable difficulty accepting the limited role he had to play as Ambassador to the United Nations. I'm sure he accepted that role only because President Kennedy made it plain that he regarded it as an important one. He included Governor Stevenson as a member of the Cabinet, and made it plain that he could call the President direct on any issues on which he was having difficulty with the State Department. Arthur Schlesinger, I believe, was in a sense Governor Stevenson's safety valve at the White House when he had difficulty reaching an agreement with Harlan Cleveland of the State Department. Nevertheless, the role of Ambassador to the United Nations is essentially vastly secondary to the role of Secretary of State. I would assume that Stevenson regretted that he was not in the latter role, but I have no direct knowledge of the matter.

HESS: On the subject of the Democratic National Committee, what seemed to be the relationship between Mr. Truman

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and a few of the men who held the position of chairman of the Democratic National Committee during the period of his administration: J. Howard McGrath was the first one to hold that position when you were on the White House staff?

BELL: This is an aspect of the President's relationships that I saw very little of. McGrath, I can't recall now, but there was some sort of scandal about McGrath and he resigned under fire as Attorney General -- I don't remember just why. I don't know whether he was Democratic National Committee chairman before or after that. I can't give you a useful response.

HESS: What about William M. Boyle, Jr.? Any memories about him?

BELL: I just remember what he looked like, that's all.

HESS: Frank E. McKinney?

BELL: No, he was from Indianapolis, I think -- a banker, but that's all I remember.

HESS: And Stephen A. Mitchell, who was actually a

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Stevenson appointment?

BELL: Yes, Mitchell was Stevenson's man in the '52 campaign. I have no idea whatever of his relations with President Truman.

HESS: Did you ever have any dealings with Stephen Mitchell in 1952 after you were in Springfield?

BELL: Nothing significant.

HESS: What do you recall about the attempt to assassinate the President on November 1 of 1950? Just where were you on that date?

BELL: That was the Puerto Ricans?

HESS: Yes.

BELL: I was in the Executive Office Building, and my office was not on the Pennsylvania Avenue side but down on the 17th Street side. I heard something about it and went up to the office of the Budget Director, that overlooked 17th Street. By then it was all over. I saw nothing of the incident itself. I did hear that the young man who was then serving as personal assistant to Budget

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Director Jim Webb, looked out the window and saw the shooting going on, and saw a policeman in the middle of the street who was hurt, and raced down the stairs and out into the middle of the street while the firing was still going on, and gave first aid to the policeman in question. Matt Cullen was the young man's name. That's the only recollection I have.

HESS: Do you recall any time when the President may have spoken of that event, or of assassination attempts in general?

BELL: No, not that I recall.

HESS: Regarding the general charges made against an individual that became to be known as McCarthyism, was there a response among the White House staff members to protect themselves from that sort of thing?

BELL: That was a very ugly aspect of those years. We all were involved in one way or another in the general process of seeking to defend the people in the executive branch against what most of us thought was a very unfair and demagogic series of attacks. I was personally less involved in this than some others. Steve Spingarn, I

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think, was deeply in it. McCarthy had some questions about people on the White House staff. Dave Lloyd, for example, I think had been a member of the Cooperative Bookstore which was one of the counts that were held against people in those days. My wife, I believe, had been a member of the Cooperative Bookstore briefly in the late '30s in order to get books cheaply. I suppose it's quite possible that Dave Lloyd was involved in the same way -- that is to say, quite independently of any meetings that were held there or any organized efforts by any leftwing group that was associated with the bookstore.

In any event, I recall that Murphy or somebody went through Dave Lloyd's FBI file and reported to the President that there was really no question whatever as to his fundamental loyalty or qualifications to handle sensitive issues in the White House. I've forgotten whether Dave was attacked personally. He could have been by some of the people who made speeches in those days: Senator McCarthy himself or others. It was a very sticky business, because McCarthy was careful to present a moving target: it never was clear enough what his charges were so that they could be answered

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and disposed of. He shifted his ground continuously and was always bringing up new cases. All of that, of course, came to a head with his own censure a couple of years into the Eisenhower administration.

The cases that were the most significant in the late years of the Truman administration, I guess, were those that were related to State Department employees. There was some sort of a list of such persons. I remember that arrangements were made for Brien McMahon, then a Senator, and

I think Senator [Millard E.] Tydings, and perhaps somebody else, to come down to the Cabinet Room and read the files on those men, there being a big issue as to whether that sort of files could be subpoenaed. I think the decision by President Truman was that they could not be, that they were confidential, but special arrangements were made for representatives of the Senate to come down and read the files. They were persuaded, as the members of the executive branch had been, that there was nothing in the files that seriously called for the dismissal of any of the employees concerned. However, what was really at stake of course, was atmospherics, and fear, and a general sense that the Communists somehow were infiltrating

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the United States to our detriment.

HESS: All right, sir, anything further on the McCarthy episode?

BELL: I was going to conclude by saying that in a sense there was nothing the executive branch could do that would successfully respond to the feeling of fear and frustration which was being played upon by McCarthy. In other words, the specific charges being made were less important to his impact than the general difficulties the United States was having in the world. It took the passage of time to expose McCarthy and his own limitations, but the deeper questions of what the United States' role in the world should be, and the attitude one should have towards the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement, remained very difficult matters until the early 1960s, when there appeared to be a significant change in the attitude of the Russian leaders. I suppose the Cuban missile crisis was the event that symbolized the change to most people.

HESS: What do you recall about the transition from the Truman administration to the Eisenhower administration?

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BELL: In the late stages of the Stevenson campaign, I had become ill, and I was in the office only part of each day during the actual transition period. I do recall that Truman had appointed Fred Lawton as Budget Director, and Fred was a very savvy, old time Government official. He arranged things so that the Budget Bureau and the information about the 1954 budget were made available to the incoming group. Mr. Truman was very ready to provide information to the incoming group. Joe [Joseph M.] Dodge was Mr. Eisenhower's first Budget Director, and he was given access to information in the Budget Bureau in December or January. I remember that a gentleman who was one of Eisenhower's assistants -- Emmet Hughes -- was designated to take over my office after January 20th. This was the subject of a joke between Neustadt and myself, who had adjacent offices at the time, because we were in our early thirties, but Hughes was even younger, and we ruefully remarked to each other that this was the first time we had ever been replaced in our jobs by a younger man. Those are very minor and irrelevant recollections, but that's about all I recall of the transition period.

HESS: Do you recall anything about the duties that Sherman

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Adams may have had at this time?

BELL: No, I do not.

HESS: Did you see him?

BELL: Not that I recall.

HESS: I have heard reports that there may have been a meeting at the Blair House on the evening of January 19, 1983, attended by some of the Truman staff and a few of the incoming Eisenhower people, at which time the President may have said that the principal accomplishments that he would be remembered for would not be the Marshall plan or point 4, but it would be for reorganizing the White House office in such a manner that no future President could make a mistake. Do you recall anything about that?

BELL: No, I wasn't there at any such meeting if it was held, and I don't recall hearing about it.

HESS: Do you recall the President ever making a statement of this nature?

BELL: No, I don't. But on the other hand, it strikes me that

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there may have been something to it, and I would encourage you to ask Murphy about it, who would undoubtedly know for sure, because President Truman was the first President who had to contend with the problem of being directly in control of the release of atomic weapons, and the method by which a President exercises that responsibility effectively I'm sure gave him a good deal of concern. The notion of assigning a military unit, a military man, to accompany him wherever he went, with the command codes and all that sort of thing, certainly was worked out in the Truman years. It undoubtedly has been changed since, but he faced the problem. That may very well have been what he meant if he made the remark that you refer to about the future President making a mistake.

HESS: Did President Truman himself ever express in your presence any viewpoint about the operation of the Presidency or on government organization?

BELL: Oh, yes indeed. I heard him in those days on more than one occasion expound his views on the importance of a clear delegation of responsibility to senior government officials, and of giving each of them

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access to the President at any time so. there was a straight line, a direct and immediate relationship between the President and his Cabinet officers and the heads of major independent agencies. He used the chart which I think Charlie Stauffacher developed when he was in the Budget Bureau, and which used to appear and I think still does appear in the document the Budget Bureau puts out each year called *The Budget In Brief*. This is an organizational chart of the Federal Government arranged in a half circle, and President Truman liked that chart because

it showed the immediate straight line relationship between the President and those who report to him.

The President frequently commented that he had reduced the number of agencies which reported to the President, and had straightened out the lines of command which under President Roosevelt had become highly confused. President Roosevelt had in a sense appointed in Jimmy Byrnes, and later in Judge Vinson, a sort of a deputy president, through whom a lot of officers of Government were supposed to report to the President. President Truman was proud of the fact that he had done away with that office and anything like it,

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and that any Cabinet officer or agency head could reach the President direct just by calling up. I don't mean they got him immediately necessarily, but any message would reach him and the President would call back. Or he could come and see the President just by making an appointment.

In addition to that point, President Truman was proud of the work of the first Hoover Commission. He felt that it did a good job, that a great many of the recommendations of the first Hoover Commission had been put into effect, and that the Government in general was a more efficient place when he left than when he arrived. He took great pains over the budget, he took great pains over questions of Government organization, over questions of Government salaries, and the employment conditions for Government employees. He was a very good President from the viewpoint of the Budget Director, the Civil Service Commissioners, and others who were concerned with the machinery of Government, because he believed that all these matters were important. He put a lot of time in on them, and tried to make management improvements which would make the Government run more effectively

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HESS: In your opinion, which of the major advisers might have had the greater influence on President Truman's thinking?

BELL: Oh, I would say undoubtedly Clifford and Murphy, in succession -- that is to say; Clifford in the early years when he was there, and Murphy gradually increasing in stature while he was there with Clifford, and then after Clifford left, Murphy in his position as Special Counsel. It seemed to me that both men had a very strong impact on policy questions, and Mr. Truman it seemed to me had enormous respect for the judgment of both of them.

HESS: Would that also hold true if we added the Cabinet members, the heads of all the agencies, in the category as major advisers, do you think that Mr. Clifford and Mr. Murphy would still emerge?

BELL: I answered your question thinking only of the White House and other people in the Executive Office.

HESS: I was thinking on a larger scale.

BELL: Considering it on a larger basis I would say that

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I would still rank Clifford and Murphy very high, but certainly George Marshall, Dean Acheson, to a lesser degree Bob Lovett, and I suppose Jim Forrestal, although I saw almost nothing of that relationship, had very considerable impact. In their own fields, he had a number of strong Cabinet officers: Charlie Brannan was a strong Cabinet officer; so was Oscar Chapman; and John Snyder, although one had the feeling that he lacked a good deal of the background that one would like to see in an ideal Secretary of the Treasury, nevertheless was tough-minded, and thought for himself, and I believe had a considerable impact on the President in some fields.

HESS: As one who has had ample opportunity to observe the Presidency, do you have any opinions as to how you think the Presidency might be changed? Are there any aspects of the Presidency that you think demand too much of his time and attention?

BELL: That's a very important question and I'm not sure I have a very well-balanced answer to it. The Presidency is, of course, an overwhelming job. Any President has to be, first of all, a policy leader for the nation, and

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a legislative leader for the Congress. Secondly, he has to participate in the conduct of foreign affairs which takes a lot of personal time -- cables, ambassadorial appointments, etc. And he has to be the head of the executive branch, which is an enormously large and complex job.

We talked a lot about these matters in those days, Dick Neustadt and Sid [Sidney] Hyman and others. Both Neustadt and Hyman have put their views down in books. I shared Neustadt's views quite closely and still do. If one set out today to ease the President's burden, to improve the office of the President, it would require examining the following fields: First, and most important how to improve the operation of the Congress. It seems to me that Congress is the most archaic and backward of the elements of our Federal Government. It operates through committee chairmen, many of whom are extremely elderly and set in their ways and not able to move quickly and strongly. The congressional system of heavy reliance on seniority makes it difficult for the Congress to respond to changes in popular opinion, and changes in the needs of the country. The congressional system is very hard to manage with any degree of efficiency. This

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does not refer simply to the problem of a filibuster in the Senate, but to the whole process of committee work which fragments congressional consideration of most issues. Congress, for example, has no way of dealing effectively with Budget and fiscal policy questions. It can only deal in pieces with one set of tax issues at a time, one set of expenditure questions at a time. Everything is done too slowly in the Congress and there is much too much creaking of gears.

However, it is a legislative body, it has to reflect the various interests of the country, and to some extent, the changes that would be appropriate in the Congress might make it less representative. Certainly any change that's proposed has to be considered. to see whether it would reduce the degree of democratic participation in society. So I do not have any recipes offhand for how to fix

the problems that beset the Congress, but I do think that the way the Congress now is makes the conduct of Government business very difficult, and this affects the President very seriously, because he is in a sense the number one client of the legislature. The way it is now, he has to deal through

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slow and difficult methods with a dispersed and disintegrated organization. It takes an enormous amount of his time. He does not have natural lieutenants and allies in dealing with the Congress. If you get a situation such has been true in recent years with Senator Fulbright, who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, not willing to play any sort of role in getting the foreign policy business of the nation done, the President's job is made much more difficult. The chairman of such a committee ought to look at himself as a responsible member of a group that should schedule and accomplish governmental business. He can and should take any position he wants to personally on specific legislation, but he nevertheless should pull a laboring oar, as Senator Fulbright, just to take that example, has been unwilling to do, in getting matters before the Congress and disposed of in an efficient manner. So one way in which the Presidency could be greatly eased as a burden and greatly improved as an instrument for accomplishing the nation's business would be to improve the Congress.

The second element of the situation which makes the President's job very difficult, is the difference

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between foreign and domestic matters under the Constitution and under the laws as they have been developed.

In the foreign field the President has all kinds of room for taking the initiative and therefore taking leadership. Indeed in recent years there has been a strong view expounded in the Congress and elsewhere that the President has too much power and too much authority in foreign affairs and he needs to be limited by some means -- congressional action, budget controls, an amendment to the Constitution, if necessary.

On the domestic front, on the other hand, the President is so thoroughly dominated by the Congress that it is very difficult for him to get anything done, with respect, say, to urban problems, racial problems, education problems, and so on. I've heard Kermit Gordon describe the situation recently as being one in which in domestic affairs the Presidency is like a weak mayor system in a municipality. He necessarily depends on so many other people, on persuading so many other people, that it's extremely difficult for him to get action, and we cannot obtain from the President the national leadership that we ought to have in these times. So it may require a substantially greater

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degree of willingness to delegate power from the Congress to the President, if the President is to be effective on the domestic front in these days.

Finally, there is great attraction to many people, and I think there's something to it, in the concept of putting more of the executive branch powers under a smaller number of senior officers -- the kind of thing that has been done with respect to the Defense Department where the old Army, Navy and Air Force departments have been consolidated under a single Secretary of Defense. It's not clear what consolidations are needed, or how they could be accomplished. President Johnson has tried to consolidate the departments of Commerce and Labor and gotten nowhere with the Congress or with the major interest groups concerned. But it is an attractive idea that there could be some reduction among the independent agency heads and Cabinet officers who report to the President. In my opinion, however, this is definitely a third-ranking element in response to your question about how to improve the Presidency.

HESS: What were the sources of your ideas on administration, policymaking and presidential power during the Truman

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administration? How important were the writings of political scientists and your own knowledge of the techniques employed by Presidents before Mr. Truman?

BELL: I was an economist rather than a political scientist. I had read extremely little about the Presidency. I stumbled into the Budget Bureau because I had friends there, and stumbled from the Budget Bureau into the White House by invitation, not as the result of any intention or forethought on my part. So I was in no sense prepared for it. I did not do any substantial reading while I was in the White House, that I recall, on this subject. I knew a little bit about the Brownlow Committee, which President Roosevelt had named, and which submitted a report that led to the establishment of the Executive Office of the President and moving the Budget Bureau from the Treasury to the new Executive Office. This was all put into effect in 1939. This sort of thing was in the atmosphere when I was in the Budget Bureau. Therefore I had some grasp of the concept of the Executive Office of the President and the difference between staff work for the President and the line responsibility of the Cabinet heads and the agency

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heads.

My first work in the Budget Bureau in 1942 was under Bern [Bernard L.] Gladioux in the War Organization Section of Don Stone's Administrative Management Division, so I learned a lot from their ideas about how the Government should be organized and managed.

I also had served during the war in the Marine Corps and therefore had some knowledge of the concepts of staff and line in the military sense of completed staff work, and all that sort of thing. This was very influential in my own understanding when I started on the White House job as to what staff work was like.

But most of the ideas I believe were learned on the spot. I learned an enormous amount from Charles Murphy who had worked on the Hill for a dozen years, in the office of the Legislative Counsel, and understood the congressional process very well. I learned a lot from argument and conversation with Dick Neustadt. We developed together, as I remember it, the process of

recording what the President's legislative program was, and what progress was being made on it through the various stages of congressional consideration. George Elsey was a participant with us in puzzling about these matters. I think it's fair to say that whatever

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we knew and understood, we gathered primarily from experience and only to a small extent from previous writings and from academic connections. That's nothing to be proud of. I could have benefited a great deal from a broader academic background. But that's the way it was.

HESS: What are the major differences between staff and line work?

BELL: As applied to the Federal Government, and the Presidency in the Federal Government, the major differences were questions of who took responsibility for a decision. Cabinet officers and agency heads had to decide, and take public responsibility for the decisions -- defend them before Congress and the public. The President had to do the same thing. The essential role of the staff officers in the White House were to assist the President in becoming better informed, in seeing the issues more clearly, in getting an agreement between people where possible before issues reached the President, to keep things out of his way, so far as they could be kept out of his way, and to clarify issues so that when he made a decision he understood clearly what the issues were.

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This concept of staff work seems to me to stand up very well, not only as I saw it in the Truman years, but as I saw it also in the Kennedy and Johnson years. It means that the White House staff is essentially there to serve the President and enable him to do more himself, but cannot in any real sense take any of the burdens of personal leadership -- personal responsibility and decision making -- off the President. Nor of course do they take any of those burdens off any of the Cabinet officers and agency heads. The White House staff does for the President things that he would do for himself if he had more time -- gathering information, filtering it, holding preliminary meetings to clarify issues, taking care as far as can be to reach agreements without his presence, if that can be done, and where that does not result in a "least common denominator" solution, which he would not want. But major issues and decisions always end up on his desk under this kind of a concept.

I should emphasize that this is the sense in which I use the terms staff and line. The concept under which Governor Adams worked for President Eisenhower is quite a different pattern. I do not

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know personally how the White House worked under those arrangements. It was evidently Governor Adams' role, assigned to him by President Eisenhower, to try to dispose of as many issues as possible himself, to decide, so to speak, for President Eisenhower on the basis of what he assumed and understood and guessed what President Eisenhower would want done. I assume that the Cabinet officers and agency heads took Governor Adams' decision in lieu of a decision from President Eisenhower, unless they felt strongly enough about it to appeal to President Eisenhower.

That's a system I do not understand; I do not know how to describe it, and it seems to me to be a very dangerous and risky arrangement. To an outsider it didn't look as though it worked well under President Eisenhower, and I certainly have not seen it attempted in the three Presidencies which I saw at close range: Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson.

HESS: What in your opinion were Mr. Truman's major contributions during his career?

BELL: I've always thought that the two major contributions he made were, first, to lead the United States on an

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internationalist course after World War II, to lead the United States in rejecting a Harding-like turning inward to an isolationist stance. I've never tried to make the historical judgment whether Mr. Truman -- had his views been like those of Mr. Harding -- could have led the nation into a 1920s type policy. But I'm sure the fact that he led in the opposite direction was an extremely significant and important element in American history, and world history. I'm not clear on the degree to which what happened after World War II could be personally ascribed to President Truman, but certainly a major share of the credit for what happened in those years on the internationalist front, in my opinion -- and I think it was an enormous achievement -- belongs to Mr. Truman.

The second major accomplishment of the Truman years, in my opinion, was to make a decisive turn on the issue of civil rights -- the racial issue -- in the United States. Again, I'm sure the time for such things had come, there were lots of forces leading in that direction anyway, but President Truman took a positive stand at a crucial time. The civil rights report in 1947, which was prepared by a presidential commission, chaired as I

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recall it by Charles Wilson of the General Electric Company -- "Electric Charlie" Wilson -- and called, if I'm not mistaken, *To Secure These Rights*, was a historic document. One of the chief staff persons involved was Nancy Wechsler, wife of Jimmy Wechsler of the *New York Post*. In my opinion, that document and the steady, continuing insistence of the President in putting its recommendations into effect, I think had enormous impact on our history. I would not at all argue that there weren't other significant contributions made by Mr. Truman. But in my opinion, these were the major ones.

HESS: What is your estimation of Mr. Truman's place in history, one or two hundred years from now, how would he be regarded?

BELL: I'm not qualified to answer that question, even though in a sense I've already answered it. It seems to me two of the things he will be remembered for most importantly, are the decisive involvement of the United States in world affairs, after World War II, in sharp contrast to what we did after World War I, and the decisive leadership in establishing civil rights,

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turning those principles into practice, which involved desegregation of the armed services, of our public facilities, and so on.

HESS: Do you have anything else to add on Mr. Truman or the Truman administration?

BELL: Nothing that occurs to me now. It may be that after I read the transcript I'll think of some things and I'll add them at that time.

HESS: Fine. Thank you very much.

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