

Warren Featherstone Reid
Assistant to Warren G. Magnuson, 1964-1981

Interview #4
The Appropriations Process
(Thursday, July 23, 1981)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: Last week we discussed the oversight role of the Congress. I wondered if today we could talk about the appropriations process and how it works. It obviously differs from the regular legislative process and legislative committees, but I wondered if you could give me a description of how appropriations bills are considered in the Congress.

REID: Any legislative committee can take up anything that it itself dreams up, or some member drops in the hopper that is assigned to them. Appropriations is a little more unique, a little more, maybe, historical. Appropriations reacts to the suggested budget that a president, an administration, advances every year to the Congress. That comes out in January. It comes out in masses of paper, pounds of backup material, that is delivered to the Congress from the administration—in more recent years, from the Office of Management and Budget. All of those documents are prepared by that office for the president and given to the House and Senate. The Appropriations Committee immediately commences to review the overall budget. Now, way back in the Civil War days, when there was an Appropriations Committee, the evidence is that they dealt with things more in toto, all at one time. But even then, they started to divide up little bits and pieces of the overall budget.

The Appropriations Committee in more recent years has evolved itself into thirteen subcommittees that are somewhat categorical. Probably the best category is defense, because all of the defense money,

page 131

together with maybe some intelligence, is compacted within that one little subcommittee. Legislative is another where the Legislative Subcommittee handles all of the Capitol Hill items, including the Government Printing Office and the General Accounting Office and the Library of Congress. But your other subcommittees, like Independent Offices, cover a wide spectrum of agencies that don't normally even talk to each other, that aren't under one single head, except maybe the president. The one Magnuson was most associated with, Labor-HEW, you do have two major departments: the Department of Labor, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Now it's the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education. And you have a potpourri of semi-independent bits and pieces, like Howard University, Gallaudet College, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Federal Mediation Service and others, that all receive funds from the federal treasury.

The Appropriations Committee divides that overall budget that the president has advanced into thirteen bits and pieces that it proceeds to look at. Each subcommittee devises its own hearing schedule to review all of the programs and agencies. Its staff commence work on all

of the recommendations. Of course, you spend more time perhaps looking at the changes that are being proposed by the president, or changes that have been generated or germinated within your own operation. Members that do serve on the committee tend to spend quite a bit of time thinking about what they have done, as well as what they might do differently, and they come up with their own ideas and give their own directions to their staff people. So the committee proceeds along several avenues in a way.

In laying out pieces of paper that might graphically show what we are up to, we always look at last year, what was expended in the previous

page 132

fiscal year, what is being expended now, what is being proposed by the president. Now, on the Senate side we often add another column: what the House has approved. So when we take action in committee, then we have that long series; after the committee has acted, then there will be another line for committee recommendations when it goes to the floor. When you go to conference, then you have all the columns. Sometimes you have to drop one in order to get everything on the same page, so you will often end up with: current spending; president's recommended spending; House approved; Senate approved; and then a blank column for the Conference to look at. That's a very short course. Now, let's get down to what the nitty-gritty might be.

RITCHIE: Right. Your committee is made up of thirteen subcommittees, and you also have several ex-officio members, don't you?

REID: We used to. They used to have ex-officio members of Appropriations. Armed Services had a couple. Government Operations did. Public Works did. But that ended some time during, I think it was the change from Senator Carl Hayden to Senator Russell. But somewhere in the last decade and a half that ended, and there are no longer any ex-officio members from other committees that sit with us. Now, I have yet to see a series of hearings held by our committee, and almost any one of our subcommittees, that does not have appearing before it members of the Senate as well as members of the House that, for one reason or another, want to testify. You'd wonder why a House member might come over and appear before a Senate committee, it might be for a

page 133

very particular reason. Maybe he got something put in that he wants to make sure they understand, so he comes over and talks about it. Or maybe he didn't get it on the House side and he's appealing to us.

Senators who appear before our committee appear for a lot of reasons. I know in the health field it was almost standard operating procedure for Senator [Edward] Kennedy to appear and speak forcefully for programs in the health field, health manpower, that he was concerned with. Senator [Jacob] Javits often appeared before our committee, and there would be other members that would plead for a particular thing that they were especially interested in.

Sometimes it might be parochial, it might be something just for their home state. But often it was something of more national scope that they were particularly interested in. They were often involved in the legislation that established, re-authorized, or had changed something, and they wanted to bring home to the members of the Appropriations Committee what it was that they hoped we might propose and endorse. But ex-officio membership on the committee was ended, at least a dozen years ago.

RITCHIE: What I was interested in was that people obviously specialize, they have areas that they are very concerned with, they are on that particular subcommittee, and you have a lot of chairmen of other committees who also serve on the Appropriations Committee.

REID: Yes.

RITCHIE: Is the work of the Appropriations Committee primarily in the subcommittees?

page 134

REID: Yes.

RITCHIE: Is it pretty much hashed out by the time it gets to the full committee? Just how does the subcommittee system fit in?

REID: I would say that the subcommittees not only do the bulk of the work, but they complete action on the majority of the programs under their jurisdiction. The subcommittees refine or help define the major issues, and then the full committee perhaps resolves problems. Often a subcommittee will have a problem, one that they can't accommodate to their own satisfaction, so they'll come to the full committee with their bill and lay out the problem, lay out the options they've looked at and leave it to the full committee. But the bulk of the kitchen work does take place in the subcommittees. It would be impossible, I think, I know as eloquent as he may sound and as forceful as he may try to appear over the next few months, David Stockman is like any other human being, and cannot possibly know everything about every program that the federal government is operating. David Stockman is depending upon various sub-people underneath him that have divisions of OMB. They do the kitchen work there and they advise him and he follows their advice. Well, the same thing happens up here, because the federal government is involved in so many things.

Many of the issues are very complex. It takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of study, an awful lot of hours of reading and talking to various individuals with opposing views, people that can represent those to you, on behalf of members as well as staff. It's axiomatic that

page 135

somebody becomes an expert in the problems of public works and waterways and that area. Somebody else becomes an expert in the veterans and the housing and the health and the defense. So a great deal of deference is paid by the other members to a subcommittee that

convinces them that they have looked into this and they have studied it and they have spent hours investigating and this is their best judgment as to what should happen. I know in our committee, just the volume of hearings that take place by the various subcommittees equals, if not exceeds, that of more than half the other standing committees of the Senate. In our own administrative makeup of the staff, it requires a great deal of time. It also requires a certain expenditure of funds just to process all those hearings and all the documents that go into hearings and build the paper base for the actions that are taken subsequently by the members and by the full committee.

The subcommittee structure has been criticized by some outsiders because it does appear, on the surface at least, to give an inordinate degree of power to a very few people. Some subcommittees have as many as ten or twelve members, but other subcommittees may only have five. You mean you are delegating to five people all that power? And there is a certain delegation of power, but the way the committee operates, especially under Magnuson, the subcommittee was given deference but there was no rubber stamp at full committee.

I vividly remember the very first full committee that Mr. Magnuson chaired, the first after Mr. [John] McClellan became ill. Mr. McClellan had written Mr. Magnuson a letter advising Mr. Magnuson that he, McClellan, would not be available for the full committee, and would Senator Magnuson

page 136

act as chairman. Well, that piece of paper was valid for over six months before Mr. McClellan died. That first full committee that Mr. Magnuson was "acting chairman" happened to be the defense appropriation bill. There was a very interesting byplay as that meeting was about to start, because Senator Magnuson had come in and taken the chair reserved for the full committee chairman, and Mr. [John] Stennis had walked in from the hallway door and had started towards that chair, and realized that it was occupied. He sort of moved back and fourth for a moment or two until Magnuson caught his eye and said, "Good, you're here John," and just pointed across the table. So Stennis sat down across the table, where subcommittee chairmen normally will sit when they present their bill.

Then when the meeting got started, the procedure is that subcommittee makes its presentation, and usually you will have the subcommittee chairman make a brief presentation and the ranking member make a brief presentation and they will open things to discussion. In this particular instance, Mr. Stennis had quite a lengthy presentation. It went on for quite some time. He got to some item and Magnuson interrupted him and pointed over to Bennett Johnston from Louisiana and said, "Bennett, didn't you have something you were talking to me about on that particular issue?" Although Johnston was certainly caught off guard—as I recall he vividly jumped back a bit—he's extremely bright and with only a momentary pause he commenced to voice his position. He had a particular interest in this item, and so he discussed it. As that took place I was watching the senators at the far end of the table, Jim Sasser and Pat Leahy were there, and their eyes just popped, because this was a new order. This was something new that was happening.

page 137

It was a precursor of the way Magnuson handled all of the full committees. When an item came up and he knew somebody was interested in, he encouraged them to speak, and before long it was wide open. You no longer sat back and waited until the end of the meeting to bring up your item. You brought it up whenever it was convenient or the order of things dictated. This was quite a change. I think it played into Magnuson's overall strategy of operation. He did it on the Commerce Committee. You get consensus by getting people involved and getting them to lay out what their problem is. That's how you accommodate the divergence of views. And if you do get consensus, then when you go to the floor, you've got the votes.

RITCHIE: So previously under McClellan and under Hayden, how would it have worked when Stennis came in? You said he wavered about where to sit, and he felt uncomfortable. How would that have been different?

REID: Well, you have to remember that I only viewed full committee markup sessions during the time of Chairman McClellan and when "Sunshine" first came into those proceedings. It was not unheard of, before that time, for a subcommittee chairman to actually run the meeting on his bill. [Allen] Ellender, and Russell and Hayden were back in maybe what some people would say would be darker times, or more closeted times. I remember when I first came back in '63, '64 there was no such thing as a person like myself who was attached to another committee, or even the personal office of a member, being present when executive sessions were being held by the Appropriations Committee.

page 138

They were very sparsely attended by any kind of staff. There was no record made. When Sunshine hit, our doors were opened.

That first meeting that Magnuson chaired, he also told me ahead of time, he said, "Now, you make sure that some of those chairs down there next to the fireplace are available for the press." We had press people that afterwards told me, "What's going on? Nobody ever saved chairs for us before." That started it with them. S-128 is not a big room, it only has physical chairs for about thirty-eight guests. Last year there were a couple of times I counted ninety-plus people, other than members, in that room. Most of us standing. I always stood because I could see better and keep an eye on everything. But one of our jobs, as far as Magnuson was concerned, was to reserve two rows, they were about five chairs across and two rows deep, there were about ten chairs there that we tried to reserve for the working press. We always held the first row and sometimes if it was highly visible and an awful lot of press people were around we'd let them take the second row. It was a new order.

I can't really tell you, because I never attended an executive session of the committee under the old rules, which were closed. But I do know that under the old rules, when things were closed, even the pieces of paper that had been prepared and printed up by GPO [Government Printing Office] were kept under the highest security. They were not revealed to our personal office, we didn't receive them in our personal office before an executive session was held. That was another change that Magnuson insisted upon, that any printed pieces of paper be made

available to the members of the committee in their personal offices at least twenty-four hours before the meeting was held. Now, that doesn't

page 139

mean they had to read them. But he wasn't going to be in the position of having one of them come in and say, "Well, Maggie, what is this? I never heard about it." He wanted to be able to say, "Well, I'm sorry, Senator, but it was delivered to your office."

RITCHIE: I talked to people from the Congressional Information Service who said they were just amazed at the number of confidential committee prints that the Appropriations Committee had produced over the years. Apparently it outstripped any other committee.

REID: I'm sure it was, and even under our regime we did have a disclaimer up there on the front, we called them committee prints and we had a very obvious disclaimer that this was not official until adopted by the committee. Because when you do have a committee print, you do have the involvement of at least two or three, maybe five members that look over everything before it does go to the printer. We did devise, we have an excellent professional person, Neil McGown, who's in charge of our editorial department. Although he's an old line printer and used to work linotypes and hot-lead, he's on the forefront of computer text editing.

Our committee, with our help, and working with the Rules Committee, we've been an experimenter with all kinds of crazy pieces of equipment that Xerox and others have come up with. So we do have a very rapid, very large text editing capacity. We can turn out in a very few minutes a finished product that may have been sitting there in the computer tape for several days and even weeks, and is corrected and changed and redrafted at the last minute. We can crank out fifty or a hundred copies in

page 140

almost nothing flat. It isn't like the old days when you had to send something down to GPO in the late afternoon and pray it would arrive by eight o'clock the next morning. So our committee, perhaps better than any other on the Senate side at least, has been able to make such information available for all our members and their staff in advance of any markup sessions.

Most of our full committee paper operations that has to be laid before members we've tried to keep in the computer in the text editing division so that we could come out with the latest version and distribute it to the senatorial offices the night before or the day before any kind of meeting. But we'd have the disclaimer on there, because any time you put out a hundred pieces of paper, you know damn good and well somebody's going to leak it to somebody, or hand it to somebody. There's no reason they shouldn't. And once a markup session would commence, Magnuson wanted us to have copies available for any working press in attendance or others who wanted them.

RITCHIE: Tell me, when the Budget Committees were set up in 1974, did that change in any way the work of the Appropriations Committee? Did that add an extra layer of something

that money matters had to go through? I've never been able to figure out how they fit together.

REID: The same law that Mr. [Mark] Hatfield and Mr. [Pete] Domenici are operating under today was there in '75 and '76, and the [Edmund] Muskie and the McClellans had to live with it. There were certain requirements that the Appropriations Committee make

page 141

certain recommendations or reports or advisories to Budget, and in the early days it was kind of a pro forma thing. Even in our early days, it was sort of a pro forma thing, but it got a little more binding. It required the Appropriations Committee to adopt a little more of a macro view of things. Normally, a subcommittee's recommendations are micro, because they are only taking a piece of the pie and addressing it in a very detailed way, and only looking at that somewhat little piece. You have to get all the thirteen pieces in there before you have a full pie, and then it may not be obvious, because there's a lot of backdoor spending that goes on in the federal government that the Appropriations Committee is not responsible for, and cannot address in its bills. So in the earliest days of Muskie and the Budget Committee, and Brock Adams, who was chairman on the House side, it was a little more leisurely as far as Appropriations was concerned, and some Appropriations members spent very little or no time looking at what the Budget Committee was up to. It didn't really change our operation at that period. It has changed it a bit more in the last year or two and especially this year.

RITCHIE: From the Reagan administration's instance on its budget, I suppose that will change how the Appropriations Committee responds this year after the budget has been set.

REID: Yes.

RITCHIE: The Constitution provides that the House originates money bills. This is one of the few cases where the House has initial authority, as opposed to the Senate's constitutional powers of confirmation of nominations and treaties. Does that in effect give the

page 142

House any additional influence? You said there was a line in your committee print on what the House has recommended. Does this just mean that they physically introduced the bill first before the Senate introduces it?

REID: Well, we use that line in our tabular tables because, for members as well as taxpayers, when you see the dollars, that is the bottom line, although you can't divorce what the dollars are buying. It's very difficult to graphically display what dollars are buying—you know how many people are being fed or how many people are being clothed, or housed, or bombs are being purchased, or whatever it is. It's very easy to put out a tabular bunch of figures and show something. For some members, especially certain mentalities that can grasp the significance of dollars and graphs and ups and downs and percentages, those are very important. But in dealing politically with a program, the fact that it got so much money and did this last year, and is doing this now, and the president wants it to do less or more, or hold it flat, and the House has gone

along or not gone along, has upped it or lowered it, these are political factors that members think about.

For the Senate, it's a blessing and a curse that appropriations start out in the House. Let's say a very powerful interest group has a goal, and they'd don't achieve it in the House, the House cuts their program. They immediately rush over to the Senate and the pressure becomes very intense for the Senate to reserve what the House did. By the same token, if they get what they want, then they amble over to the Senate and try to protect it. Now it's easier to protect a given than

page 143

it is to seek an unknown. So there is an advantage to the interest if they score over there, they can perhaps protect over here.

It's a blessing in a way to the Senate, or a senator, because he can always say to an interest group, "Well, look you've got to get it in the House. I'll do everything I can, and I'll help you over here, and I'll get it done over here, but you've got to get it done there," especially if he doesn't want to do it and he's a little bit sure the House is going to turn them down. He makes points, but ye,t he doesn't reveal his real intentions. So there is a little protection, because many members, Magnuson has a phrase that he uses quite often: "No politician is defeated by what he didn't say." The longer that you can stave off making a public commitment on a particular issue, maybe the better off you are. The fact that those people have to seek funding on the House side then come over here, staves off some of the pressure.

RITCHIE: The House has gotten a reputation of being the more conservative body on appropriations bills, the Senate has a tendency to be the more liberal. Is there any particular reason for that? Has that been your experience?

REID: Well, you have to look at the House and a member's constituency, and the Senate and a senator's constituency. There are a few senators that have a constituency that is mostly rural, but very few. Most senators, even though they might have a lot of rural area in their state, have some urban center, and there are differences in the problems that people face in the rural areas as opposed to an urban area. Now in the House, you have 435 congressmen, and it's one

page 144

man, one vote, and you do have those constituencies carved up a little more neatly. You can have maybe quite a few House members who have far more cows and pastoral lands and some farmers, and some very beautiful rural areas that they represent. And they are here to represent them. Even though they might be United States congressmen, they should be representatives of that district first and then think of the total picture second. If they want to get reelected they better think of the smaller picture quite often.

Whereas senators, they're supposed to represent their state but they're supposed to sit on the board of directors of the United States, so they should represent their state and then look at

the bigger picture. I would venture that if you analyze the states, almost all of them have some kind of megalopolis. It might not be as bad as the megalopolis that we see here that runs from Richmond to Boston, but at least it's a megalopolis in that context in their state. Senators may be forced to recognize problems because of their home constituencies that some House members are not force to recognize. There was a period where the Senate was certainly more generous in some of these programs that do have more of a macro impact than the House was.

RITCHIE: Then the question arises: what happens in the conference committee? What happens when the House has passed an appropriations bill that is considerably less than what the Senate has, or on certain items that the two have come up with different versions of the same bill?

REID: There is when push really comes to shove, because any appropriations conference always has minor differences,

page 145

and some of those minor differences are ironed out well in advance by the principals involved, and when you do see a conference, there might be 150 "differences" in either dollar levels that would be provided or the specific provisions under which the dollars allowed might be used in the program. There's a conference memorandum that outlines those. The House member and the Senate member that are chairmen of their respective conferees will quickly go through those and there will be House recedes, Senate recedes, and it goes so quickly that most people don't know what's happening. Most often, you'll find them "splitting" the difference in dollars. But then there usually will be a number of items that are really in disagreement, where they are almost diametrically opposed. Then it gets down to real arguments.

My own experience is that House members have it over senators to a certain degree because on the House committee, you do not have members serving on as many subcommittees. In fact, some of them only serve on one subcommittee. They do not serve on other committees in the House. Appropriations is an exclusive thing with them. Most of them have been around a few years, they are comfortable in their districts, and they spend a lot of time in hearings, they spend a lot of time doing their homework, so they come to a conference individually very well prepared. And of course they have staff backup. But they are personally very well prepared. Senators sometimes will come to a conference not as well prepared. Part of the reason is that even members of our committee serve on other standing committees, and our subcommittee chairmen are often chairmen of other committees.

Even though at times, like with John Stennis, he was chairman of

page 146

our Defense Subcommittee, he was also chairman of Armed Services, so he would have the advantage of the issues that were perhaps boiling in the appropriations bill in the appropriations conference were also issues that he had dealt with as Armed Services chairman. Dick Russell had the same advantage. In that case, you do not have a senator who is not well prepared. You have a

senator who is extremely well prepared, because he's probably fought this same issue for the last five, six, ten years.

When you stray afield from some of that, and most of the little programs that might be a bone of contention, you might be facing a few House members over there that know what they are talking about much more intimately than senators who are trying to carry the Senate position, and that can happen to a member of Appropriations. He might not really care about this program that deeply but somebody on the Senate floor who's not a member of our committee raised the issue, raised the ante, there was a Senate vote, and so here the conferee is stuck with carrying the Senate position even though it might not be something that he personally would like to do, or that he personally is that interested in. So it can be a little embarrassing at times if the House members are adamant and exceedingly well prepared and the Senate members are not that well prepared. Of course, again, these things today are all out in the open, Sunshine again. Sunshine did not come to conferences as quickly as it came to committees. There was a period after Sunshine had come to committees, and the Appropriations Committee, that conferences were still somewhat closed.

ITCHIE: I've been reading the Foreign Relations Committees' hearings in the 1950s on the Mutual Security aid and the

page 147

House always provided for less money in the foreign aid program than the Senate did. I've seen on several occasions where the senators have said, "Well, we want such-and-such but let's actually ask for a larger amount, and when we go back the House in conference we can split the difference."

REID: That's right.

ITCHIE: Is that a fairly common practice?

REID: Yes, and regrettably it's a practice that doesn't start in the Congress. It's a practice that starts in the departments and within the subdivisions of departments: always ask for more and settle for less, and you know you've got enough cushion. I don't know how you can avoid it, because an administrator, who's administering a program, he's certainly dedicated to keeping it alive, and he is going to ask for a little bit more than he's spending because if his program is doing well and is successful, it's probably going to need more. So maybe he knows that if he asks for 5 percent more the people upstairs will cut him to 3 percent, well if he really needs 4 percent then maybe he'd better ask for 7 or 8 percent. It escalates along the way and it can even happen in OMB. So when the request gets up here and is acted upon here the same thing can happen.

In the Congress, on so many things where there is a difference, you try to find a middle ground. In legislation you will do it. The two sides that are dedicated to at least doing something then will try to find some middle ground between their two positions. Well, in money

page 148

it's easy to find a middle ground. If you want fifty and I want a hundred, seventy-five's in between, isn't it? And what's wrong with splitting the difference? So in appropriations that effort to accommodate the opposing view is very easily recognized in a dollar figure and cutting the difference. I think you could go through appropriations bills for the last thirty years and you would probably find a high percentage of differences were split down the middle, a very high percentage. The fact that does happen does often lead people who are very concerned about some program to ask for more and get more because they know they will have to give up something when they go to conference.

RITCHIE: Does this then encourage the House to pass appropriations bills that are perhaps lower than they know will eventually come out to give them a more fiscally responsible image? If the Senate knows they are raising amounts because they are going to split it, does the House lower amounts because they know it will be split?

REID: That often happens. I saw it many times. I've even seen presidents do it. Impacted Aid, Public Law 874, that passes out money to school districts all over the country, I think all but two congressional districts gets some of that money. [Public Law] 874 was a whipping boy for presidents probably since it got started in the 1950s. I remember Lyndon Johnson sending up their budget with 874 cut, but they knew that we'd add it. The same thing does happen between the House and Senate. There are times that a subcommittee on the House side will lower the amount of a program they know the Senate's going to increase, and sometimes there's a little logrolling, because they will increase a

page 149

program that they fear the Senate will cut. So they'll put those two in there, and then they've got those two in conference: "Okay Senators, we'll go along reluctantly on one, but you've got to go along with us on the other." So they balance off the two. It's a system that has been here and probably will remain here. It's a way of accommodating the divergent views and represented needs of segments of our society. Sometimes those cuts, which you know the other side will change, are made so that your overall totals will be lower. That cosmetic of fiscal prudence was not invented recently and undoubtedly everyone has played that game now and then. I've also seen administrations and OMB inflate the anticipated costs of a program, far beyond what is reasonable, so they can come forward at the end of a fiscal year and claim savings. Having CBO and other resources at our disposal has made it possible for Appropriations to catch those, and if there are political credits to be gained, we've tried to garner them first.

RITCHIE: In the appropriations process, any committee on Congress, when it passes legislation, also indicates how much is going to be spent on it. But then they have to get the money from the Appropriations Committee.

REID: Right. Basically there has to be an authorization first, a legal authorization for such-and-such to happen, and tied with that authorization is a recommended dollar level, and then subsequently an appropriations bill has to be enacted that appropriates money in support of that public law.

RITCHIE: Then to what extent does the Appropriations Committee become sort of a court of appeal? Do the factions from

page 150

the committees that have disagreed come to the Appropriations Committee and present two different points of view, which the Appropriations Committee has to untangle?

REID: Yes. The people that fought it out in the legislative arena, in order to get something authorized, be it a Clinch River [Nuclear Reactor] or a National Defense Student Loan program, the interests that have pushed for, or perhaps fought out the authorization came trotting along to Appropriations and the people that might be against it trot too. The same fight is made again. Because the Congress has authorized more programs than any prudent man could ever fund, or the federal treasury could ever underwrite, the Appropriations Committee has had to pick and choose which authorized programs they would fund, or if a program was to be funded, just how much they felt we could afford.

We were often faced in Magnuson's time with authorizations in many good areas, most of them ones that Magnuson personally would favor, but the authorizing committees had authorized expenditures that would have broken the bank. As Magnuson would say: "If we did what the authorizing committees said, the Marshall would be down there posting a sign on the door, 'This place closed, bankrupt, out of business' on the Treasury." So we would have to zero in and maybe cut back in appropriation bills. There would be caveats, there would be restrictions placed upon the expenditure of the funds that would allow the administrator only to do so much. Some people were critical of this procedure, but yet it was the only way that the Congress could retain control of the dollar and indicate exactly how they felt it could be spent, and set up the legal

page 151

basis for spending it. And, of course, it was that technique of tying strings on dollars that Henry Hyde took a hold of to do things like abortion, to handle legislative problems that the legislative committees had failed to deal with.

RITCHIE: I assume this has caused a lot of additional problems for the Appropriations Committees, these extra riders tied on to their bills.

REID: Yes. The members of Appropriations have enough of a problem dealing with dollars let along the—they might use the word "extraneous"—the extraneous issues that have been loaded upon appropriations bills. But if you're a frustrated Henry Hyde and want to do something, and can't get the legislative committees to do it, Judiciary or whatever it is, I can't blame Henry Hyde for doing it on an appropriation bill. I would not deny him that right, because to be fiscally responsible, the Appropriations Committee has to be able to tie strings on the money.

RITCHIE: In terms of everybody appealing to the committee, the committee then has to

have means of evaluating their claims. Is that where the oversight practice occurs? Is the committee keeping track of what is going on so that they can make independent judgments? Or do they base their decisions primarily on the arguments that are brought to them by the opposing sides?

REID: Increasingly, I believe, our committee has tried to build its capacity for independent judgment. We as a committee

page 152

early got into the computer field, not just for text editing but the House Appropriations and Senate Appropriations Committee quite a few years ago acquired a computer capability in order to analyze figures from a computer standpoint. When the Budget Committee came along, we got them into the same act, so that there is a master contract now and a master computer that the Congressional Budget Office, the two Budget Committees, Senate and House, and the two Appropriations Committee, Senate and House all use that same computer. This at least makes it easier for Budget people and Appropriations people to talk to each other, because at least they have the same documentary base.

When Magnuson became chairman of Appropriations, we initiated a more visible investigations unit. The committee had an investigatory authorization. In fact, a piece of paper passed in 1943 gave the Senate Appropriations Committee a small amount of money that they could use to hire investigators. We inherited that system and it was a very lovely system because it meant that for payroll purposes we didn't have to go before the Rules Committee. We had what some viewed as a secret source of funding. It was one of the most luxurious things to ever encounter because in essence, the Appropriations Committee was given an unlimited expense account, because there was a standing order over in the Disbursing Office—they wanted Magnuson to renew the order, but he did not, he just let it stand—but that standing order was that whatever Appropriations spent they always had \$200,000 more in payroll. We did not expand the staff. We held our number of staff down and in 1980 we were about \$5,000 under what we had inherited in payroll expenses.

But we initiated a more visible investigations unit. Although

page 153

people had been on the payroll as investigators, they were really clerks, and secretaries, and everything else. We brought in Don Gray, who was an old-timer on the Hill, as our chief investigator. He had an assistant. Then, with detailed personnel from the various departments and agencies that might be needed on an ad hoc basis for a particular investigation, we'd delve into something. Of course, we only had about two years' operation with that investigations unit. But during that period they had a number of good things for us. We had an internal procedure where they couldn't do anything unless, one, a member asked for it; and two, the chairman, Magnuson, and the ranking member, Mr. Young, signed off. There were a few things that we did that were somewhat confidential but most of the things that we did were wide open.

We had a number of members that were very receptive to the capability. Senator [Thomas] Eagleton, [William] Proxmire, [Lawton] Chiles, [Birch] Bayh. They initiated a number of requests that the investigations unit carried forward. Usually the investigators were able to bring at least something preliminary before the members in anywhere from ninety to 120 days. So the turnaround time was a little faster than we would get from, say the General Accounting Office. Even though our investigations unit utilized GAO personnel, we borrowed a lot of people from HUD, accountants and some investigators, we worked with a lot of inspectors general from the various agencies. I felt that we were developing a good capability. And in several of those investigations, the adoption of recommendations that flowed there from, paid for all the costs of that investigations unit many times over. The way we had designed it, there were only two really permanent staff on the committee and ad hoc utilization of "experts."

page 154

Now there was the potential for criticism, perhaps, that we were pulling these people out of federal agencies—and we had a couple of FBI men that worked with us for a while—that here we were using federal employees that were going to have to go back to wherever they were, and they were investigating. We never used a detailer from a department to investigate that department. If allegations came in about a department and we were looking into them, we'd use investigators from some other agency or our own investigators. The word was out that we had this unit and I had a number of calls from potential whistle blowers myself. Very seldom would I personally act upon those calls. I would get them to contact our chief investigator and lay it before him. I had enough to do to try and do his work.

RITCHIE: I've noticed that especially in the earlier years, right after World War II, the committee had a number of FBI agents on their staff. I think Tom Scott came from the FBI.

REID: Yes.

RITCHIE: What was it in particular about the FBI that made it so useful to the committee?

REID: Well, there was a time when you didn't get into the FBI unless you were either one, an accountant; or two, a lawyer. Tom did have an accounting background. He's a very capable guy, a personable fellow, very able. He certainly helped me a great deal as I was growing into the job. I had worked with him a little bit before Mr.

page 154

Magnuson became chairman, because we had some interests that were broader than just the things Magnuson obviously was interested in. He had me dealing with Tom Scott when Tom was chief clerk of the committee. But I think it was a fact that in those earlier days, under the Haydens or the McKellars, the others that were chairman, that they were looking for somebody like that. There was a time that the FBI had a number of people detailed up to the Hill. Now they still have a number of detailees on the House investigations unit of their Appropriations Committee. And of course, we had a couple of them when Magnuson was chairman and we had

this unit. Most of them didn't stay very long, maybe six months, but if they had stayed longer, if we were still operating under that system, it might be that we would get to know some of those people.

I know one of the most able clerks on the committee at the moment got on the committee because he worked for IRS [Internal Revenue Service] and every year for about four months the IRS sent him up and he was in a little room down in the basement of the Russell Building and he helped people prepare their income tax. Well, a couple of members got to know him by that fact that he did their income taxes. The next thing you know, he's switched from IRS to the Hill. I would certainly believe that during that period of the '30s, '40s that the FBI contained a number of people with solid backgrounds, like Tom, in accounting, that would be valuable to the committee. Because remember, it's dollars and cents, and at least the staff have to have a comprehension of dollars and cents and then an ability to translate dollars into programs and verbalize them, and work with members and help the members understand. So that background that an FBI person might have had would be good and translatable.

page 155

And if they had done some investigations, this is one of the things we encouraged. We encouraged our clerks to get out of Washington, D.C., to Nebraska, to Tuscaloosa, or wherever it is, where some of their key program operations might be taking place, and find out what was really going on. Don't just listen to these characters in the home office tell you what's going on; get out there and see it yourself. It amazed me how little our travel budget was, our expenditures for travel, when you realize that the members as well as the staff have a responsibility for overseeing those billions that are being spent. Even though you have the input from people out there in the field that might come in, as well as hometown people that are associated with the program that tell you, you still can gain something by getting there and seeing it, and looking it over. Of course, FBI men were trained in investigatory procedures, so that aspect of their background would have been valuable.

RITCHIE: When Magnuson became chairman of that committee, did you become his chief of staff? What was your position after he became chairman?

REID: Well, when he became acting chairman he told me, "Just keep your eyes open, but find out what's really going on." That's all he needed to say, because I knew how he operated. Magnuson has never consciously done anything that would threaten the prerogative, the person of another member. So even when McClellan died, we were still in session, it was November, McClellan's chief of staff, his staff director, Jim Calloway, called me. He said, "You know, I think I should meet with Magnuson." I said "Okay." We met in the Marble

page 157

Room behind the Chamber. Magnuson said, "Well, Jim, what are you worried about?" He said, "Well, you know, Mr. McClellan's no longer with us, so you're chairman." And Magnuson said, "Until the Democratic Caucus acts, I am acting chairman. You just remain on the job and check with Feather." So for the next two months, December and into January, Magnuson was acting

chairman. He was again being deferential to the fact that the Democratic Caucus had adopted new rules, and chairmanship wasn't automatic. Everything was de novo. You started anew. Until the Democratic Caucus nominated him and there was the ratification on the floor, everything was done as acting chairman.

After that meeting between Calloway and myself and Magnuson, I told Jim, "You know, anything you can do to help us out and clear the decks, you know the people that might not want to stay, or need to stay." But we didn't "fire" anybody. That, again, was a thing about Magnuson, he did not enjoy the problems that might be involved with ever firing anyone. He did want to be involved in the hiring, but he didn't want to do the screening. He wanted to be presented with some options and look them over and make his decision.

When he took over he also carried with him from the Commerce experience some good memories and some bad ones. One of the bad ones, as far as he was concerned, was that the Commerce staff had grown a little too big. He inherited a committee from John Bricker that had five people, and he turned over a committee to Howard Cannon of one hundred and twenty. Now that spanned almost twenty-five years, and it spanned a mushrooming of the activity of the committee, but it still somewhat embarrassed him. So he was looking at a committee that he felt was

page 158

functioning fairly well, that he'd already instituted some minor changes, major perhaps, and he wanted it to continue to function well, and he didn't think we needed a lot of additional people to do it. He had pressure from some of his other staff people to increase and add and do all sorts of fancy things and I was his foil to try and prevent that. It was not the easiest thing to do because there wasn't the obvious position. Magnuson, as I indicated earlier, never had a "chief of staff" in his own office. He didn't allow his AA's to become gatekeepers; he wasn't about to appoint me to become any kind of a supreme gatekeeper on the Appropriations Committee.

In fact, the only piece of paper he signed was a piece of paper to the Disbursing Office that instructed Bob Malstrom to deal with me and me alone, other than himself, on any items that that office might need to deal with the committee. And of course, when you get down to it, money is the bottom line, and the funding of a committee is just as important as the funding of a program, so the fact that he did that and I was the only conduit in and out of the Disbursing Office, did give me a certain portfolio, not very obvious to the public, because that letter was never published anywhere, but it was the mechanism that Magnuson gave me and that I exercised with his approval and with his sanction that allowed us to control things. And that fact, that letter of instructions was known to a few power centers like the secretary of the Senate, Stan Kimmitt and Nordy Hoffmann, the sergeant at arms. In dealing with members, I know one of the first members that came to him about a personnel problem was Senator [Ernest] Hollings. Magnuson's response to Hollings was, "Well, go talk to Feather." I'm sitting across the hall and in

page 159

marches Fritz Hollings, and says "Feather, can I talk to you?" And I said, "Are you kidding? Any

time!" And bingo he sits down and he says, "Maggie tells me I have to deal with you."

RITCHIE: He wanted to add someone onto the staff?

REID: Yes.

RITCHIE: Was it your responsibility then to try to talk him out of it?

REID: In that instance, I got all the facts and I went to Magnuson and explained what they were, and elaborated some of the pluses and minuses, and Magnuson okayed it and we went ahead. There were several other instances like that with other members. I did have the uneasy mission at times of trying to hold them down. Sometimes fending them off.

RITCHIE: So you were sort of in between Magnuson and the staff, or how would you describe it?

REID: No. Immediately after his nomination by the Caucus, he did sign another piece of paper, he transferred me. As chairman, he transferred me from—I believe I was on his personal office payroll at the time—he transferred me to the Appropriations payroll. I was put in there and Calloway and I were sitting there at the top of the heap, as far as money was concerned. I was given the title "professional staff member." That's the title I hold now and I will be terminated from August 31.

page 160

RITCHIE: Well, how would you describe your responsibilities on the Appropriations Committee?

REID: Well, assistant to the chairman is probably the best, because I did work directly with him and interface on his behalf with any number of people. You know, when it came to the [James] McIntyres and the OMB directors, and others, I was often the interface whom they needed to contact. Then in the operation of the staff, I had the major responsibility of space and the allocation of resources. That was an immediate problem, because my own reading of the Senate Rules that required minority staffing, I read that as a matter of right that by 1982 they had the absolute right to one-third of the staff. I kidded my counterpart, Pete Bonner, I said "You know, it has something in here about right, but it doesn't have anything about responsibility. You get all these goodies but you don't have to do anything. All you have to do is be there."

We looked at our real estate and we did some trading with the Rules Committee and got rid of some real estate in the Senate Courts [Annex] and got a couple of rooms over here [Immigration Building Annex], and we got some real estate in Russell [Senate Office Building]. We got forced out of some real estate in Dirksen [Senate Office Building] when they were carving a hallway to Hart [Senate Office Building]. We reapportioned the real estate; we had to try and give the minority a little more space. We made very few, minor changes in personnel. We launched the investigations unit. There was nothing that I ever did, or that we ever did on the majority side, that was not cleared with the minority. The relationship,

page 161

I believe, that we had between Mr. Young and Mr. Magnuson was as cordial and as amicable as anyone could ask for. The same with the minority and majority staffs.

RITCHIE: I was going to ask you about how much partisanship plays a role in the appropriations process, or how closely the Republicans and Democrats work together on a committee like Appropriations.

page 162

REID: Well, there had been evidence in the past that there were clerks that were very jealous of whatever they were doing and would not share that information with others. As I indicated earlier, that was a problem we had with HEW [Subcommittee] at one time, and we changed it. We expanded the role of "members' representatives." In fact, when Magnuson took over, we even published what we called the "green book." We published a book that gave all kinds of information about members and about the staff. It only collected information that was probably existing somewhere, but it put it together in a much more readable form, very easy form. It had the rules of the committee and all that. It also had the staff and the membership on the House side. But there was one page that listed all the members of the committee and then their "personal representatives." This was someone in their personal office that the member told us, "This is the guy I want you to talk to about appropriations."

Well, we did it for the full committee, but I strongly encouraged all of the clerks to do the same thing with their subcommittees, because most offices did have somebody who was more responsible for foreign operations, or more responsible for HUD, or Health, or whatever it was.

page 162

You get that person, you make sure that everybody knows it's that person, and then somewhere along the line in the subcommittee operation, when there are staffs sitting down with staffs, you get that person out of John Stennis' office, or Jim Sasser's office, or Dale Bumpers' office, to come in and sit down and participate. This is what the staff at least is fiddling around with, and here's where the problems are, and here's what the options might be, and you generate at a staff level, not just the Appropriations staff but involving the personal staff of Appropriations members, the beginnings of the decision-making process. We had done that on HEW to, I thought, to quite a successful degree, and so we were encouraging it on the other subcommittees. It was time consuming. We often had many filibusters when you'd have one of those meetings, and some of the staff found it frustrating, but some of them found it very fruitful.

RITCHIE: I get the feeling from looking at Norris Cotton's memoirs and other things like that that the Republicans and Democrats got along fairly well on the Appropriations Committee, that there wasn't all that rigid a difference. Is that a fair assessment?

REID: I think that's very true. In fact, just yesterday I ran into Gordon Allott in the

subway and spoke with him a moment or two. I can remember when Gordon Allott was the ranking Republican, ranking minority, on Independent Offices, and the relationship that he and Magnuson had. There was a time that Leverett Saltonstall was a ranking member. Most of the times the Saltonstalls, the Norris Cottons, the Jim Pearsons, the Gordon Allotts, the Ed Brookes, the Milton Youngs,

page 163

there was never any bitterness or animosity. There were times when there was a very rapid, very early recognition, "Look, this is one where we are going to have to go our separate ways." They'd just kind of smile at each other, and when the time came they went their separate ways. Until then they didn't even spend time on it, because it would have been a waste of time to spend time because they had their paths carved out. Most of the staff mirrored that same attitude. Now it was more prevalent that you would have staff that might be a little more vocal. They had the luxury of doing that because they don't have the onus of having to cast a vote, so we would run into staff people that would be a little more difficult.

RITCHIE: I was wondering if the reason for the good relations between Republicans and Democrats was that Appropriations often has a tone of reciprocity. You have to give a little to get a little, and everybody goes along because everybody is basically getting something out of the final bill.

REID: That has to enter in, because as we discussed earlier, if you are talking about words and you're trying to craft words, you get positions that might be somewhat more firmly opposed and you try to find a middle ground. Well, it's a little more difficult to find a middle ground with words than it is with dollars. So you have that mid-ground splitting the difference in dollars. It's so much easier if you get to that point. Then you're dealing with not one or two programs, but hundreds of programs, so it is easier to realize that "Look, today this is what he wants, but I'm not sure what I'm going to

page 164

want tomorrow. Now, if I make it too difficult for him on his today, what's he going to do to me tomorrow?" So it's a matter of common sense that a member not oppose too strenuously, or the chickens may come home to roost.

RITCHIE: I suppose even the most fiscally conservative senator has a special project somewhere in his home state that he'd like to raise some money for.

REID: Yes, or he's got some kind of a program that he thinks is important that he's going to want funded that has more than just a parochial interest. And they are all competing for a scarce resource. Money is always scarce. There's never been too much money around to do everything that everybody wanted to do. There's always been too little, so they have to accommodate.

RITCHIE: The Appropriations Committee has always tended to have a lot of other

committee chairmen and ranking minority members as members of its committee. They've already been through the battles in their legislative committees. Do they then come with fairly strong convictions on how much money should be spent for programs their committees sponsored? I assume that John Stennis, by the time he gets to the Appropriations Committee, is already thinking about the program they passed in the Armed Services Committee.

REID: They have the intimate knowledge of discussing the options and coming to the point of adopting a program. They have that intimate knowledge based upon all the authorizing hearings, all the

page 165

discussions, all the private as well as the public discussions they've had. So when they get to the Appropriations process, their position in their own mind is well fixed. Their assessment of the priorities has already taken place. So they tend to be very well prepared, and they're somewhat more adamant in their position. There's little that's more important than money, and the fact that Appropriations has been in charge of the biggest bulk of the controllable federal expenditure, has made it the most sought-after committee.

Until recent years you never saw a freshmen of either House on Appropriations. The more senior members got on. Magnuson came here in '44 and he didn't get on Appropriations until '53. He had to serve in the vineyards first. So when you were a little more senior before you came on the committee, by the time you became a subcommittee chairmen you were probably at least a subcommittee chairman on another committee, if not a chairman. That happened with Magnuson. Magnuson concurrently became chairman of the Commerce Committee, a very potent committee within the Senate, at the same time he became a subcommittee chairman of Appropriations. Now today, you do have younger members, newer members, freshmen members who become members of Appropriations that do not have as major responsibilities elsewhere, nor the experience. I think this is going to have an impact on the Appropriations Committee's operations.

RITCHIE: Has it already had an impact in any way?

REID: I really don't have the basis to judge because I have not participated in those meetings, I have not gone to one of them. I have absented myself. I've served in a capacity to advise Mr.

Page 166

[Mark] Hatfield's staff as well as Mr. [William] Proxmire's, and given them the benefit of anything that I knew, and share with them some of the memos that I might have drafted to give Magnuson. I've been available as a resource, but I have not gone to any sessions of the full committee and sat as a mouse. One of the problems I faced when I was running things for Magnuson was trying to convince the staff that unless you needed to be there, there's no reason for you to be there.

RITCHIE: One other thing about the appropriations process that interests me is what happens when it gets on the floor. After all this time you've deliberated in the subcommittee and full committee, when it gets onto the floor of the Senate, how much of the bill really is changed?

REID: I would say in a percentage factor, probably by less than 1 or 2 percent. Even though in recent years, you've had people, sometimes just for posturing and just for demagoguery, who would advocate a 10 percent across the board cut, the balance-the-budget types. When you get down to real programs, you would have somebody that might oppose a Clinch River, for some environmental or some other aspect, and might want to delete something. Obviously, if MX missiles came on the floor, you might have moves along that line. But by and large the arguments were not over dollars, they were over something else. In the social field it was always abortion. When the abortion issue was put on other bills, often you'd have more discussion on that you would on something that was really more dollars and cents. The debates were never over major expenditures, and the changes were often modest. You

page 167

might find somebody who was vitally concerned about youth unemployment and hot summers that would try to add some funds for summer youth employment, or something like that. Or you might have the housing question, subsidized housing, come up and you might have an apparently large dollar issue voted on on the floor. But by and large it was nit-picking.

RITCHIE: The appropriations bill always seems to be the tail end of the legislative session. It's often debated the night before the session adjourns. Is this by design, as a way of forcing the members of the Senate to go along with the appropriations bill, by running them right down to the wire?

REID: It has been used as a vehicle to keep members in town. There have been majority leaders that knew, especially in election years, that they would have trouble keeping a majority around unless they had one or two goodies that people had to be here for, for their own political reasons. And appropriations bills were used by majority leaders at times to help hold the session intact until adjournment. But sometimes it was not by design, it was just by circumstances that you could not get agreement. That happened in the Labor-HEW area on the abortion question, because there was a time when Henry Hyde had the votes in the House, but Ed Brooke, Warren Magnuson, and Birch Bayh had the votes in the Senate. Well, on the abortion issue, Mr. Hyde and Mr. Magnuson didn't quite agree. It became an issue that was almost unresolvable, irreconcilable. When you can't agree, then you can't move. So there were these extraneous things that often held bills till the last.

page 168

In the appropriations process, we keep talking about thirteen bills, but historically the Appropriations Committee had come along at the end of the session with a Supplemental bill. And a Supplemental was to provide for those programs that we hadn't done enough for in the regular process, or to provide for funding for programs the Congress had just recently enacted, because at least in theory you might start in January with a new Congress, with a new session,

and the legislative committees must pass through both houses and pass the president a new program that was authorized to get started immediately, and that wasn't provided for in the appropriations process, so you have to have a Supplemental. There would often be a catch-all Supplemental that would need to be passed in the waning hours of a session.

RITCHIE: I've seen Magnuson down on the floor during those late night sessions.

REID: How he could do it! He's always had the ability to catnap. He can lean back in at least a comfortable Barco lounge or something like that, and almost momentarily be in some level of sleep. He can go back there in the Marble Room and in two or three minutes he'd be asleep. If they'd let him sleep for twenty minutes then he could come out, ruffled, but with all of his faculties and survive it. I know several times when we did have those long sessions, one time we started on a Thursday or Friday and he was wearing the same clothes Sunday afternoon. And here the session was really over with, although they had to stay in order to sign pieces of paper, but there was a football game on and he stayed in the cloakroom to watch the football

page 169

game before we went home, and he hadn't been home for two nights, Friday night and Saturday night. He'd only catnapped in the Marble Room.

RITCHIE: In 1977, James Eastland retired from the Senate and Warren Magnuson was elected president pro tempore.

REID: In '78, and Magnuson was elected in '79.

RITCHIE: Could you explain to me what exactly a president pro tempore really does? How did Magnuson's responsibilities change when he became president pro tem?

REID: Well, again, Magnuson was sensitive to some things. His memory was much longer than mine and he could remember the times when there were president pro tems of the Senate that had a great deal more obvious power. Carl Hayden, when he was president pro tem, had the patronage book, and there was no such thing when Magnuson became president pro tem. But the president pro tem of the United States Senate is the only constitutional officer in the Senate other than the vice president. In the line of succession to the presidency, the president pro tem does occupy a position right after the Speaker. In a way, it was a little bit frightening after he became president pro tem to have these people show up to explain the procedures for emergency evacuation. When they brought it home to him that there would be a helicopter at such-and-such a place and that he would get aboard, and that if his wife was with him she could get aboard too, he said, "Well, if she isn't with me, I'm not getting aboard." He wasn't about to fly

page 170

down to Charlottesville, or some stupid place and not have his wife with him. We'd just take the car and go out to the Shoreham and pick her up and drive!

Then you get the red phone, an extension to the White House switchboard. There was one in his personal office in the Russell Building, and another in his Appropriations office in the Capitol, and there was one at home. The phone at home was a red one. They would test it about once a month. It rang once when I was there and they were just testing it, and it was a little disturbing. You did realize that this was a vehicle that might have to be used for other purposes. He was the only one that ever used it. None of the staff were allowed to use it. It was amazing, because I placed the calls many times for him. It was almost instantaneously answered, and it was a male voice that came on "Yes, sir." When you asked for a cabinet member, which he often did, he would use it for contacting various cabinet officials, it was a very effective instrument. Because they had similar instruments and they came on the line almost immediately.

But the president pro tem did have certain ceremonial duties, ministerial duties. In the absence of the vice president, the president pro tem is in that pecking order. One of the nice things on the Senate side when you are president pro tem, they do provide you with a car and driver. That was a nice thing to have, it did take some burdens off me personally, because over the years I had been the one that took Magnuson home every night. I didn't pick him up in the morning every time. We had staff people that lived out near him that would pick him up and bring him to the Hill.

page 171

Within the Democratic party structure of the Senate, the president pro tem had been included as part of the "leadership." The Democratic Caucus has a steering committee that performs many of the functions that the Rules Committee on the House side performs, of scheduling legislation and making up priorities. Well, Magnuson had been on the steering committee of the Senate for quite some time, about twenty years or better. So when he became president pro tem there was some debate as to whether he would get two votes or what the deal would be. It was more than pro forma because there were other interests within the Democratic membership of the Senate that wanted to add another member if they could. So that was another function that the president pro tem might have.

Then, legally, there are a number of laws on the books that require appointments to commissions, to various federal bodies. They're usually honorary, they don't carry any monetary value except that national commissions that do have meetings, you get your travel paid and you get a modest hundred dollars or something a day. But under the law, many of those appointments are made in the name of the president pro tem. Historically, within the Senate, if the president pro tem has two appointments to make, one of those appointments is made with the advice and consent of the minority. That was something that we carried out very assiduously, that the minority made their recommendation and Magnuson just ratified it. On the Democratic side, as president pro tem, Magnuson did exercise the influence that he might have on occasion to select someone of his recommendation rather than just turn it over to the Caucus, although he'd run his idea by the Caucus—which in essence was

page 172

Mr. [Robert C.] Byrd, the majority leader. In the operation of his duties as president pro tem that

was another assignment that came my way.

We also discovered that the president pro tem is the legal supervisor for the secretary of the Senate, for the sergeant at arms of the Senate, and for the legislative counsel. One of the first sessions that Mr. Magnuson personally had was with Nordy Hoffmann [Senate sergeant at arms] and Stan Kimmitt [secretary of the Senate], when he became president pro tem the two of them met with him to discuss some of their concerns, some of their interests, and pledge their fealty.

RITCHIE: Did he have regular dealings with these officers? Did they turn to him for assistance?

REID: Oh, yes. There weren't many times that anything had to be formally decided but there was informal, verbal communication between those three people almost on a daily basis. Nordy Hoffmann was somebody that Magnuson knew very well. In fact, he knew Nordy before Nordy ever came to Capitol Hill. Nordy Hoffmann was born and raised in Seattle. He's from an old family out there. Of course, Magnuson knew Stan Kimmitt when Stan first worked with Mike Mansfield and was secretary for the majority. So these were not people that Magnuson was unfamiliar with, nor hadn't had some kind of dealings over the years. Anytime they wanted to see him they usually caught him in and around the floor and would discuss things. I would say that I dealt more with Nordy because the sergeant at arms does have a much broader responsibility outside of the immediate operations of the Senate chamber,

page 173

the computer center, and the lease space. Many of the things that the sergeant at arms had responsibility for had fiscal overtones.

Another responsibility that I had for Magnuson was to keep an eye on the legislative budget, because we were all concerned about the bad press of the "billion dollar Congress." And we had concerns about the Library of Congress and some of the things that are funded under the legislative budget. We had been involved with the Library of Congress when I first came back here and some OMB director tried to do away with the program where the Library of Congress makes out those little catalog cards that end up in your catalogs of Podunk city library. Our analysis of it was "Well, yes, it does cost Uncle Sam more money to make those cards. But how much does it save the librarian in Podunk? And what are we about? Why don't we want people to read? Of course, if you're in Podunk and you want to read, you go to the catalog first, don't you?" So we had some interests there, and they were continuing. So our dealings with the sergeant at arms were a little greater in number and complexity.

RITCHIE: So the position of president pro tem carries headaches as well as honors.

REID: Yes. You have the honor and with it the responsibility. It's an office perhaps that the man, the occupant, makes more or less out of it. Its purely legal powers are more in reserve than anywhere else. The ultimate power that's in reserve is one, I think, almost anybody would pray doesn't come your way. Because I can't imagine a more cataclysmic event than Dallas would be the elevation of a president pro tem to president of the United States. You would have

to

have a horrendous event to bring that about. And potentially, it's there.

RITCHIE: Well, we've been talking for the past several weeks about your whole career from 1949-'50, and 1964-'81. You talked about the differences in the institution of the Senate from the time you were first here in '49-'50, and when you came back in '64, how much larger the institution had gotten. Now you've had almost twenty years with the Senate. How different is the United States Senate today than it was in the past? In what ways would you say it's changed?

REID: I think it's still a relatively small town. I think it's peopled, by and large, exceedingly well. Whether it's the charpeople, whether it's the plumbers, whatever it is. You know we have some of the finest carpenters that are still alive in this country. Some of them would strike me down for using that phrase because they are really "cabinetmakers," they're not carpenters. They are among the finest craftsmen that are available in this country. They are all dedicated to making the place work, whether it's keeping it beautiful, keeping it clean, keeping the elevators working, or the lights on, the temperature cool, at least they try. I think the staff, by and large, are highly dedicated.

I think the biggest change that I would be concerned about is that the "pressure cooker" is hotter, the pace is perhaps frenetic, the complexity of issues greater and the sheer number of issues coming before the Congress is greater. I think about the people that have been involved with me, that I've been involved with intimately, that I've

seen have personal problems, that I've seen the divorce rate very high. A contributing factor to those personal problems has to be the time that they spent, the dedication that they have given to whatever it was that their staff mission was. When I was in law school there was a phrase: "the law is a jealous mistress." I think that's even more so about staff work within the Senate, whether it's in the more political parts that the legislative committee might be a part of. I think they are jealous-mistress type jobs that put a strain on the personal relationships that an individual has and needs. I think how people get away from the Hill, from their jobs, to refresh their batteries, to recharge their batteries, whether it's to Rehoboth [Beach, Delaware] or whatever, I think this is a problem that some of the staff have not resolved. It puts a strain on them, puts a strain on the institution.

I know in our own operation at the secretarial level, I tried to find new secretaries that were Class-A, Number One, and all that, and I would argue with the other staff, "Look, if we can get eight hours out of them, that's all I want. Let's bring somebody else in as a part-timer to cover these long hours." We had many operations; we had an operation in the Capitol that, because of our membership and because of Magnuson, we had to keep open whatever the Senate was in session. Well, when the Senate went in at nine or ten o'clock in the morning and stayed until nine or ten o'clock at night, this made for an awfully long day for the people that might be assigned

down there. It put a real strain on them, and I didn't think it was fair to ask that secretary, just because her clerk happened to be located there, that she had to be there from nine o'clock in the morning until nine or ten o'clock at night.

page 176

How all staffs resolve these problems, the length of the sessions, the duration of Congresses, the expansion of attention to such a wide span of sub-specialities, is important. We're still individuals, human beings, that need lives that are perhaps a little bit bigger than the micro-thing that we're looking at. But I see it working. If it had been my decision alone, I don't think I would have built Dirksen, let alone Hart [Senate Office Buildings]. At the same time, I recognize that it's important for members to really respond to their constituents with a staff of five or six people housed in three rooms which used to be available in Russell. They've had to acquire the automatic machinery, the System 6's, the mass mail responding capability. You can't operate that without people, so they've had to expand their staffs, committees have had to expand their staffs, just to do the job they've been forced to take on.

The bottom line, for whatever the causes, is that the rate of turnover among staff is surely higher today, just as it is for members. I think that the pace of events and the pressures that come with that will assure an even higher turnover of members and especially the staff who help them to formulate public policy. That means we'll be lacking institutional memory.

I'll admit to showing a certain prejudice in this, for I favor stability. While change is inevitable and usually good, I feel that evolutionary change is the very essence of our system. Those who gain their experience within a stable system, who rise at an incremental pace to positions of power within that system, they do tend to be more cautious. They deliberate suggested changes with less haste—I'd say they weigh all the consequences of any change more rationally.

Page 177

Within the Senate today, as an institution, far fewer members or staff have that accumulated tenure, that experience that is as deep as it is broad. Far greater numbers of both come here with little experience within legislative bodies at the state or local levels. If that view is valid, and if it does continue, it might well result in sessions where the panic over issues of the moment result in far too hasty action—perhaps revolutionary changes—wider swings of the political pendulum with consequent government action or inaction—that will trigger reactions among the body politic that I do not believe will be in the best interests of our nation.

RITCHIE: Your long association with Warren Magnuson put you in contact with a man who's always been identified with the "Inner Club" of the Senate, from his days of playing cards with the senior senators, to being chairman of the Commerce Committee and chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Do you think there still is an "Inner Club" the way people described it in the 1950s and '60s?

REID: Not the way there was when a Clint Anderson and a Bob Kerr and a Warren

Magnuson, and others, Stu Symington, might get together in one of the east front rooms of the Capitol and play a little cards or just get together—this didn't happen every day, but it happened often. I don't think that happens today, partially because of the speed with which everybody is moving. Those were the days when they had to spend more time here. Today, you have members that are, I would say on any given day there are at least two or three members of the Senate that are flying away from Washington, not to it. At the

page 178

same time there are others flying back. And yet the Senate is still in session. So they don't have the opportunities to come to know one another well and to build those interpersonal relationships that can be so important, if only for giving them greater job satisfaction.

Of course, Warren Magnuson was here long enough to see Washington become one of the world capitals and acquire embassies from how many nations, and the pressures that that adds to the city that weren't here in the 1930s nor the '40s. The fact that you see such a boom in commercial office space in this town, and how many of them being occupied by Wall Street law firms, Chicago, Houston and Los Angeles law firms. This is becoming, perhaps, not the commercial center that a Wall Street or Chicago Board of Trade might represent, but it's certainly becoming a legal center that wasn't envisioned maybe a decade ago by some of these firms. There's almost a stampede now, if you're a big firm in Dallas, Chicago, or New York, that you have a Washington office.

But that "Inner Club" of the Senate, that White and others wrote about so well and so accurately, is gone. There are still a number of real movers and shakers—those who can almost command others to follow—but their influence is not as pervasive or decisive across such a spectrum of issues. There will always be some kind of small group, call it what you will, that will have the appearance of being in charge, of running the show and calling the shots. But it will be an ever-changing cast of characters, depending upon the particular issues. The likes of a Dick Russell, a Bob Taft, or now a Warren Magnuson are absent from the scene and Warren Magnuson might well prove to be the last of that long line.

RITCHIE: Has television and the media changed the Senate in its way of doing business?

page 179

REID: I fear it has because it's put a premium on the successful member to be a successful performer, and to make a good appearance in half a minute, to be able to quickly respond, and appear knowledgeable, and communicate over the electronic media. The fact that it's so easy now for the people within the television industry to have their little vans sitting out there on the northeast drive and do a "quickie" [interview] that's shot by microwave, and processed and can be in Podunk within a matter of minutes. It used to be that you used a crackly long-distance connection at AT&T. You might call a reporter on the local paper, or have a scratchy message that might get out over the local radio station, but now you have a much finer fidelity and higher quality transmission. I think it's created for the successful member, the guy

who wants to get reelected or rise to "higher office," it puts a premium on the ability to electronically communicate. The medium itself *is* the message today, not whatever lengthy private thought, deliberation or contemplation that a member might have expended in whatever process brought him to his public position.

RITCHIE: Do you think it's changed the type of senators we'll see now and in the future?

REID: Most certainly and, I believe, with unfortunate consequences. With the ever higher percentage of the electorate making their decisions about public issues and about public figures based upon whatever information they receive from the electronic media, that has changed the basic reasons some individuals are successful in gaining the confidence of the electorate. The pace at which one can gain or lose that confidence is certainly much faster also.

page 180

Still some things do remain the same. The electorate has always been extremely jealous about their elected officials. They demand their personal presence everywhere, for anything, at any time. And they don't allow public figures any private life; that is especially true of a spouse or children; even a niece or nephew who might smoke pot is not only fair game for the press, but too often hounded by them.

The electorate is equally fickle and will elect or defeat a candidate for what are truly extraneous reasons. My best examples both come from the South. Decades ago, a member with great seniority always stayed at the Mayflower Hotel during congressional sessions. His opponent demolished him during his reelection attempt with a standard speech, built entirely upon a copy of the printed menu from the Mayflower dining room. He'd read all of those items on the menu—mispronouncing any of the fancy French dishes—and, of course, gave all the prices—and, in that rural area, trounced that senior member. Yet, what connection might a member's eating preferences or his temporary abode have with his possible effectiveness as a member of Congress?

The defeat of then Senator Claude Pepper by George Smathers in 1950 is a far more recent example, where the lack, perhaps, of sophistication among the electorate, and a dash of McCarthyism of the time, brought about the downfall of a most capable, effective and senior member of the Senate.

The electronic media and the pace of events today, which has been escalating since World War II, combine to bring into play what I call "burn factors" that are prevalent among members as well as staff. There is the "burn up" on the inside where those internal drives that are so

page 181

critical (and so evident also) in successful individuals, whatever their vocation, and they burn up those driving forces for any number of personal reasons. No doubt that has been true from the

earliest times when citizens gained the power to anoint one of their own and put a toga on them, but the pace of events in the public arena today certainly adds pressures to that burn up factor.

Perhaps more often today, a member will dissipate their favorable acceptance among their electorate, and this I term "burnout." Again, this will happen for all manner of reasons but I'd rank overexposure at the top of the list. Overexposure puts modern truth into that phrase attributed to a famous French King who said, "nothing pleaseth like rare appearance."

I felt that President Carter was suffering fatally last summer and fall from overexposure—in sum total and across too broad a spectrum of public issues. The public not only became tired of seeing him, of hearing him, but they became bored and they just tuned Carter out—long before they turned him out. The electronic media, especially television, escalates that risk of burnout among public figures just as surely as it has among those who are just entertainers. How many Fred Astaires can you name who not only have their professional act together and who occupy that premier status among their peers, but who obviously have a keen perception of the burnout risks. And the George Jessel types are legion.

Those burn factors are indeed interconnected and the burden, the pressure they put upon members or any public official is tremendous. Members of Congress must be constructed, psychologically as well as

page 182

intellectually, of firmer stuff than the average to withstand those pressures—if we are to have a level of quality among our national board of directors and policymakers that the continued successful operation of corporate America demands. While this has been true for public figures from the earliest of times, the faster pace of our modern world escalates the speed with which all these events occur.

You'd have to wonder if a Washington, Madison, Jefferson or Franklin would be among any "Inner Club" today. The sage of Monticello withstood scurrilous attacks in his day. But what if the tale of Sally Hemmings were at every supermarket checkout stand, harped on constantly by columnists, voiced by TV editorialists and explored in-depth by electronic reporters? Today, it is often just a handful of Cronkites, nationally and locally, who anoint those among a pack as "front-runners" or as real "comers" and all too often this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Most of those Founding Fathers underwent extensive testing in the public marketplace among their fellow citizens—be it Williamsburg, Richmond, Boston or Philadelphia—over a number of years, before they were given a toga.

Today, the electorate may still anoint the very best and the brightest, but perhaps even more often, we see the dullards and the demagogues in a toga. Those pressures and burdens of public figures are all too evident to the best and the brightest; they opt out on public service; and they put their energies to work in other fields where they achieve equal success and personal satisfaction, without undergoing the deprivations of privacy and the like. This does not bode well for the body politic, and while I feel the potential for harm all too obvious, I don't have the answers for turning it around.

RITCHIE: That brings us up then to Magnuson's last campaign in 1980, his one and only defeat. What happened in that election to end his career in the Senate?

REID: Well, part of what happened was what he feared was going to happen. He feared that the Democratic party was in disarray. That Mr. Carter and his administration were not appreciated, for whatever reasons, and that they weren't selling. There was apathy. There was disaffection. Magnuson has always felt that interest rates are translated into action at the polls. He was concerned about that. He was concerned about his own image. I don't think he showed his age, except in his walk, as much as his age was a factor. He didn't look that much different at seventy-five than he had at sixty-five. His genes are amazing, because he's got more hair than I have, and it's healthier. He's never died his hair. He has an ability to recuperate from a long, hard day in a very short rest span. His mind is as agile today as it's ever been, and of course his memory is expanding every day. The basic qualities that a man might need to do the job of United States senator, I think Magnuson had them, has them, and if anything, they were getting better, like fine wine that might need be aged. As we were approaching 1980, Magnuson did question whether he should run again. He raised the question often, although he certainly enjoyed his work even more and he knew that he could continue doing it as well or even better than in the past, he did wonder if he might be going to the well once too often. At the same time he was plagued with an obligation, for he'd come to the very top; he'd become president pro tempore; he was

chairman of Appropriations; and the most senior member of the entire Congress. None of that could Magnuson pass along to any successor to his senatorial seat that the citizens of Washington state might elect. That sense of obligation to hold those positions for those who had placed him where he was able to acquire them was, I believe, the prime factor in his decision to run. But the 1980 voters in our state were looking for change, certainly at the state level.

We had some problems in our own state. We had a governor, Dixie Lee Ray, who had been an official here [chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission], and who was well known in the state. She was elected governor the same time that Mr. Carter was elected president, and she was nominated and elected in that year for some of the same reasons Carter was elected. She was a non-politician so to speak, a change. She had been able to alienate all of the press in the state of Washington during her four-year term. They were all down on her. And she enjoyed fighting with them. She got herself into a situation where there was a primary fight. The leading candidate against her in the Democratic primary bound himself to Magnuson. His name was McDermott and he came up with the "M & M" slogan. She blamed part of that on Magnuson. Well, he had absolutely nothing to do with it. The gubernatorial candidate is the one that started it, and even put out tee shirts with "M & M: Magnuson and McDermott." We had no choice. Magnuson has always been a down-the-line Democrat. He would not get involved in a primary, but whoever the primary selected, he would support. There were friends of Dixie when she was defeated as governor in that September primary that were unhappy with Magnuson because they

partially blamed him, so there was that disaffection.

page 185

But I think the most telling blow came with the Carter-Reagan debate. Watching it in Seattle I certainly felt that Reagan was the winner of that debate and established himself as a very presentable, creditable alternative. The tide turned dramatically. And all of the polls out home confirmed it. Where Carter had been ahead, he was now behind and he was falling fast. We felt it over the following few days, and of course, that was just a week before the election. Then as we sat there and watched the returns early in the afternoon and saw the White House limousines going to the hotel downtown when it was only five-thirty, quarter-to-six in Seattle, and then we got the reports from the precincts: at six-thirty and seven there wasn't anybody there! On primary night we had precincts that had people lined up, they didn't get to vote until about eight-thirty, eight-forty-five because they were lined up waiting at eight o'clock when the polls closed. Our law requires that anybody in line be allowed to vote. We didn't have one precinct in the entire state on the general election night that had anybody waiting at eight o'clock. They were all home watching the new president. It was devastating on the West Coast. It was devastating in Seattle and Tacoma. In fact, Magnuson did carry Seattle but he didn't carry King County and Pierce County, another major area. So the landslide that started here, that rolled west, hurt. When it was decisive, especially the impact of that early hour concession, I leave to those who study returns more closely. I do know that any number of seats in the state legislature turned Republican; where the turnout of those who vote late in the day—the more blue collar types—tend to be heavily Democratic, the results defied all previous voting patterns; and I know that was equally true in other states on the West Coast.

page 186

Magnuson made a speech when he went down to his headquarters that night. He ended his comments by saying something to the effect that, "I wish my successor well. It's possible that he did me a favor; it remains to be seen whether he did you a favor." I told him afterwards in the car, "You gave the Ph.D. candidates a subject that many of them will have fun with over the next twenty years." And I know in the last six months, that Mr. Magnuson has come to appreciate that line himself, because the things that he is seeing proposed by the Reagan-Stockman administration, the cutbacks in many of the programs, especially in the social, bio-medical research, health programs, early childhood detection programs, oceanography, these were programs that he very much believed in. He was often involved in the authorizing. He was certainly involved in the funding. He believes they are "investments" that we can ill-afford losing, whether it's Public Health Service hospitals, clinics, wellborn child clinics, all of it is something that he was very dedicated to. He'd have been a most unhappy member in the Senate of today; not because he'd have lost some positions of apparent power; not because of Democrat vs. Republican; but because he believes that government can help to make a difference, that it has an obligation to redress grievances and to help make things better for people. He'd have found those views to be in the minority and I doubt he'd have any relish in rearguard attacks upon the Reagan-Stockman proposals to dismantle so many of the programs that Magnuson had a personal hand in putting in place. So in a very personal way, Slade Gorton did do Warren Magnuson a favor last November.

RITCHIE: Well for me this has been an education in the history of the Senate over the years that Magnuson served. Hearing

page 187

his story has really been a chronicle of the generation he represented from World War II on.

REID: Well, I hope he writes his story, first-person. He spans a remarkable period in our national life, our emergence from a fairly insular country, insular people, America First, and I don't want to put too many bad connotations on that but we did ignore the fact that there were other people on the other side of the Pacific and the Atlantic. We've ignored the fact that there are people south of the border too. But he spans that period when we came out of isolationism, for better or for worse, into a One World. He spans that period when prop planes could only go a few hundred miles to when jets not only can go intercontinental but we can travel intercelestial. He was part of it, and intimately involved in some of the decisions, and was personally acquainted with FDR, Truman, Eisenhower, the Kennedy's, Nixon, Ford, let alone [William] Douglas who served on the Court, and any number of other people, and was somewhat at the center.

Within the institution here he was close to people like the Dick Russells, and the John McCormicks, and the Sam Rayburns, and Carl Alberts, Mike Mansfields, Bob Byrds, as well as the Bill Knowlands, the Ken Wherrys, Bill Jenner, John Bricker, Norris Cotton, Jim Pearson, Milt Young and the Saltonstalls, and so many of the gentlemen on the other side of the aisle. I think Magnuson's friendships, and I think many of them do approach true friendships, within the existing Senate is probably strong, or stronger with a [Howard] Baker or a [Ted] Stevens than it might be with a [Robert] Byrd and a [Alan] Cranston. I'd say that about

page 188

Baker because Magnuson had a relationship with his father-in-law [Everett Dirksen] that Baker's not unaware of. Of course, with Stevens, part of it is that Stevens served on Commerce as well as Appropriations, and he is from the Northwest. Magnuson has long enjoyed a reputation—at one time he was publicly called the "Third Senator from Alaska." For many years when Alaska was a territory, Magnuson took it upon himself, both as a congressman from the First District of Washington, and then a senator, to be concerned about and try to represent some of the interests that Alaska had back here, that they didn't have anybody who could vote on. He spent time and tried to help them, and did help them, and was appreciated. He's always had a following in Alaska that is well deserved. But it was an extra chore when he was doing it. Of course, some of that spins off with Ted Stevens.

RITCHIE: I've also appreciated your own observations from the point of view of the staff. Your own experiences, I think, have been in many ways unique, working from an elevator operator on up to the chief assistant to probably the most powerful chairman, I would guess the Appropriations Committee chairmen would easily be considered the most influential of all the chairmen.

REID: I've tried never to forget that experience as an elevator operator, because I do think that I came to appreciate the fact that there were people like the cabinetmakers and charpeople that help make it possible for the Senate to operate. They're just as important, I think. It's the sum total. Whether it's a Byrd or a

page 189

Magnuson trying to do a job on the floor, if everybody else isn't trying to help to do that job it doesn't work. We've got some great people that are trying to make the whole thing work, I think for good reasons and with very firm dedication.

[End of interview #4]

page 190