

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Interview #3

Phil Murray and the CIO

(Thursday, August 4, 1988)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: Since you have just come back from a political convention, I thought today we could talk about the conventions you have attended, starting with the most recent one. What was your role at the 1988 Democratic Convention?

HOFFMANN: Well, as it has been since 1960, I've been on security, basically to the VVIP area, where they are seated. This probably was the most difficult of all that we've had, because of lack of space. When you look at this convention, obviously it was like a tv studio, and that's it. There was very little space. We had to enter through portal 32, where there were VVIPs in two sections. There were about one hundred and ninety seats in both of them, but it became so crowded we had to take the chairs out of there and they had to stand up.

On the way into this portal, on the left side, was a place for the concessionaires. They kept coming and going. There was also a tv studio on the left, and a radio booth on the right, and they kept coming in and out. You had to get to know them by face,

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otherwise you had a complete backlog. They were very cooperative, very wonderful people to do business with. There were people there who had lists, and we had to try to accommodate those people who were not on the list and should have been. It goes without saying, it was a very difficult problem.

We had to shut the doors for three nights, because we were overpopulated, over thirteen thousand people. The fire marshals shut the doors. A lot of people were a little bit disturbed because they were shut, but you can only squeeze so many people into a place like this. It was for their protection that the fire marshal decided to shut it down. Basically, the people who were running the convention had done an excellent job with the limited space that they did have. From a standpoint of security, I think we probably had the best security we've had at a convention so far. There were less eruptions. However, some of the problems were caused by people who didn't want to permit people to come into some place, where they should have been allowed to come in anyway, because of who they were, because people did not recognize them. It was very difficult. I tried to bail them out as much as possible. We became a little bit hostile at times, but it all worked out. I think it was a very, very well run convention, except for the fact that it was too darn small a facility to accommodate all that wanted to go in.

RITCHIE: What type of people go into the VVIP section?

HOFFMANN: Like Mrs. Dukakis, Mrs. Bentsen, Coretta Scott King, some of Jesse Jackson's family, some senators, congressmen, former leaders of the party. Those were the people we tried to take care of. It was a very small place to do it, but we were, I think, fairly successful. We didn't get too many noses out of joint.

RITCHIE: I was going to say, with VIP you're dealing with some big egos.

HOFFMANN: There's no question about it.

RITCHIE: Did some of them give you a hard time?

HOFFMANN: Not this time, no they didn't. One of them did come in and start to give me a hard time. The fellow who ran the radio booth happened to be standing there, and he turned around to this fellow and said, "You're on the wrong track. This is the most professional man I've dealt with in a long time." He said, "He knows what he's doing, so listen to what he tells you." The man was saying, "They don't dare shut the convention down." I said, "They will shut it down before nine o'clock, or my name ain't Nordy Hoffmann. He came back later and said, "Your name's Nordy Hoffmann, they shut it down before nine o'clock."

RITCHIE: What were they doing, shutting the doors?

HOFFMANN: They shut the doors so nobody else could come in. And it was closed. It had to be. You get thirteen thousand people in a place that can only accommodate approximately eleven thousand, it gets very, very jammed. When you look down on the floor at the convention, you could see it was just absolute bedlam, because nobody could move one way or the other. It was difficult.

RITCHIE: What are some of your tricks of the trade in dealing with VIPs? How do you approach that kind of a job?

HOFFMANN: Number one, you have to have knowledge of the person who is the VIP. I think that in most instances, even though some of them have an unbelievable ego, they love to be kidded. If they've gotten to know you over the years, it really doesn't become a problem. "Well, I can't get you a seat right now," I'd say, "How about going up to the cocktail lounge for a few minutes and I'll come up and get you." "Oh, would you?" I'd say, "Sure." And in a few minutes I'd go up and get them and bring them down. It's a kind of a personal service. You put your own neck on the line with these people, and they do appreciate it. You don't have much of a problem with real VIPs, pseudo-VIPs you have a real problem with. They think they should be some place and they shouldn't be there

to begin with. But by and large, I think basically it's knowledge of who they are, and what they are, and what they mean as far as the party is concerned, or

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what they mean in the Congressional area, as senators and congressmen, or the people who are contributors to the Democratic party. It's that kind of a knowledge that you don't get in twenty-four hours. Having had some experience in the past with these people, I really don't have too much trouble. There's no quick way to do this.

One man was so mad that he couldn't see, and rightfully so--because he happened to be a VIP, and they wouldn't let him in. So I took him to the side, and took him up and bought him a drink. I said, "I'm sorry, I can't get you in, but hold out for a little bit more."

He said, "Listen, you've done everything you can. I appreciate it. How long have you been doing this?"
I said, "Since 1960."

He said, "Why don't they let somebody with experience do this, instead of these kids?"

That was his reaction, but sooner or later he got over it. That's all it is. It's a question of knowledge of people. I remember at the convention in San Francisco [in 1972], we had much more space there. I asked my wife to help me. She knew them, because she worked for Senator Muskie at one time. She was up at the top of the stairs, and the people at the bottom of the stairs

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wouldn't let this person in. I saw her go flying down the stairs and right out into the audience. The first thing I knew she had John Kennedy, Jr. He was supposed to be up there, and they were turning him away. Strangely enough, this year, the Kennedy's had me thank my wife for what she did for them at the San Francisco. It did make an impression, obviously. That's what it's all about. We've got more egos up there on the Hill than we've got anyplace else in the world. And if you can handle those, you can handle anybody.

RITCHIE: Aside from how crowded it was, what was the atmosphere at this convention? How did it compare to the other conventions you've been to?

HOFFMANN: I don't think there was that much difference, except that it was, as I said, in a television studio. Of all the conventions I've been to, this is the only television studio we've ever worked with. I think really and truly, it would have been better if they had a few more seats for people, because a lot of people didn't get in that wanted to get in. I think the convention had some great speeches. The problem was working the convention, and I think this is something that people

don't understand. When you're on security, you have a meeting in the morning, and it starts at 7:45. You go from that meeting into the office, which was in the CNN Building, in the south tower, and you begin to move laterally from some of things you just did at the

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meeting, so that some of those things don't reoccur the next day. You're pretty busy, and normally we were starting somewhere between five and six o'clock in the afternoon. We had to be at our stations three hours before that happened. Then you're on the convention floor doing what you have to do until it ends, which most of the time was between midnight and twelve thirty, which means you've had a long day! And that was every day.

People don't understand that that goes on. They think that conventions just happen. It doesn't just happen; there is a tremendous amount of work that goes on behind the scenes, that nobody sees, and very few people care about, except "Where's my seat?" That's the number one question. "How do I get in here?" Or "How do I get in there?" "What do you have to do?" By and large, it's a matter of selectivity as far as the convention is concerned. It's long, hard work behind the scenes getting it ready, so that you have very few problems.

We recognized early that we were going to be oversold. We did not have to close the convention. That's the fire marshal's problem. When that building gets overcrowded it's to their own protection that he closes the building. They closed it, and they left some VIPs on the outside, but that's the way the cookie crumbles. They're supposed to be in there when the gavel goes down, not when it's over. So if they didn't get in, that's their problem.

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RITCHIE: Did you have to notify people, some of the VIPs, that they'd better get down there quickly?

HOFFMANN: No, but the first time they closed the building they caught a lot of people short. Once they closed the building, people were getting into that convention, and into their seats, a lot earlier the next two nights. We still had to close the doors two nights. But that was because of the limited space that there was inside.

RITCHIE: Does the Democratic National Committee manage the convention?

HOFFMANN: Basically, yes.

RITCHIE: So you were working for them?

HOFFMANN: No, this is a volunteer operation that I've been doing for a long time. Pay my own way, and everything else. This isn't something that I do for money. I do it because I like to do it, and because I think I'm making a contribution. That's inherent, as far as I'm concerned, and the rest of it doesn't mean much.

RITCHIE: How did you get started, back in 1960, doing this?

HOFFMANN: Well, I guess it really had started earlier than that, but basically that's when I really remember. I was asked by

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the then Sergeant at Arms, who asked if I would help him at the convention. I said yes, and from that time on I was on security. Then once you find somebody you keep them. It's like Dick Murphy, who's been doing this for a long time. I really worked for Dick Murphy and the security people. Dick was concerned, because he said, "Boy, you're going to be up against a real tough one this time, because we don't have the space." When you began to analyze it, you knew it was true. You'd go in and put chairs in place and find out how many chairs you can get in, and then you'd know it's not going to be enough. So when you get a big crowd you've got to get all those chairs out and stack them someplace. You've got to know where you're going to put those chairs to get them out of there. Then people start standing. I remember the second morning, we had this meeting, and were going around the room asking everybody, and Murphy came to me and said, "Do you have anything to say?"

I said, "Yeah, I want you to know that that's a well-built stand out there."

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "We had to pull all the chairs out because we had so many people in they were standing. We had twice as many people as we should have had. But the stand didn't cave in, so we're all right." It was true, that was exactly what happened.

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For me, it's a labor of love, and I've been doing them ever since Los Angeles. I look forward to it, except it's probably the toughest two weeks I ever put in in my life. Particularly on Eastern Time, because on Eastern Time you've got to go in there at six o'clock, because your prime time comes around nine or ten, and you're going full tilt then. By the time you wind down it's after twelve thirty. When do you eat? Where do you get time to eat? I cannot eat late at night, because I won't sleep. I think I took off about fifteen pounds while I was down there, just because I stayed away from pushing myself to the table. By and large, I don't think I left the hotel--I was staying at the Omni Hotel right there in the plaza group, where the convention center was, and the office was in the CNN tower--I don't think I left there but one night in the two weeks I was there, to go

out for dinner. And that was on the Saturday night before the convention. Once the convention starts, that's all I know, and I just do it that way.

RITCHIE: It seems as if each convention has had it's own unique problems, especially with the galleries. I was thinking about 1960 when you started, that was the convention where the Stevenson delegates packed the galleries.

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HOFFMANN: Yes.

RITCHIE: They managed to round up every ticket they could.

HOFFMANN: They did.

RITCHIE: Did you get involved in that controversy?

HOFFMANN: No, I didn't. That was not my assignment. But I was there for the whole thing. We had problems on the outside of the gallery. It was not as tough as people say. I think that convention was milk toast compared to some of the others. The one in Atlantic City [in 1964] was very difficult, because we had the Mississippi delegation, which gave us a real problem. But I think the San Francisco convention was probably as well run as any of them.

You've got to worry about it, because you've got not just security here, but you've got the local constabulary of the police department of the city, you've got the county police, you've got the state police, you've got the Secret Service, you've got the FBI. You've got a lot of different services that have to bring this thing together, communicate together, so that everybody's singing out of the same hymn book. As I just said, the fire marshal shut it down. Okay, the fire marshal is part of these meetings. He's got to be in all these meetings. The communication between all these various areas comes together at a

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meeting you have every single morning. That's where you run into the problems. If you've got problems you bring them up at that meeting, and then you go back to your offices and try to work them the most reasonable way you can, to make it look good. Everybody says to me, "God, that was the best convention I ever saw. It really ran good." Little do they know! There were an awful lot of headaches on the outside of it, because it was a very difficult problem because of the limited space. Limited space is the worst problem.

RITCHIE: What was the story with the Mississippi delegation back in '64?

HOFFMANN: Well, this was about blacks and whites. They made the decision and we had to ask them out of there, because they wouldn't let other delegates come in there. It was kind of touch and go for a while, but we were able to do it. It

was a little touchy for a few minutes on that floor, and people got a little bit hostile.

RITCHIE: That was when the black Freedom delegation came and took the seats of the white delegation, even though they weren't the official delegates.

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HOFFMANN: Right. That was the problem we had to work out. We did work it out. Bob Dunphy and I--Bob was in the Sergeant at Arms office--worked it out together. Jim Powell, who was the chief of [Capitol] police also was down there and helped up in this particular situation. Again, it was important that you don't push and shove. You try to reasonably talk to somebody and say, "Here's what the situation is. Would you please step aside so that certain things can happen." Sometimes you get a guy who's adamant as hell and won't do it, then you have to use a little muscle. But I don't like to use the muscle angle. I think that if you can sit down with people and take a little time, if you recognize that this problem is coming down the road, and you spend that time, maybe for four or five days before the convention, trying to get people to agree to certain things, you don't have the confrontation. Basically, that's what we tried to do. And I have to say, I was young at the business, but I thought we were very successful in doing it.

RITCHIE: How did you finally work out that difficulty?

HOFFMANN: They were removed. We gave them additional space someplace, and there were some other things we did, but it worked out very well.

RITCHIE: Didn't Walter Reuther have something to do with that? Wasn't he called in to try to defuse the situation?

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HOFFMANN: Well, he was. Yes, he was called in on the top to try to see what could be done, and was very, very helpful in having people sit down and listen, instead of getting all hot and bothered, without picking up your axes and going to get them.

RITCHIE: Atlanta was a pretty well run meeting from all accounts. Lyndon Johnson kept tight control over everything that was going on. But '68 on the other hand was a real donnybrook.

HOFFMANN: That was the worst convention I've ever been to. It was terrible. That Conrad Hilton [hotel] was--believe me, they had awful smelling stuff they were putting in radiators and everything else going through the hotel. They were coming in and dropping these things in cushions in the lobby of the hotel. It was a street mess to begin with. I was also at that particular time working with Ed Muskie, because he was running with Humphrey. To get Ed Muskie out of that

hotel, and get him out to the place where the convention was held, out there in the stockyards, was a thing that I've always remembered. When the Secret Service came in, once it had been announced that he had been chosen, we went down in the bowels of the Conrad Hilton and went underground for two blocks and came up into a garage that I

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never knew was there, and there were the cars. We pulled out of there, and nobody even knew we came out of the hotel. That's the way we got him out of that hotel, because it was a hell of a note, people were really upset to see that we didn't have a convention. That's what they were trying to do, but they didn't make it. That was a very difficult convention, this one was a piece of cake compared to that convention. I think that maybe the Democrats have grown up some too. And the laws of the land have changed. The fact that you look at Mississippi now and you've got a tremendous amount of blacks who are in public office. There were none in those days. So we have moved, although blacks don't think they've moved fast enough, I think they've moved damn well, and that the accommodation has been theirs. It takes two to tango. So I think that we've made a lot of progress. Obviously, the way conventions are run--for instance, in San Francisco at one point in time we knew that were having gays marching, labor unions marching, and some church people marching. This looked like it was going to be a holocaust in San Francisco. It wasn't. It was just absolutely fine. We got one parade through, and the other parade came through, everything was fine. There wasn't anything that went wrong. No arrests. They had a place where if they wanted to make known their dislike for the Democrats, or candidates, there was a place for them to do

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it. So they did have a chance to make their protests known and be recognized. I think that was the answer to it. Everybody thought we were going to have a real donnybrook in San Francisco, and I think it was the smoothest convention we've had in a long time.

RITCHIE: Especially following right after the '68 convention.

HOFFMANN: No question about it. That was still in everybody's mind. Think about that. Boy, it was tough.

RITCHIE: So it was a matter of instead of fighting against dissident voices, letting dissident voices have their say.

HOFFMANN: Absolutely, and give them a place to have their say. Give them a place where the television cameras can get them. Let them march on Market Street, whatever they wanted to do. We had a place for them right outside the convention hall where they could make their protests. This took away any problem. The police, again, this is a thing that people don't think about--the number of police departments in a city, in a state, is unbelievable. State police,

county police, city police, FBI, Secret Service, and some other security forces that they have. We've been very, very successful in making sure that people don't bring arms into the convention hall. That's the big thing we've been able to hold to. Dick Murphy's done a hell of a job in working this thing out. We have worked it out, there's just no

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question about it. There were a lot things that we had to do, to get around this thing, to get to it, but I think we've got it made now.

RITCHIE: Basically, would you say the conventions have been run primarily for television?

HOFFMANN: Well, this one was. It was a television station. All you had to do was look at it. Every place around were these big booths for television and radio. You've got to realize, it looked like a high school basketball court, straight up seats, way up, looking right down to what used to be a hockey rink. That's not a national convention for a Democratic party, or a Republican party, it's not enough room. The space is so necessary. Like New York [in 1976] was a great place to have it. We had plenty of space up there, because we used Madison Square Garden, which was terrific. So it's a question of where you've got space. If you can put the people into a place, it's fine and dandy. If you've got a place for people who do not believe in the democratic process, but want to protest against it, if you give them some place to protest, where they can get on television cameras, they're going to be very, very happy to do what you want them to do. It's a question of crowd control. Some of the police that are involved in it, in places like New York or Miami, have done a marvelous job on that particular thing.

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RITCHIE: Do you ever get any pressure from a candidate's staff to try to get their people in, or anything else?

HOFFMANN: I don't get any. That's not my bag. All I'm doing is I'm given an assignment to take care of the VVIPs. That in itself is enough assignment, I don't need any help from anybody else. Sure, I get people who say, "Well, can you get me in?" That's not my bag. You've got a ticket, you've got a credentials committee, if your credentials are in there, fine and dandy, we'll let you in, but you've got to be credentialed in there, and that is not my job. I don't go out looking for trouble. So the answer is no.

RITCHIE: Had you attended any conventions before the 1960 convention?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yeah, I went to conventions in the '50s. I remember one, I think [Estes] Kefauver ran at the convention in Chicago.

RITCHIE: Was that '56 when the ticket was Stevenson and Kefauver?

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HOFFMANN: Right. But I had been at other conventions before that. So this was like old home week, coming home to do the job.

RITCHIE: How active a role has labor taken in the Democratic conventions over the years?

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HOFFMANN: Over the years, it's not been constant. Sometimes they're more active than they were before. I remember one time when I was working for the labor unions we tried to get as many of our people as delegates as we could, so that they would have floor exposure. I don't know what they're doing today, because I'm not that close to their operations. But they have always been a force for good. I haven't seen anything that the labor unions have ever done that created any problems as far as the conventions were concerned. They've been very good. But they have been a force in the conventions. I remember in the old days when I worked for the Steelworkers, I went to both the Democratic and the Republican conventions, at the request of my principals. I remember I was staying in San Francisco when they were at the Cow Palace [in 1964], and I was staying at the Palace Hotel, and that was [Nelson] Rockefeller's hotel. I went out every day to the Cow Palace, which was a long ways from downtown San Francisco.

RITCHIE: What were your responsibilities?

HOFFMANN: Basically, at that point in time, I was really just there to take care of our delegates and things of that kind. We had a room for them where they could come and have a drink or have a sandwich, the same thing that was done in 1960 in Los Angeles.

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RITCHIE: How different is the atmosphere at Republican conventions from Democratic conventions?

HOFFMANN: See, I worked on the inside of the Democrats, I worked on the outside of the Republicans. I couldn't tell you, except they were very, very decent as far as I was concerned. They were looking for any support they could get from labor. So I was always well taken care of. I wasn't in the same category that I was with the Democrats. They have a very well run convention, and they know exactly what they're doing. With the Democrats, I've got to worry about getting tickets for my delegates, so that was a little bit different.

RITCHIE: Did you mostly try to make contact with the members of Congress whom you knew?

HOFFMANN: Absolutely. The fact of the matter is, basically right now in the VVIPs, members of Congress come in, and they may not be on the list. I've got to see that they get in. I recognize them by face. That's what the problem is: when

people don't recognize them, they're going to get shunted aside. And that's when they get a little bit hostile. So I stand right by that door. If I see them, I just pull them and take them in. Maybe the people will say, "But he's not on the list." I'd say,

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"I don't care whether he's on the list or not, he's got to go in. He's a member of the United States Senate or he's a member of the United States House." So you don't have any problem that way.

RITCHIE: In the days when you were with the labor unions, did you get involved in anyone's presidential campaign?

HOFFMANN: Kennedy, up to my ears.

RITCHIE: In what ways?

HOFFMANN: Kennedy once said afterwards--I remember Arthur Goldberg and I went to the White House when Arthur was being sworn in as the Secretary of Labor at that particular time, Jack Kennedy said to me, "I ought to have something for you. I never went to a city in the United States that the Steelworkers weren't out there to meet me at the airport. I know that's your doing, and I appreciate it."

I said, "Mr. President, all I can say to you is this: you'd better leave some of us in the field so that we can help you where you need some help." And that was what it was.

Yes, I was really up to my ears in that campaign. It depended upon what the Steelworkers had done, what their executive board had decided to do, how strongly we became involved with a candidate. But yes we did, we supported him very heavily.

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RITCHIE: Were you for Kennedy before he got the nomination?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yeah. A long time ago, it went way back.

RITCHIE: I just read a little piece that Senator Moynihan has written, in which he recalls swimming in the pool at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, in 1960, right after Kennedy had offered the vice presidential nomination to Lyndon Johnson. He said that on the edge of the pool were Arthur Goldberg and George Meany, in bathing trunks, and all he could hear Goldberg saying was, "Now, George; now, George," and trying to explain to him the Johnson nomination. I gather that Kennedy's labor supporters were very unhappy with the Johnson nomination.

HOFFMANN: Yes, most of us were supporting Scoop Jackson. [Opens desk drawer and removes a card encased in glass]. Here, this was when Scoop ran in '72.

RITCHIE: "Jackson for President." And autographed.

HOFFMANN: Scoop was considered to be the vice presidential candidate, and they came up with Lyndon Johnson. That was a complete surprise. Nobody asked us about it, but that's the way it worked. And if it hadn't been for that, I doubt that Kennedy would have been elected. So I think it was a smart move.

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We were up there in the Biltmore hotel, and we had a suite up there in which we had food and booze and everything you'd need. We had a lot of delegates. I remember that Jack Kennedy was on the floor above us, and he came down to our suite. He and I had been friends for a while. He said, "Nurdy, do me a favor, will you? Will you let a couple of these waiters go so I can lunch up in my room?" I said, "Sure, glad to." Yeah, we did a lot of work in the political field at that time. Much more, I think, than they are doing today. But I don't know if that's true or not, I'm not that close to them now.

RITCHIE: Back in the 1950s, when Kennedy and Johnson were both still in the Senate, did you have much dealing with Kennedy as a senator?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes. I dealt with him quite often, because he was on the Labor Committee, and that's where I was particularly interested in what was going on. We did have a lot of accommodations there. I also knew Lyndon, because Lyndon was the Majority Leader, and a very dynamic sort of a guy. He was a power, there's just no question about it, he was a real power in the Senate. And he used the power to do the things that he felt ought to be done. I think a lot of people criticized him for this, and I don't think it was fair, because if you can remember the thing they really wanted was a civil rights bill--and when it came down to getting a civil rights bill, there was nobody who

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should get more credit than Lyndon Johnson did, because he did get them a civil rights bill. I think that a lot of the criticize that went to Lyndon was just unfair as hell. He was a great legislator, whether you agreed with him or not. He did some things that maybe you and I may not agree with, but I want to tell you something: when it came down to getting things done on that Senate floor, he did it. And he did it by maneuvering, and having people in the right spots and the right time. He was a great legislator, and I think he's been abused. A lot of people say, "He wasn't this, he wasn't that." The hell he wasn't, he was a power. Take a look at the people who were around him.

I can remember back in 1958, when we had the big onslaught, and brought all the new Democratic senators in, that was a big sweep we made that year. We were doing a good job of motivating people, not to run but to get out to vote. I was in his office, which later became my office as Sergeant at Arms. I was in there one day, and he was congratulating me on the terrific job the Steelworkers had done to give them this kind of majority, and the door opened, and the great senator from Oklahoma came in.

RITCHIE: Monroney?

HOFFMANN: No, the other one who owned all the oil.

RITCHIE: Oh, Robert Kerr.

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HOFFMANN: Bob Kerr came in, and he heard him say this to me. He said, "What are you congratulating him for?"

Lyndon said, "For the job he did with his Steelworkers in getting out the vote and giving us this kind of majority."

He looked at Lyndon and said, "Who can make any deals with this kind of a majority?" [Laughs] That was typical of him. I shouldn't say that.

RITCHIE: But that sounds so appropriate for Kerr. Someone once told me that the only deal Bob Kerr didn't like was one he didn't have a part of.

HOFFMANN: That's exactly right! I believe that. I remember, I had to testify before him at one point in time. I was berating him for the fact that they hadn't been treating the Indians in Oklahoma in a way I thought they ought to be treated. He looked at me across the table and said, "Young man, you take care of the Steelworkers, I'll take care of my Indians." Which is terrific, I got the message.

RITCHIE: Well, how strong were labor's relations with Johnson when he was Majority Leader?

HOFFMANN: I represented labor, and I want to tell you, we had a very, very strong relationship with him. He made statements, in fact I remember we had one dinner down at the

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Carlton [hotel] and he was there as vice president. He singled me out, and he said, "There sits a man who's done more for the Democratic party than anybody I know. And he's done it in a quiet way. And he's been very successful." He said, "Stand up and take a bow, you ought to." Which I did. I was embarrassed as the devil, but what are you going to do? He was the vice president. So our relationship with him was very good. We didn't always agree with some of the

things he did, but I don't think that anybody that's in this business figures that total agreement is the way to go. I think you've got to make allowances, number one for where that particular senator comes from, what his state really wants him to do, and then if he can, you'll move him over. But he was, in my book, a real operating legislator. I liked Lyndon Johnson. There were a lot of things I might not have agreed about, but I'll tell you one thing about him: I always knew where I stood. That's one of the things that is so helpful to a guy who's got to work in this factory. I don't like people who tell you one thing and then do another. That makes your life very difficult.

RITCHIE: Did Johnson make himself accessible. . .

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes.

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RITCHIE: Or was he a hard man to get to see?

HOFFMANN: No, he wasn't hard to see, at least for me. I don't know about anybody else. All I can say is that my own experience with him was one that he was always receptive. He did not always agree with you, but he was receptive to listen to what you had to say, and then he might say, "I can't go along with you." All right, fine, I understand that. Nobody is going to go along with you one hundred percent. If he said no, and wanted to tell you why, find and dandy. If he didn't want to tell you why, it was still all right with me, because I think that it's a basic concept that people have to give on some issues, and can't be a hundred percent in your favor, because there are other people in the United States besides the labor unions. I recognized that. I think that that was one of the successes I had with Lyndon.

RITCHIE: What about Kennedy as a senator, how effective was he?

HOFFMANN: He was effective when it came to matters which concerned us, as far as the labor movement was concerned. I could go up and give him the cause-effect of a piece of legislation, he would take it under consideration. I would talk usually to one or two of his aides at the same time, and we would go over it. He would say, "Well, I think this is going to be a very difficult thing to get done, but we'll give it a try." I'd say, "Fine,

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that's all you have to do is just give it a try," and he did. So from my standpoint on the labor issues, I had no problems with him at all. I thought he did very well as far as we were concerned. One thing about him, he had one of the best staffs I'd ever dealt with. He had people who were knowledgeable, who could give him answers, and give him right answers. They'd argue with me and tell me I was nuts, which I couldn't disagree with. I probably was trying too hard, but that's the way it went.

RITCHIE: Did you work with him when he was on the Labor Racketeering Committee?

HOFFMANN: Yes. I worked with Bobby [Kennedy] an awful lot on the McClellan hearings. We were having problems with the McClellan operation. People wanted to bring the Steelworkers in and get them brought before the committee, and I was trying to keep us from getting before the committee. Fortunately for us, I think, and I don't take all the credit for that, we were able to stay away from being called before the committee. We were never called before the committee. I didn't want that to happen, because I thought that put a stigma on you, even if you were absolutely innocent. There were a lot of things that happened behind the scenes that I can laugh at now. I certainly would not disclose them today. It was the most unbelievable thing in the world how that entwined. Every time I see somebody walking around with this book of [Roy] Cohn's, I think of what a real miserable

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guy he really was to deal with. He was deceitful as hell. We found out from various ways that everybody was watching us, telephones were tapped. You couldn't do anything. I knew, I went through all this.

At one point in time I went to Senator McClellan and asked him to pose a question to somebody who was really trying to take us to the cleaners. He looked at me and said, "Why do you want me to do that?" I said, "Because I don't think he'll do this. He will digress to some other way and not take an oath." So that morning, in the committee, McClellan said, "I want you to take an oath before you testify." And this guy said, "I refuse to take an oath." He said, "Well, I refuse to hear you," and dismissed him. That's exactly what I wanted done. It was a very fair question. If you're going to say these things, you've got to be under oath, and he didn't want to. This witnesses didn't want to take the oath. I knew he didn't, because McClellan's next question was going to be: Whose payroll are you on? And that would have blown the whole thing wide open for him, so he declined. Yeah, we had a lot of problems during those days. Those were rough days.

RITCHIE: What was your impression of McClellan? Was he playing fair or was he pretty much anti-labor?

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HOFFMANN: It's strange that you would ask that question, because it came back later on. Fritz Hollings said this: he said, "The thing I always liked about him"--he was talking about me--"was that when he became executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, he held no grudges against those who had been against labor," which was McClellan. The fact of the matter is, when McClellan was running for election, he came down to my office, which was right across from Maggie's [Warren Magnuson], and sat there one day while

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I showed him some television spots. I said to him, "Senator, don't get yourself overheated in this primary, because if you get the people to come out for you in the delta basin, you're going to win in a walk."

He said, "Why do you say so?"

I said, "Well, because some of the people in labor are going to say some things which you can use in the delta." And that's exactly what happened. Some of the people did make some statements, and it went back to the delta, and the delta turned out in the next election, and he was home free. Fritz Hollings never forgot that. He said, "Here's a guy, when he took a job, regardless of anything in his background he was not going to down the road with that one," and that's what happened.

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McClellan wasn't our friend, as far as labor was concerned, but I always found that when I went to Senator McClellan he was a very fair man. As I just told you, he did ask this question of this guy who was the most anti-labor guy I ever knew, and the guy wouldn't take it. But you've got to go back in that history and understand, there were many forces in this operation. It wasn't just labor and McClellan. [David] Schine, and Cohn, and those guys were Machiavellian bastards, excuse the word but that's exactly what they were. They gave us a real hard way to go. They would have crucified us if they had a chance, and they were trying. But you utilize all the talent you had to produce people who could help you.

One of the biggest helps I ever had in my life during those days was from a guy who is now the ambassador to Italy, Maxwell Raab, who came down here with [Henry Cabot] Lodge. I knew Maxwell very well, and we've been friends ever since. I would go to him for advice on how to maneuver this stuff. We found him to be very, very helpful, because Maxwell could tell me things that I ought to do, or not do, and I listened to him. Because he knew what was going on up there. The committee was tough. I think that McCarthy was out to get anybody, and McClellan was going to carry it on. Except, once McClellan found out that these people were not coming into court with clean hands, shall we say, he took the legal way and said, "Okay, you're going on to testify, we

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expect you to take an oath." I just sat there and started to smile because this guy just picked up his books and closed them and away he went.

RITCHIE: You mentioned Joseph McCarthy. What was your impression of Joe McCarthy?

HOFFMANN: Bad news. I'd rather not talk about McCarthy, because I know too much about him, all of which has been burned, and he's dead.

RITCHIE: On the other hand, he's probably the one senator who's had more interest for historians, there have been more books written about him, and he's more controversial--you either line up for him or against him. So any of your reactions to him would be interesting.

HOFFMANN: Well, I think that my reaction to McCarthy--he came from Wisconsin, and most of the things I knew about McCarthy I burned when he died, so it's senseless for me to talk about it, because there is no proof. But I had proof at the time about some of things that McCarthy had done in Wisconsin, because at that point in time the Communist party was very strong up around Milwaukee, and my fight has always been against the Communists in the trade union movement. So I knew some of the things because of the investigations. And when he made that statement about the State Department and all the people who were un-American, or he

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put it a little stronger than that, I was just absolutely beside myself, because I had all of this material, and I wanted to go with it. Then I sat down by myself and said, "Is it really worth it?"

I knew he had a problem with booze, I had known that for a long time. I didn't know it was as bad as it was, but I did know he had a problem. So all I was saying was that McCarthy shot from the hip, and he didn't really have the things to back it up. He didn't have anything to back up what he said about people in that West Virginia speech. I knew that, and I had proof on things about him, that we could have disclosed and blown him right out of the water. I had it in black and white, but as I said I burned it when he died, because I didn't think there was any sense in carrying it on after he was gone, it's not going to prove anything right or wrong. It's not going to make him look better or it's not going to make me look like a hero if I use it.

It's just like I disagree with people who work on the Hill and then write a book about what's going on on the Hill. They've been after me for a long time, and I said no way am I ever going to do that. Because I have a very strong love and respect for the Hill, and I just think that the only thing these people want is garbage, which you would throw out. Well, I didn't throw his garbage out, I burned it.

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I was not ever a McCarthy fan. I thought McCarthy tried to do us in. I still think that. He was unsuccessful, but he had cohorts who were feeding him the kind of information--because he'd never have gotten the kind of information that way. It was Cohn and Schine. That's the real fact. McCarthy was not a senator who was brilliant enough to think these things up by himself, he had to have somebody feeding him this stuff. When he thought it was pressable, he took out. When he went too far, he came up against an attorney who made him look awful bad. I've never forgotten that day, I thought that was one of the finest days that have come

to be. Later, when he got sick, I had all of that stuff under file, lock and key, and I had material too, but I just burned it. And that's the end of that.

RITCHIE: The Steelworkers made a concerted effort to get the Communists out of their organization. . .

HOFFMANN: No question about it.

RITCHIE: And here was a senator who was making a career out of supposedly getting Communists out of the government, but you really felt he was working at cross-purposes from what you were doing?

HOFFMANN: I knew it. I had proof. But I didn't do it. Go off of this thing for a moment. [Discussion off the tape.] That ain't going to help anything.

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RITCHIE: Interestingly, Bob Kennedy worked for both the McCarthy Committee and then the McClellan Committee. What was your impression of Robert Kennedy?

HOFFMANN: He was tough. I liked Robert Kennedy. He was very tough. I got to know him so well at 1960 at the convention, because of the delegates we had. Many nights I spent down in his room in the Biltmore. When we had to talk about something we'd go in the bathroom and turn on all the water faucets, so if we were being tapped they weren't going to be able to tell what we were talking about. He was a good guy to work with. I liked him because he was a no-nonsense guy. He was kind of fun to be around, but he was searching to do the same things I was searching to do, and that was get rid of the Commies, and we did. Not because of his help, I mean, he didn't do anything about that, but he was going in a lateral position the way were going. I found him to be a very trusting guy, and I worked with him on many occasions, because I had to have somebody on the committee who was going to be my friend. And obviously it wasn't Cohn or it wasn't Schine, so it had to be somebody else, and it was Bobby. Also involved in that whole thing, Arthur Goldberg was very close to me, and I was very close to Arthur. So I had a counsel to go to, to find out whether we were on the right track. Arthur never told me wrong. He at that point was counsel to the Steelworkers, so I was close to him on that basis. But that's the way it worked.

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RITCHIE: Kennedy could not get along with the Teamsters, on the other hand, they were his great nemesis.

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes, that was true. There was just no question about it. And he didn't have a blind side on this thing. He knew that there were deals being made, and he felt that they controlled by the racketeers. I'm not so sure he wasn't right. I don't know it, I don't have it on first-hand information, but I know that

there were people who we were concerned about in the Steelworkers, particularly when Phil Murray was alive. Phil was very much concerned about this, and we were following it up.

I found Bob to be very, very helpful as far as I was concerned. He had some blind spots on some of the people who worked for him. I told him that he had some people who had questionable credentials. He asked me who, and I told him, and he said, "I don't think you're right." I said, "Time will tell." Time did tell, and he came back to me and said, "You were absolutely right. I don't know where the hell you get your information, but you were right about so and so." I said, "Well Bob, it's a big town, and a lot of people come here for various reasons. I just felt that this guy was wrong, and I know he's been in your inner circle, and I thought you were getting duped." He agreed, he came back and said, "You're right."

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I'll tell you, that part of my history in this city was probably the most interesting. I didn't understand all these things, I was a novice. When I found out about wiretaps, when I found out about who was doing what to who, I couldn't believe some of these things, because these people were not coming across in that direction. I was trying to make up my own mind. I remember I went back several times to friends of mine on the Hill, who were very close, Pat McNamara from Michigan, and Ed Muskie, and some of those people. I would sit there at lunch and talk to them about this, and say, "Am I doing this the right way?" See McNamara came from labor, way back. Ed Muskie didn't, but Ed Muskie in my book had a brilliant mind, and would be willing to listen, and would then--probably not immediately--would come back to you with a conjecture later on about whether you were going in the right direction or not, which I always held as a strictly confidential thing. I always had a very close, warm relationship with Ed, as I did with a lot of the senators. With Pat McNamara, with Phil Hart, and people like that, whom I had great confidence in and didn't mind going to talk with. Mansfield was another one, who was the same way. I have a real high long-range respect for the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. That's why I would never do anything that would in any way hurt or be critical of the way things operate there, because I know how it

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has to go. You have to have a knowledge of this place up here, a knowledge of the people, you've got to know everything about it. It's just not that easy to learn how this operates. Once you learn how this operates, they may make a lot of mistakes, and there may be a lot of things that may not go down good, but by and large, they are the basis of a democracy and you've got to have respect for it. If you believe in a democracy, those are the people who make the rules, and that's where you go. I've always had that, I make no bones about it.

RITCHIE: On the other hand, some of those people were out to get organized labor. There were some very strong anti-labor members.

HOFFMANN: Oh, no question about it.

RITCHIE: You mentioned McCarthy, and McClellan, and other members of the McClellan Committee who were very opposed to what you were trying to accomplish.

HOFFMANN: Absolutely. We knew that. But forewarned is forearmed, and that's what we were. That's what I was trying to do, get the best knowledge I could to feed back to my principals and say, "Here's a problem that you've got to deal with." Worked out very well.

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RITCHIE: How closely did you work with the AFL-CIO during all that?

HOFFMANN: Well, at first we were the CIO and they were the AF of L, and then it came together. By and large, once we came together, we worked very closely together. We hadn't up until that point, because I don't think they wanted any part of us. They thought we were going to go away quietly, or something. But by and large we felt that together we could do a better job. So from that time on we worked very closely together, with Meany and the rest of them. McDonald was head of the Steelworkers at that time. But even in a united effort, we did it a different way. We went back to our membership and asked them to tell us what we ought to be doing here, rather than we telling them, and that made a difference, as far as we were concerned. We continued to do that even after we went into the AFL-CIO. They had a different way, they had Labor's Non-Partisan League, and we were the guys who were out there collecting money to defeat these people who were against us. We didn't do it, but we made an indentation. I learned an awful lot. I found out that in some of the instances where you were trying to help the steel industry, they were very hard to help. They didn't want help. They wanted to run it their own way. It made it very difficult. They were bringing imports into this country something awful, and we wanted to do something about it. I had meetings with these people who

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had plants all over the country. We met down at the Statler Hotel in those days. We set up another meeting for two weeks away, and half the guys didn't come back.

RITCHIE: You were talking about the differences between the Steelworkers and the AFL in funding candidates. The Steelworkers were much more active in PACs. Back in those days, before all the modern federal campaign laws, how did it work when you provided money to a senator or congressman? Did they solicit it, or did you offer it? How did it work?

HOFFMANN: In ninety percent of the time, they asked for money. What we did, and I developed this at least partially, I felt that for me to distribute the money was a mistake. The money ought to be distributed from the place where they collected it. We had districts all over the United States. So when the senator would say that he needed some money, or we found out that he needed money for reelection, we would then go back to the director of that particular state where he came from, and say this senator would like to have some money if possible. He-- meaning the director--would go to the International office and say that they would like to have it. They would write him a check, and he, the director, would present that to that particular senator. So that would take me out of the money end of it, because the senator

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ought to know where the money is coming from. So when the senator got mail from somebody, he knew why he got the mail. If I gave it to him, it was not going to have the same impact.

That's the way we built the process in our own union. I don't know that anybody else did, but that's the way we did it. They would write to that senator, or his [campaign] committee, and that director would present it to him. I thought it was a pretty safe way to go. We weren't building any dynasties in here, that's what I didn't want to have happen.

RITCHIE: In the 1950s a lot of liberal senators complained that the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee was favoring senators who went along rather than the independent types. Bobby Baker, I guess, was the one who was handing out the envelopes.

HOFFMANN: Yes.

RITCHIE: And much more went to a senator like Allen Frear of Delaware.

HOFFMANN: I knew him.

RITCHIE: Who was cooperative, than to a Paul Douglas.

HOFFMANN: Or to a Kerr of Oklahoma, who didn't really need it.

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RITCHIE: So did the Steelworkers then try to help the senators who weren't getting funding from the party?

HOFFMANN: No, I don't think it was done on that basis. We didn't have that kind of big money. It came on the need. Obviously, a man like Paul Douglas would be right at the top of the list because of what he did. I don't think that they ever took the tack that would give to people who were not getting it from that

particular source. Basically, this opened the door for the director or his associates, who were the local union people, to come and see the senator. That's what we built on the legislative education committee. We built it on that basis. It was very, very successful, I'll tell you that. Most of the unions felt that we were way out ahead in lots of places in doing it in that manner. Then this didn't leave any stigma that I was going to be picking my friends to give money to. This had to be approved by the executive board, and the board then gave the secretary-treasurer the right to write these checks against this particular account to that particular committee that he had, and he would then give it to the director, who was in charge of the areas that supported him in that state. I think that was a protective thing. I'll never think we did wrong on that.

RITCHIE: And that opened the door of that congressman to the local labor people.

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HOFFMANN: Absolutely. That was the theory behind the whole thing. It started because I was going down the street in Cleveland one day and one of the local union people just ran into me and said, "Nurdy, why are we against Bill XYZ?" I looked at him and I said, "I don't know." Well, he said, "You sent a letter?" I said, "I did?" He said, "Yeah." So I went back to Phil Murray and I said, "Phil, this is wrong. We're crazy. Why don't we do it the other way?" So we used the land grant colleges and everything to educate our people about the legislative process, and we brought them into Washington, so that they then were motivated to collect the money because they knew the money was going to be spent from their own areas, the director would make the checks out and he would think it wasn't me. I tried to stay out of all the pictures, to give these guys credit for it. They would go into their neighborhoods and be politicians in their neighborhoods. That's the way it began.

We built that thing from about 1953 on, and by 1960, as Kennedy said, we had a real political organization going. I think it was run very well, I really do. The International office did a marvelous job. We never had any criticism about it. There was no mishandling of funds or anything like that. It wasn't going into places where it wasn't supposed to go. These were what I called built-in protections. In other words, I wasn't going to do it. The guy who was the director ought to do it, so we wouldn't take

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it away from him. He would be responsible to his people in his own district. That would give the senator or congressman an opening to come in and see the people who supported him. The whole thing worked not just theoretically but actually, it was very, very helpful. Proxmire said that, Gaylord Nelson said that, all the senators. I can go down a whole list of senators who just felt we were doing it the right way. Now, that's the difference between the old AF of L and the CIO. We had this thing going before we came in.

RITCHIE: When the ALF and CIO merged, did the CIO philosophy prevail, or did the AFL philosophy prevail?

HOFFMANN: I think some of both did, but because we had a hell of a lot of members in the old CIO--we were going for the people who worked in the plant, not just artisans--that made a difference as far as the total operation was concerned. They picked up some of the things we had been doing. We didn't have any problem. Once we had that we created a legislative committee that had both AFL and CIO people on it. I think [Andrew] Biemiller ran it for a while. We would meet every week to talk about these things. At least the communication was there. They picked up some of the things we had been doing very well, and vice versa. Al Barkin came over there and took over the place for the AFL-CIO and Al came out of the old CIO. So the answer to your question is yes.

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RITCHIE: You mentioned Andy Biemiller. I've heard about him from a lot of other people, he was very well known on Capitol Hill. What were your relations with him?

HOFFMANN: Well, I helped elect Andy from Milwaukee when he was a Congressman, and worked with Andy for a long time. When he finally left Congress he took this job with the AFL-CIO as a legislative agent, and built the structure into it. Much of the stuff that he built in was CIO stuff, because he had had more closeness to the CIO than to the old AFL. But he did a marvelous job for the AFL-CIO. He worked very hard. He believed in the committee system, and he had many guys from the old CIO and the old AFL on that committee, and adjudicated whatever had to be done to get the job done as well as possible.

RITCHIE: Was he a good lobbyist?

HOFFMANN: Yes, he was. He really was a good lobbyist. He really knew what he was doing. I didn't agree with him all the time, but that is neither here nor there. I'm no genius at it either. But he did a good job, and a job that satisfied the people who hired him, which was Meany and the rest of those people, and he worked very closely with them. He did basically what he was told to do, and tried to get whatever he had through

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this committee. We had some pretty good arguments on the committee about how we would do it, but nevertheless it did work out, and I think he made a good contribution.

RITCHIE: You mentioned the last time the controversy over the Kennedy-Ives bill and getting Landrum-Griffin. Kennedy-Ives was the reaction to the whole

McClellan Labor Racketeering Committee, and was drafted by people like Kennedy who were sympathetic to labor.

HOFFMANN: Right, exactly.

RITCHIE: What happened? Why did you come with the much tougher Landrum-Griffin bill?

HOFFMANN: Well, the problem was us. I mean, the labor movement itself. As I told you, I think, Meany had made this statement, and I said that we were opening a Pandora's box if we were going to go over to the House, and we came out with Landrum-Griffin, which was exactly what we didn't want. But if you just counted the votes over there you'd know you were going to get this kind of a problem. Meany didn't stand still for it, he wouldn't listen, so as a result we cooked our own goose.

RITCHIE: Do you think that Kennedy wasn't strong enough as a proponent of that legislation? Was it a failure on his part?

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HOFFMANN: That's pretty hard to say. I don't think that--see, we were divided, and a house divided against itself, someone smart said, is going to fall. And we fell. We got Landrum-Griffin, which was what some of us had predicted, but they wouldn't listen. I was told to sit down and shut up, which I did. Old Joe Keanan behind me said, "You're right, but be quiet!" Old Joe was a good friend of mine, and we agreed that this was the wrong way to go. But that's the way they wanted to go, and there was nothing we could do about it.

RITCHIE: I've heard that both Meany and Biemiller could be pretty stubborn when they thought they were right.

HOFFMANN: That is the mildest understatement I've ever heard you make! They were very stubborn. Meany was almost brutal about it. And Biemiller, the more he was associated with Meany, because the same way. He was an alter-ego for Meany. He felt that he was in the power seat, which he was, and sometimes ignored some of us peons. But then we got Landrum-Griffin!

RITCHIE: Stuart McClure on the Labor Committee said that labor was always the most effective lobbyist on Capitol Hill for any social or economic issue, but necessarily for any labor issue.

HOFFMANN: That's right.

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RITCHIE: He said that they could always pull together reformers behind a health bill. . .

HOFFMANN: Right.

RITCHIE: Or an education bill, but when to a labor bill they couldn't get the same coalition behind them.

HOFFMANN: That's true, that's absolutely true.

RITCHIE: Why do you think that was true?

HOFFMANN: Oh, I think that all the labor bills were self-serving, social issues were not self-serving. They were talking about the total group, not just a labor union. Then you've got to remember you had people who came from states which are called "right-to-work" states, and they are not going to go along, nor are the people who would go along with something other than a labor bill, because it's the law of their particular state, and made it very difficult. I think that those labor issues had to be looked at very carefully from the standpoint of labor unions because of the right-to-work bills, and they were spending an awful lot of money doing this, and they were seeking a lot of publicity. That's where you found the division. You wouldn't find the division coming on something that's going to help the farmer, or to help the poor, because they're needy. They would take that kind of an attack. But when it came to labor unions

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they would say, "Well, I can't go along with that because we've got a right-to-work state. I've got to get reelected." And he had an out. You've probably never heard that before, but that's true.

RITCHIE: So you had to deal with the reality of each issue.

HOFFMANN: Exactly, you have to. Everyone stands on its own. I'll tell you a story: one time, it was in the House, and we were working very closely with the UAW, Bill Dodd and those guys. They came to me one day while I was over in the House, and he said, "You've got to get the votes to go for wheat for Pakistan." I looked at him and I said, "I don't have a local in Pakistan." He almost went nuts! He told everybody about that. Phil Murray said, "He's right, we don't have any locals over there." But you see, we got so frayed over other issues, that when we came to an issue that concerned ourselves, we had spent most of our ammunition before we got there. If we had stayed within the confines of what we were supposed to be doing, instead of going all over the world, to change the whole wide world, and taken our own issues strongly, I think we could have done a lot better. Because we just made ourselves look like a sieve. We'd go for anything that looked like some fancy-dan that would make somebody look good. Wheat for Pakistan! Why would I worry about wheat for Pakistan? I never did go for it, and it lost.

RITCHIE: On the other hand, you were one of the earliest supporters of clean water legislation. . . .

HOFFMANN: No question about it.

RITCHIE: And environmental issues. You produced that film.

HOFFMANN: Exactly right.

RITCHIE: What was the motivation behind labor pushing clean water issues in the 1950s, as opposed to strictly a labor issue?

HOFFMANN: Well, clean water was one of those issues which was not only related to labor but to everybody else. Anybody that was a fisherman, anybody who wanted to use the waters, wanted clean water. I think we were right. When you look at what happens today, we were about fifty years ahead of our time. But now you've got all of the people who have gotten away from it. The guy who really was the father of that clean water legislation, believe it or not, was Wayne Morse. You go back and look at Wayne's record. He kept saying, "Keep fighting for clean water." He kept at me. This was an issue that was acceptable to every household. You couldn't find anybody who didn't want clean water. Hell, they wanted to turn on their tap and get clean water. This was not a labor issue, but it was an issue that we solidified a lot of people to follow labor. If we made it all

right with clean water, they'd say, "Well, hell, they're not all wrong." That was getting your foot in the door, as we called it.

We were always for clean water, but we had an awful lot of guys who were fishermen who worked for the Steelworkers, and we wanted the rivers and lakes clean, if we could get them. We didn't even worry about the ocean in those days. Nobody even thought about that, now look at it today. It's strange that you would bring that up, I was half the night awake trying to figure out how the hell can we can get rid of this garbage that's coming out of the hospitals and being dumped into the oceans. That should never have been allowed! I think this is the worst stupidity that we've ever brought upon ourselves. We've got to do something about stopping it. All these things are floating up on the beaches, and don't tell me that it was somebody who took some stuff out and dumped it. That didn't happen. These were hospitals that did this sort of thing, and the sooner they find out who they were the better.

The question then comes back: how do you get rid of this stuff? I kept dreaming about it. It kept going through my mind all night: how do you get rid of these syringes? How do you get rid of all this contamination that's coming out of hospitals. We're still going to have contamination in hospitals, because you've got

people with diseases. But how do we do it? I was thinking, could you burn it? No, because then it would go into

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the atmosphere, that wouldn't be the right way. You can't dump it, because it will eventually break away and rot and go into your water system. You can't bury it, because the same thing comes when you get heavy rains. I'm giving all the things you can't do, and then I wake up this morning and say, "Why, you dumb cluck, why didn't you figure out something that we could do?" I still can't figure it out. How do we get rid of it. I don't know. I wish I did. I wish Wayne Morse were still alive, maybe he'd have an answer to it.

RITCHIE: Well, back when you were pushing clean water, the steel companies were helping to pollute the rivers.

HOFFMANN: They were polluting the streams, that was exactly what we were talking about.

RITCHIE: Didn't this put the workers against the companies?

HOFFMANN: It did, but we didn't care. The guys that were working in the plant felt it was wrong to be dumping that stuff in the streams. Look at the rivers! Take the Allegheny and the Ohio, and the Monongahelia, all were dumped in by steel mills or by coal mines. They were polluting those rivers way, way back, and we were trying to get away from it. We didn't make it, but I think everybody now sees--well, look at the money we've spent trying to clean up the Potomac. Where was that pollution coming from? Upstream, they were dumping into that river.

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RITCHIE: Well, I've been here for an hour and a half now and need to wrap it up, but I wanted to ask you, in your years as a lobbyist for labor, what gave you the most satisfaction? Was there a particular incident or victory that you cherish?

HOFFMANN: I know that the night we got beat in the House on the labor bill, I drove all night that night, I was so disturbed. I drove all the way out to Charleston and drove back by myself, trying to figure out: what had I done wrong? Why didn't we make it?

On the other side of the ledger, I think one of the big things that I felt--and I felt strongly about this--was the Social Security bill. Social Security meant something to me, not that I needed it, but others did need it. I'll always remember, because I went home afterwards, and we were sitting at the dining room table. We had a big family, and when I came home mother cooked a dinner and everybody came for the free meal, I guess, it wasn't to see me I'm sure. But anyway, we were sitting there and somebody was criticizing it. I'm one of the few Democrats in my family,

most of them are Republicans. They were saying about Social Security, "Oh, that's a crazy thing, why do they need Social Security?" My father spoke up, and he said, "I want you to know, I need Social Security. I feel that I'm going to be a lot better off now that we have this, and I want to thank him for doing this, because he's worked so hard at it."

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Now, I was a young man at that time. The point that I was making was there people who could not retire, or if they did retire did not have enough to live on. I thought that was a mistake. They had earned the right to retire, and I felt this was the way they could do it without somebody giving them a hand-out. I felt that that was one bill which was meaningful not only to steel, to labor, because you see at that point we had just determined in our negotiations that any moneys that came from Social Security could not be counted against the amount of pensions that they got in steel, so we had that pretty well blocked. I remember when this happened, because we were in Cleveland, Ohio, meeting at the Statler hotel. I called Phil and said, "Phil, I think this is one of the great days of our history, to have this kind of an protection." He said, "I think that's true." I said, "It's growing up."

The other bill which I felt was good, and which we had worked hard to do in steel--we had not done it through legislation--was when I worked for the Steelworkers, there was a twenty cent differential between the North and South. I felt that that was bad, it was bad for everything. It was bad for the economy. There was no reason for it. I have always felt that a job is a job. You describe the job, you tell what it is, and if you're performing those things you ought to get the same rate no matter where the hell you live. We were able to bite that a little bit

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at a time. I think we came down to fifteen cents, then we came down to ten, then we came to seven, then we came down and wiped it out. I think in about five years we wiped the differential out. That was another thing that I felt was so important as far as we were concerned, to be able to do that.

Those are two of the things that I recall that I felt strongly that we had made a service, not only to our union, but to the general public as well. And I still think that it was one of the great things that we have done. You remember, this was the fifties, and now we're up in '88. Fifty years ago we did Social Security, and it has survived, and think of all the people that it has helped. That thing is blinking at you.

RITCHIE: Yes, we've run to the end of the tape.

HOFFMANN: Isn't that great, now you don't have to worry about stopping me!
[End of Interview #3]