THE CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC COUNCIL AND GRASS-ROOTS POLITICS

Charles G. Gant

Interviewed by Saundra B. Taylor

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
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INTRODUCTION

Charles Green Gant was born in Nashville, Tennessee, September 24, 1916, to Charles G. and Elizabeth (Bell) Gant. Graduating from high school in 1933, he spent a few years on the family farm outside Nashville before going to Cleveland, Ohio to work as head of shipping of the Brewing Corporation of America. Leaving that position in 1939, Mr. Gant attended Antioch College, received his A.B. in 1942, and moved to Washington, D.C., to be an administrative analyst with the U.S. Bureau of the Budget. After three years in the U.S. Navy, Mr. Gant returned to the Bureau of the Budget, then changed to the budget office of the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, leaving in 1951 to become comptroller, then a study director for the National Science Foundation.

In 1954, Charles Gant and his family moved west, where he took a position as business manager of Lockheed Aircraft Corporation's research laboratories in Van Nuys, California. Within a short time, he left Lockheed to help form an independent consulting company that later was bought out by Philco-Ford Corporation in 1956. Mr. Gant continued employment with Philco-Ford as director of the company's Newport Beach operations until 1967.

Charles Gant's active interest in politics began when he attended meetings of the Van Nuys Democratic Club after his arrival in California. Moving to Northridge, he found the local Democratic Club there more active and became its president in 1958. The Gants then moved to Orange County in 1959, and in the following year, Chuck Gant discovered the Santa Ana Democratic Club and also attended his first California Democratic Council convention.

From that time until the so-called Casady affair of 1965-66, Chuck Gant played a very active role in the grass-roots politics movement represented by the California Democratic Council. He was president of the Santa Ana Democratic Club, 1960-61; served as CDC director for the Thirty-fifth Congressional District, 1963-65; and was manager of the 1964 CDC convention held in Long Beach. Elected as the first southern vice-president of CDC in its 1965 reorganization, Mr. Gant resigned the position some six months later (November 14, 1965), as did several other board members, because of insoluble conflicts with CDC President Simon Casady.

After leaving CDC, Chuck Gant remained active in various local political movements, helping to form and then head a group called Democrats of Southern California. He has also continued to serve as a member of the Democratic

County Central Committee of Orange County, to which he was first elected in 1964. Aside from that membership, he now claims to be "withdrawn" from politics.

In the following transcript of tape-recorded interviews made under the auspices of the UCLA Oral History Program, Charles Gant discusses his political activities and philosophy and his experiences in the California Democratic Council. He also describes in some detail the organizational structure of CDC and its role in the development of California Democratic politics during the 1960s.

This interview is part of the Program's Government and Politics series. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

Saundra B. Taylor

Los Angeles, California

May, 1972

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Saundra Taylor, Librarian, Department of Special Collections, UCLA Library; B.A., M.A., History, UCLA; M.L.S., School of Library Service, UCLA.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: The home of Charles Gant at Tropic Lane, Santa Ana, California.

Dates: February 19 and July 21, 1970.

Time of day, length of sessions, and total number of recording hours: The interviews were recorded in the evening, the first session taking something over two hours and the final session about one and one-half hours, for a total recording time of about three and one-half hours.

Persons present: Gant and Taylor.

CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW:

The interviewee was asked to give a brief autobiographical description and then discuss the California Democratic Council, his activities in that organization, and in California politics in general, and his personal assessment of various political figures. Mr. Gant proceeded in a more or less chronological order during the first session, making no use of notes or other visual material. The second session was devoted to the political portraits in response to the interviewer's questions, with Mr. Gant again relying solely on memory.

EDITING:

Editor: Saundra Taylor.

The transcript of the interviews was checked against the original tape recordings by the interviewer and edited for punctuation, paragraphing, correct spelling and verification of proper and place names. The edited transcript was returned to Mr. Gant for correction and/or verification of names and dates. The completed manuscript retains the original sequence

of the taped sessions. Any addition of words or phrases made by the editor but not actually spoken by the interviewee have been bracketed.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings and the edited transcript of the interview have been placed in the University Archives and are available under the rules governing the use of the University's noncurrent records.

Mr. Gant's personal papers relating to his CDC activities are located in the UCLA Research Library, Department of Special Collections, as Collection 1059.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE 1

FEBRUARY 19, 1970

TAYLOR: Mr. Gant, would you begin by telling me something about your background, your education, family, place of birth?

GANT: I was born in Nashville, Tennessee, September 24, 1916, which makes me now 53 years old. My childhood was spent in Nashville and in a small town outside of Nashville, by the name of Gallatin. I went to public schools in Nashville, graduating in 1933. This was of course in the depths of the Depression, and I spent a couple of years on the family farm and then I went to work in Cleveland for four years, 1935 to 1939. I then went to college at Antioch in Yellow Springs [Ohio] graduating in 1942. I spent several months with the Bureau of the Budget in the federal government, and then entered the navy in February of 1943. I was married in 1941 to my present wife, Margaret Gant. Our first child, a daughter, was born in 1943 just prior to my entering the service. My service extended until 1946, when I returned to the Budget Bureau in Washington and worked there for another year or so. I then worked for the navy until 1951, then as the comptroller and later study director for the National Science Foundation until 1954. Our second child was born in 1949 while we were still in Washington. We came to California in late 1954,

where I was employed by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in Van Nuys. I was there until 1956 when I went with a small company, which a group of people who had been working at Lockheed organized as a separate consulting company. It was later bought by Ford Motor Company, and I continued employment with Ford until 1967.

Our daughter died in 1965 and our son, who is now almost 21, is our only surviving child.

It was while I was living in the San Fernando Valley that I became active for the first time in political activities.

I was, as you can see, a Southerner by birth. I was, so to speak, born into the Democratic party. It was kind of bred into my blood, I suppose. My grandfather had been obviously a Democrat all his life. My grandmother was born during the Civil War and she was named Dixie Rebel because of the prevailing circumstances. I can remember talking to my grandfather in 1939 or 1940 when he was then about 80 years old. He was very unhappy with the Roosevelt administration as obviously he might well be. He'd never felt it right nor moral to take government payments for non-planting of crops and this kind of thing. And he said he just wasn't going to be able to vote for Roosevelt in 1940. I said, "Well, are you going to vote for Wilkie?" And he thought a long time and he said, "Well, Charles, I can't do that. I just am not going to vote." So, in a

sense I have that kind of heritage, although in subsequent times I had gotten away from the type of thinking which the Democratic party represents in the South. Since the war, and particularly during my own active participation in politics, I've always been opposed to that aspect of the Democratic party.

I suspect that the primary influence in the change in my thinking and attitude and approach to social problems was my attendance at Antioch, which was then and still is a very liberal educational institution. Without any question, it had a significant influence in changing the orientation of my outlook on political and social matters. I did vote for Wilkie in 1940, my first time to vote. I don't feel too badly about this, since I'm not sure that Wilkie was ever genuinely a Republican. However, since then I've always voted Democratic. It's kind of like the story that I once heard, of someone who told about his father on his deathbed, advising the son not to forget his Democratic background and summed it all up by saying that he'd always voted for the best man and he'd always been very fortunate the best man had been a Democrat.

I have always had, I think, an insistent and abiding interest in political affairs. Maybe that's part of the Southern heritage. Southerners seem always to have had a much deeper and more pervasive interest in politics than people have elsewhere in the country. Politics is kind of bred into the blood in the South, part of the Southern

character, so to speak. So I followed politics with considerable interest.

I guess I would have to say that the most complete and full awareness of my association with the Democratic party came to me during the conventions in 1952. Up to that time, reflecting back on it, I think I had a kind of semi-objective view of parties. I wasn't altogether happy with Truman as a president in the early days, as many people weren't. But in 1952 the Republican convention came first in time, and that was the year in which Eisenhower and Taft squared off and there was the fight over the Texas delegation and a few others which decided the issue of who would be nominated. Then later on the Democratic convention came along and [Adlai] Stevenson was nominated. I realized that while I listened to the Republican convention I had the feeling it was "they" who were doing it, but when the Democratic convention came it was "we." And so from that point on I've always understood with myself that I was a Democrat, and I would always be one. There was not likely to be anything that would shake me from that. The kind of situation in which, right or wrong, it was my party.

I was not active in any type of political activity in Washington, in part because being a federal employee there were certain inhibitions to doing so. I think in retrospect that that may have been more of a rationalization than a true reason for not participating, but nonetheless that's the case.

When I came to California, for some reason I began to look with more favor on doing something, and my first actual entry into any kind of political activity was to attend a club meeting in Van Nuys which I went to because I saw a notice in the paper. That was not a very enlightening affair because the club, which was the Van Nuys Democratic Club, was not well organized or very effective at the time. That must have been about 1956. I didn't actually become active until 1957 when I became aware of a club in Northridge, where we were then living, in the San Fernando Valley. I'm not sure I can recollect the initial activity, but in 1957 I got interested in the water problem in California. The club was undertaking some study of this, and I participated in it and, as was likely to happen in any kind of volunteer activities, anyone who shows interest and so forth soon is invited to become a leader of one kind or another, so in 1958 I was elected president of the club. That, of course, was the campaign in which the Democratic party finally came back into power in California, and the club participated very actively in that particular campaign in the Valley. I don't recall exactly how well it did, since it was a fairly Republican area, and I suspect we didn't carry it, but we did work very actively.

In 1959 we moved to Orange County because my business moved from the San Fernando Valley down here. We came here in June of 1959 and after a period of settling down,

I sought out the Santa Ana club along in the early part of 1960. At that point the Santa Ana club, although it had been in existence some years, was pretty much in the doldrums. As I recall, at the first meeting I went to, we had four or five people, a condition to which the clubs have pretty much reverted since.

TAYLOR: I'm surprised you found a Democratic club in Orange County.

GANT: Well, surprisingly in 1960, by the time the registration for the general election had come and gone, we had a slight majority in registration in favor of the Democrats. As I recall, about 436 more Democrats registered in 1960 than Republicans. We've never been able to achieve that since. In fact, we've gone downhill in terms of registration since then.

Now, that didn't mean that we were a Democratic county by any means, because many of the Democrats then, and still, vote Republican, but they at least considered themselves Democrats and were willing to register as such.

In 1960 I went to my first CDC [California Democratic Council] convention, which was held in Fresno that year. I wasn't a delegate or anything of that sort, just an observer. I was much impressed by the activities of that convention, and in some ways, as I look back, I think perhaps it might have been the best convention that I ever attended. It was sort of the heyday of the first [Edmund G.] Brown administration, which in many ways,

I think, was a very crucial administration in the history of California. There were a number of items of legislation which were really groundbreaking--either had been passed in the previous [legislative] session or were under consideration in the current session.

One of the most notable, of course, was the California Water Plan, which was then going to be voted on and was voted on in that 1960 session of the legislature--no, I'm wrong. It had been passed in the preceding legislature but was going before the voters in the June primary for the authorization of the bonds which were necessary to get it through. And that was a very, very significant item. It had been, of course, very controversial, and the question of the north versus the south and the whole water controversy had been going on for years, and they'd finally gotten it resolved, which I think was a very creative thing on the part of that first Brown administration. The administration was quite eager to have the active support of the California Democratic Council in helping to get that ballot proposition approved in June. So the state administration sent representatives, and the legislators were there in great force, and there were fairly extensive efforts to make the delegates aware of what was at stake and explain the ins and outs of it. The educational value of that convention was greater, I think, than any that has followed.

The plan for higher education was then under development,

which later came into being in the form which still prevails in terms of the relationship between the university and the state colleges and the junior colleges and so on. The legislators were there in great numbers, I think more than have ever been at any since then. They participated actively. It was a very exciting situation. They then, of course, went on to the 1960 campaign, which, as far as the Democrats were concerned, was the last campaign which was, shall we say, enjoyable, and in which we worked with enthusiasm and sense of real accomplishment. There was of course strong feeling for Stevenson in California, throughout California, in party rank and file. Stevenson was well liked, well loved, and justly so, by people who considered themselves to be volunteers. And there was strong feeling for him at the national convention, which of course was held in Los Angeles that year. But after the convention was over, the party coalesced, and as the campaign wore on, the spirit got better and better. Of course we didn't actually carry California. We came very near to it. But it was a very good campaign, and there has never been in my experience the same kind of across-the-board participation since then. Now there has been--there was obviously in the 1968 campaign--participation by groups with that same kind of dedication, maybe in 1968 on behalf of the McCarthy people, even greater dedication; but taking the party as a whole there hasn't been anything quite like it since.

My particular activity in 1960 was the organizing of registration and, later on, getting out the vote type of activity in Santa Ana. And I was in charge of that operation in the area. In the following year I became president of the Santa Ana club. I was president in 1960-1961.

TAYLOR: Did you have more than five members this time?

GANT: Yes. We got between 200 and 300, and we had quite an active operation going, met regularly, and had speakers and discussions and so on. I first ran for state office in CDC in the elections of 1961. The officers and board members of the statewide organization of CDC were elected in odd-numbered years so that that problem would not exist in the times of the normal elections. So we had a convention in Santa Monica that year of 1961, and I ran and lost to someone who'd been in the county for many years.

TAYLOR: Was that the campaign for the Twenty-eighth Congressional District?

GANT: Yes. We were in that district then. The Twenty-eighth Congressional District included all of Orange County and geographically the greater part of San Diego, all of San Diego, except the City of San Diego. It was geographically and population-wise the largest district in the state. It had obviously been gerrymandered Republican. Unfortunately, in my personal situation, I didn't have many contacts in San Diego County as contrasted to my opponent, who later incidentally became a very good friend and who

is no longer in the county. That was my first exposure to the infighting that goes on in the inner councils of a party.

I recall that I was alleged to be anti-labor and anti-woman and a few other things of this sort. It all sounds a little silly in retrospect, but at the time it seemed fairly important. I later became what was known as an assembly district representative. Each director appointed an assembly district representative for those assembly districts that fell within the congressional districts. In those days things were nice and neat and all assembly districts were included within congressional districts. They're no longer that way. Because of the Supreme Court's decision concerning one-man-one-vote, assembly districts no longer coincide with congressional districts, you see, and so things are not nearly so neat as they were in those days. And so I became an assembly district representative, and as such I went to the state-wide board meetings which were held about once every three months.

In 1963 I ran again for the director's job, and at this point I was unopposed. By this time, of course, we had a redistricting, and I was now in the Thirty-fifth Congressional District, which was the eastern half of Orange County and the hinterland of San Diego County. In the course of my responsibilities I traveled a good many

miles in this part of the state.

TAYLOR: Are the directors on salary with the CDC, or does it come out of your own pocket?

GANT: No. It's out of your own pocket. Being engaged in political activities is not an inexpensive business. I would guess that during that period of years I must have spent anywhere from $1,000, $2,000 a year just in traveling up and down the state to meetings of one kind or another, and so on, without counting contributions. It would range somewhere between $1,000-$2,000 a year just in defraying expenses that are involved. That of course has always been one of the difficulties in volunteer political activity. It's not something that everybody can do, because they don't have the financial means to do so. And it's one of the problems that CDC always had in that it did not have a very good representation from the lower income in minority groups. In fact, any kind of demographic analysis of CDC's activities and strengths and weaknesses would show that districts like the Thirty-fifth District, which is a relatively high income district and is as a consequence a Republican district, also had the strongest activities in the organization. For example, much of the leadership of CDC came out of districts like what is now the Twentieth District which includes Pasadena and parts of Altadena and even Burbank, I guess. Whereas districts like the Twenty-first, which includes central

L.A., Watts and so on, were always very weak. There were always clubs in those districts, but they didn't have much substance to them. In fact, there might be numerically more clubs in the district like the Twenty-first than there might be in one of the higher income districts, but they tended to rise and fall like California vegetation--with the rains, you know. Whenever there was an occasion to have a club, why, it would come into existence; that is when the officeholder or someone aspiring to office found it to his interest to have one of these clubs come into existence, and then they'd sort of go out of existence. But basically the problem lay in the fact that people in the middle class, upper class, upper middle class, had the time. They had the financial means, and they had the educational training and motivation to take part in it, whereas people in the lower income district, the minority groups, did not have.

And so, one of the problems of being a broad-based organization that CDC had was that it did not effectively mobilize many of the lower income minority groups. The defect was perceived and efforts made to do something about it, but it was an intractable problem in the nature of things.

Perhaps at this point we might describe a little bit more about the organization of CDC and its origins and its underlying philosophies and ideologies. Although I

came to California in 1954, I was not among the original founders of CDC. Indeed, there was always in the organization a kind of an in-group that had been at Asilomar. After a while one began to wonder whether or not it wasn't like that battery that Harry Truman had been a captain of in World War I, or the PT-109, you know [laughter]; Asilomar could not have held all the people that were at Asilomar. It was a kind of an article of faith for anyone getting up at a meeting to start off by saying, "I was at Asilomar in 1953." So what I know about the origin I have assimilated in the years that have followed, and there are differences of view as to actually what brought CDC into existence, but I think that basically the versions tend to converge. In a sense, CDC owes its origins to Hiram Johnson. This may sound a strange thing to say, but as everyone knows that has any familiarity with the political history of California, Johnson campaigned and came to office on a promise, along with the other thrust of the Progressive movement throughout the country, to do something about constraining the party operations and particularly to eradicate from party politics the corruption and so on which was thought to permeate them. And, of course, in the early days of the century the parties in California, particularly the Democratic party, were relatively corrupt operations. The Southern Pacific Railroad had effectively seen to that. I've read some of

the histories of that period, particularly the Mowry book on California Progressives and so on, but it's a little hard to visualize exactly the kind of thinking that brought about the party system which they put through the legislature in 1911, and which has generally prevailed ever since. Certain articles of the Progressive faith were evident in it, like nonpartisan local elections and the primary and so on. But how they constructed or structured the party is still something of a mystery to me. It was designedly a very weak structure. The result was that candidates who were strong built up both on the state and local levels personal organizations. It also turned out that the concept of nonpartisan local elections worked to the advantage of the Republican [party] because California was basically, throughout that period, a Republican state. And that type of an operation, for reasons which I think are much too complicated to try to go into, worked to the favor of the Republicans.

So throughout the whole period both parties were, as parties, quite weak as contrasted to what they were in other parts of the country, such as the Democratic party in the large cities in the East or the Republican party in Pennsylvania and Indiana and so on. Now, the Republicans began to do something about this in the thirties, particularly after the [Culbert] Olson election when the first Democrat got in since the early part of

the century. They came together in a volunteer group known then as the California Republican Assembly. That was a very successful organization, and what it did for the Republicans was what CDC later did for the Democratic party. Namely, it was a kind of extralegal device for organizing the efforts and energies of the party members, which couldn't be done effectively through the state organization. There's an analogy, I think, to the early history of this country. The framers of the American Constitution did not think much of parties, as every high school student of civics knows, and so they made no provision for parties in the Constitution. In fact, I think it is true even today that the word "party" is not mentioned in the Constitution. This was somewhat naive, for in effect the way they so structured the federal government, it made parties almost necessary, because by attempting to divide it into three groups, the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive, it would have been a stalemate had it actually operated that way, which is maybe what they intended. In order to make the system work we had to use parties as a kind of unofficial extralegal device for bringing together enough consensus so the government could operate. So one way of looking at the early history of this country is that the party system was a necessary device to make the structure as it is designed in the Constitution work, and people who tend

to denigrate party operations and so on fail to understand that without them the government would not operate very effectively, if at all.

Well, something of the same thing was necessary in California, because the official structure was so dispersed, diffused, and ineffective, that without something behind it, kind of suffusing over it, the thing wouldn't work. Now, the Republicans found that out in the late thirties, and as a result they came back into power; and they went along very nicely, particularly during the Warren years, while the Democrats disintegrated into a complete shambles. I guess the ultimate indignity was in 1952, when [Earl] Warren won the Democratic primary, and therefore became governor in the primary. Well, it was after that, then, and with that kind of condition existing, [that it became] apparent to everybody that something had to be done, plus the impetus given to volunteer-type of activity by Stevenson and his campaign of that year. People began to come together to see what could be done.

In some ways it's hard to know which of these influences was greater. The condition was certainly there, but when the history of this period (mid-century period of American politics) is written, I think the influence of Stevenson is going to be very, very large. Even though he never became president, Stevenson did great things for this country. Stevenson probably would not have made a good

president, but he made a great contribution in the sense that he was able to convince people of the worth of doing this kind of thing, inspiring them to do it and having them stay with it. There's a generation of us, I guess, that were imbued with his concepts. I can still remember vividly his acceptance speech in 1952, "Let's talk sense to the American people." This kind of thing we've not seen since. Even [Eugene] McCarthy, who was able to inspire a lot of people, I don't think had that kind of ability to get across to people. McCarthy was more a kind of an instrument or a vessel, and I think he looked upon himself much that way. Many of his statements and speeches and much of his writings indicate that he looked upon a leader as being a kind of expression of the followers, kind of a Rousseauean concept in a way. Stevenson was more of a leader, and I think that his campaign brought people to the realization that they could do something and that they should.

So it began to come together. There were several people around in the state that were fairly influential in this. [Paul] Ziffren of course was one, although I suspect the person who had as much to do with it as anybody was the late George Miller, Jr., who was [a state] senator for many years from Alameda County, I guess it was Alameda. He it was that brought the first group together in Asilomar [July, 1953]. I've had people tell me who were involved

in it that in those days the communications in the party throughout the state were so poor that the only communications network that existed was that of the Young Democrats, who had a statewide organization, and oftentimes people communicating particularly from the north to the south had to rely on the Young Democratic organization to do so. There's always been that dichotomy between the north and the south in the state party, and even today the party structure, even as it's officially written, recognizes this. The party operates pretty generally as two parties within the state, the north and the south, and that's not a very cohesive operation.

CDC was formed then in a sense to do for the Democratic party what the [California] Republican Assembly had done for the Republican party--that is, to broaden the base, to involve more people in it, and to become a kind of extralegal, unofficial organization through which the party could begin to bring itself back together. Now, the actual founding of CDC took place later that year in Fresno [November 28, 1953]. This was the founding convention.

TAYLOR: At this time the Democratic clubs, or the club movement, were already in existence, weren't they? Wasn't CDC actually formed afterward?

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GANT: Clubs had been in existence for many years. I know of at least some that date themselves back to the thirties, and I'm sure that there were groups around and so on which operated rather independently in the form of clubs, whether they called themselves that or not. I think after, or as part of the Stevenson campaign, they began to spring up sort of adventitiously throughout the state.

Indeed, there was always some dichotomy of view within CDC about how clubs came into existence. There was one view which said you couldn't force them, you couldn't go out and organize, you had to wait until they sprang up, and another group was always saying, "Let's go and organize clubs." I'm inclined to think that the first view was probably the more correct one in the sense that I have not been aware of many clubs that were consciously organized as such. Most clubs somehow came into existence through a group of people being interested in doing something. They could be helped, assisted, and so on, but the impetus for them had to come from the people themselves. And the idea of someone going out and organizing, I think, is not a very valid concept. CDC at one point even employed some so-called field

representatives to do this, and to my knowledge they never succeeded in getting clubs organized. It is an interesting question for theorists of social activity and movements and so on as to how organizations like this come into being. I'm inclined to think that if we're talking about a really broad-based political organization there has to be some kind of motivation on the part of the people themselves to come together.

In any event, the clubs were around, and others began to form and so on. And some of these clubs surprisingly have long periods of dormancy and then they come back into life and then they go out again and so on. Take the Santa Ana club, for example. I don't know when it first started, but it's been up and down several times to my knowledge. It's probably twenty years old now, and it's had periods when it's had good activity and periods when it was nothing. Somehow it continues to exist in one way or another; the idea continues to persist.

The basic concept of CDC was that it was an association of persons who were interested in political activity and carrying out that political activity through the means of the Democratic party. In time the word "volunteer" came to be used to describe the typical type of a CDC person. The term "volunteer" is not an altogether good term, because much of what people have always done in political life has been on a volunteer basis, in the

sense that they don't get compensated for it. Even those whom you would call, for example, "professional" or at least "nonvolunteer" don't get paid for doing what they do, at least in terms of a salary. They get compensation maybe in other ways. Some do it basically because of expected or hoped-for reward of some nature. Some kind of personal aggrandizement. Maybe they want to be appointed to be a judge or to some other patronage position; there are not many of those in California, so we don't have that kind of motivating factor. Others do it because they like to have access to people in power. There's a large contingent in political activity of people who just want to be able to walk up to the governor or the speaker of the assembly or somebody or other and chat with him as though he were an old friend. So they are willing to contribute time and effort and money. I think the thing that distinguished the typical CDC person was that his motivation, or the reward that he sought, was in seeing that certain types of governmental activities were brought about or certain candidates who would further those activities were elected. In other words, he wanted to have a certain type of policy or a certain type of governmental action which he considered desirable put into effect, and he was willing to work for that. In the end his satisfaction came from seeing that policy put into effect. Now, that of course is a kind of abstracted view. It's

obviously much more complicated. There were lots of people in CDC who found this the means to participate for various kinds of rewards. In fact, one of the arguments, or one of the explanations, for CDC's disintegration could be that much of its early leadership did in fact go on to get certain types of rewards like--I don't know, there must be a hundred judges around the state that were at one time active in CDC. I can name you five or six in Orange County. And those people were good people. They were effective people, and they were taken out of the stream by receiving those kinds of rewards. So there were always people who saw in this activity some means to further advancement. Maybe they wanted to run for office, and this was a way of building some kind of base. But, I think, fundamentally, if you have to get the pristine [CDC] person, it was one who wanted to see what in his view was the right kind of government policies and actions taken, and if that were accomplished, either by direct action in terms of influencing the policy or by the choice of candidate as instrument, that was satisfaction enough.

James Wilson tried to deal with this problem in this book he wrote, The Amateur Democrat. I think that's the title of it. He was then at Redlands, as I recall. He's now at Harvard. He's gone on to bigger things. He did a fairly good job of trying to make these kinds of

distinctions and anyone interested in this subject ought to look at that book. I guess it must have been written about 1963 or 1964, somewhere in that order.

Basically that was the type of people and the kind of thinking that animated much of CDC in its early days and through much of its history. It explains, for example, the preoccupation that CDC had with the question of issues which came in time to be a very controversial thing. Although there are people who said in the early days that the question of issues was not a very significant factor, that it was more a matter of getting people elected to office, I'm inclined to think that it was always there, that it only seemed not to have been there when once it became controversial.

Another factor, of course, was, I think, the desire to get the Democratic candidates elected. I think, if my theory is correct, that this was a manifestation of the more basic driving force, namely, of getting the right kind of public policy. But it was so clear that the only way that anything was going to be done, because in those days, in the mid-fifties, there were no such things as direct demonstrations or voting-with-your-feet kind of activities that the younger generation resorts to these days--to bring these into being. This was a very essential concern.

Now, this manifested itself particularly in terms

of how to deal with the question of the cross-filing in the primary. This was of course one of the legacies from the [Hiram] Johnson era in which anybody could run in anybody's primary that wanted to, and I guess it was fairly typical for most candidates to [cross-] file, and there was no requirement as to party identification on the ballot. This condition still prevails in Wisconsin. The question was how to deal with this. So one of the first objectives of course was to offset this, because by and large this provision worked to the advantage of the Republicans because they were the party in power and incumbency always counts for a certain amount in elections, and if people were unable to distinguish among the candidates as to their party affiliations, why, they were inclined to vote for the incumbent. So the device of the pre-primary endorsement came into being as a way of offsetting this. Of course, in time, once the Democrats got into office, the problem was solved very easily by legislation, of just abolishing that provision in the law. But in the early days that couldn't be done, the Republicans weren't about to do it, so how did you deal with it? Well, the device of the pre-primary endorsement became then a central type of activity, the theory being that if you couldn't identify it on the ballots you could get a group of Democrats together and they could, by some kind of action endorsing the candidate, say in effect to

the electorate, "This man is a Democrat, and he is favored." Now, some people have always objected to this, and it's a little hard to understand altogether the reasoning that goes into their objections. There have always been endorsements of some kind. Labor organizations have endorsed for many, many years; and presumably what they do is say by this to the membership of the unions, "This is the man whom we favor." The same kind of thing is just broadened out to include all of the party members by the device of the pre-primary endorsements.

Many people have said that pre-primary endorsements tend to be divisive. They argue against them on the grounds that they are divisive, but it has always seemed to me that this is begging the issue because the thing that is likely to be most divisive is not the pre-primary endorsement but the primary itself. There can be nothing more divisive than a primary. And I like to point out to people who argue with me on it that in 1968 we had less endorsements, pre-primary endorsements, than we've had at any time since my experience in the state. Yet never did we have a more divisive primary than 1968. The thing that makes for divisiveness, of course, is the general situation such as prevailed in 1968, and not the act of endorsement per se. In fact, in many cases, I think if the endorsements were handled properly, it would reduce the divisiveness. Now, it's difficult to do, and lots

of the endorsements were characterized by stacking of conventions and other forms of chicanery which is likely to prevail in those situations. But if an endorsement, I think, were handled properly it would tend to reduce the divisiveness rather than to create or enhance it.

In any event, a primary can be surely as divisive, and I think you can make a case out that it could possibly be even more so.

In fact, I was interested in reading a biography of Harding not long ago, Warren Harding. It was interesting that when he was first running for state office in Ohio, the "bosses" in those days, including the one in Cincinnati, were both very much upset by this newfangled law about these primaries, because it tended to destroy what they looked upon as the party unity or discipline. In other words, they were using in 1908, as I recall, the arguments against the primary that people now tend to use against the pre-primary endorsement. I suppose if you carry it further you could say elections are divisive.

But in the mid-fifties this seemed to most people--I think it was the general agreement--that it was a way around the problem of the party affiliation problem on the ballot. And so it was generally accepted. And so CDC began to endorse. Also at that time it was the organization that included most everybody, and so there was no problem about there being other groups that weren't

fully in sympathy with it. It became in time a kind of an article of faith which people stuck to and others argued against. It became also a more difficult problem to handle once we began to have incumbents, because it was very difficult for an endorsing convention not to endorse an incumbent, just like it's quite unlikely that a national convention would not renominate an eligible president for office.

TAYLOR: This happened with the CRA.

GANT: They faced the same problem, and in the end I guess they had all the same things and were unable to solve them, either.

As to the organization of CDC, at the base there were the clubs, and then there were councils, and then there was the state organization. Now, in a strange kind of way, which no one who was not directly involved will ever quite understand, I think, since you more or less had to absorb it, as an individual you were a member of all three organizations. As a club you sent representatives to councils and you also sent them to the state organization. So the state really considered itself to be an organization of individuals. You were a member as an individual, but you had to be a member of a club to qualify, so to speak. The council thing, which came as a later development, was looked upon as an intermediate step between the club and the state organization, and in some places worked

very well and in others was never quite successful. After a while it tended to be overlapping. For example, there might be a council in a congressional district and councils in the assembly districts and in some cases senatorial councils. We never had that problem so much in the south as they did in the north because they always had had overlapping senatorial and assembly districts and congressional districts. In the early days there was just one from each county. That isn't quite true. In the north they combine some of the counties because they were small. There were 58 counties, 57 counties and 40 members of the senate, so they had to combine some. It got awful, kind of messy. Whenever they attempted to structure a council in any one of these jurisdictions, why, it became a bit too much, because it depleted the leadership, and it got to be a kind of bureaucracy with nothing to do--over-organization.

At the state level, the state organization consisted first of all of the annual convention, which took place in the spring of each year, and then a board of directors, which was made up of one director from each congressional district, plus officers who were elected at the statewide convention, and were elected on a statewide basis. The directors were elected at the convention by the delegations from his district present at the convention. The directors then had the power of appointing an

assembly district representative, as he was called. That was a kind of patronage operation. The board of directors met about once each three months in between conventions. These meetings usually took place--about every other one took place--in Fresno because it was the most centrally located, but they were varied from Los Angeles and San Jose; Sacramento we met in once, and San Francisco, and so on.

The question of money, at least in the later years, was always a very prominent one. The state organization was financed basically by two means: one, a levy on each individual club member, initially of one dollar; and, secondly, through income from the convention, primarily from a registration fee. Though there were certain expenses attached to the convention, there were always additional monies. So in the heyday of 1963, 1964, 1962 and so on, we would come out of a convention with $15,000-$20,000. There were efforts made to raise money through contributions or basically through what was known as the "Champions" program in the early sixties which was successful for a couple of years in raising--or I guess the most they must have ever made was $8,000 or $9,000 or $10,000. Most of this money was consumed in maintaining two offices, one in San Francisco and one in L.A., and a certain number of staff people in each of these offices plus other organizational expenses. In only a few elections was there enough money available to the state organization to make any real contributions

to political campaigns.

One thing the state organization did in each election was to have what was known as a slate mailer, and this was used in the primary and was part of the pre-primary endorsing procedure. The state printed for each jurisdiction, and it got to be kind of a messy proposition after a while, but it was a card or a folded flyer which would have all the endorsed candidates on it. And it was identified with CDC and would be sent to the voters, say, Saturday before the election or something like that. The ideal time was to have it arrive on Monday, you see, if you could work it with the local post office. The state organization paid for the printing of these, but each local group financed its own mailing costs, so it wasn't always sent out. But for a number of elections this was used and although it's always a question as to how effective these things are, candidates did seek to get on it, and in fact that was one of the levers that was used in trying to make the endorsement meaningful. It was also bitterly opposed by others, people who were not included but always argue that this was a denial of the free primary and all this sort of nonsense. But that was the kind of argument that would prevail or surround this type of activity.

The primary activity in even-numbered years at the conventions was of course the endorsement of statewide

offices. Not having been at any prior to 1960, I don't know all the details. There was, I guess, in 1956 the famous one in which Yorty, being denied the nomination for the U.S. Senate position, castigated the convention with his famous remark about the convention being stacked, rigged and something or another--I forget the phrase. Yes, "stacked, packed and rigged," or something of that sort. Then there was the one in 1958 down in Long Beach, when the thing that really stirred up the delegates was the race between Peter Odegard and Clair Engle. I only know this by hearsay, but it must have been the kind of thing that was very difficult to deal with, because in Odegard there was a candidate who was really the CDC type of candidate. I mean, here was a very literate person, very highly educated, close to the Stevenson ideal. On the other hand, you had Engle, a kind of an attractive person and basically a very sound person from a Democratic viewpoint, good campaigner. We haven't had really as good a campaigner around in the party, I think, since--but a man who was a kind of a professional politician and one whom the regulars obviously wanted in, and who in the end prevailed. It was not unlike the 1960 national convention with the Stevenson and Kennedy situation.

In 1960, there wasn't anything on the statewide because there was no state election that year. In 1962, of course, there was just a repeat in terms of the state

except for the senatorial [races], and for that Richard Richards was the odds-on favorite. I can't recall whether there was anybody else that even opposed Richards at that convention. I was the manager of the 1964 convention held in Long Beach. In some ways this was a unique convention and kind of a peak of conventions. I mentioned 1960 as having been, I think, one of the best of the conventions in the sense of being educational: 1964 probably was in a category by itself in terms of the drama that was involved. Engle was then coming up, presumably for his second term. But he'd had a brain tumor in the previous year and was apparently incapable of running, but his wife protected him very assiduously and it was not known for sure what the situation was. So the question of whether he would be available, whether he could run, was before the convention. I guess one of the more taut moments of the convention was when, on a Sunday morning, as I recall, a woman who had been active in CDC, had been secretary--Edna Weisbart--came and asked if they could plug in a telephone to Washington to have Engle speak to the convention. That posed some fairly delicate problems to deal with, but we finally agreed to it. He did call, and it was obvious from the call that he was not in a condition to run.

[Alan] Cranston was seeking the nomination. [Stanley] Mosk had indicated that he might, but at the last minute

did not do so, and Jimmy [James] Roosevelt was there. Now, many people supposed, of course, that Cranston would be the odds-on favorite because of his previous connection with CDC, having been its first president and, of course, then later on [state] controller and having throughout the state one of the more active patronage operations in the inheritance tax appraisers. Roosevelt then came onto the scene quite late. But as it so happened, the convention came very, very close to nominating Roosevelt. It was really an amazing situation. The man by his personality almost carried it. If he had done more work ahead of time with the delegations and so on, he would have gotten the nomination. Cranston finally won. Engle clearly was out of the picture.

Now, when you talk about the divisiveness of pre-primary endorsements, there was a case I think where the thing worked--or would have worked effectively. It didn't in the end because of [Pierre] Salinger's coming into the picture. Had not Salinger come in, it would have worked I think quite well because Roosevelt concluded, while at the convention, that he would not seek the nomination. When he came he was not prepared to make that kind of a commitment. In other words, he wasn't prepared to say, "If I don't get the nomination, I won't run." But during the course of the convention he was, I think, quite surprised at the manner in which

it was conducted. He was quite impressed with it, so much so that he felt that it was such a good thing and that he'd been given every opportunity, that it was only right and fair that he just withdraw. And so I think it was at the convention proper, he stated that he would not run. The Mosk situation was more complicated, and there were other pressures brought on him not to run. So, as we came out of the convention we had the one candidate, namely, Cranston. The fact that Salinger later came into it sort of pricked the bubble, and it all went to pieces. The failure of CDC to carry that primary in the face of the Salinger thing was one of those tangible things that you can put your finger on in tracing CDC's downhill slide. I'm going to come back to this later.

To go back to the discussion of the conventions, in the odd year they were more heavily devoted to the discussion of issues. Although we still had issue discussions in the even years, they were overshadowed by the endorsement question. There are some people who took the view that issues came into the CDC picture because in 1959 or sometime somebody said, "Well, what are we going to do at the convention? We don't have any endorsements to make," and then they got onto the idea of having an issues conference, which was always looked upon as being a little bit separate from the convention. I don't know whether that's a valid explanation of how

issues came into being or not, but in any event they began to come along in the late fifties. Now, in 1960 there was the question of these various programs that the governor was much interested in getting through, particularly those that had to go before the voters in June, and so the convention was used as a means of enlightening the members of the organization in the interest of getting them to work for the issues.

At this point I need to distinguish between "resolutions" and "issues." From the very outset the convention had always passed resolutions. A resolution was something that someone drew up, and it came to a committee. It was accepted and maybe modified and then went to the floor of the convention and was voted up or down, or maybe amended on the floor. It was recognized that this was not a very effective way of dealing with these because these things were unorganized and were likely to be erratic in the sense that anyone with a pet theory or pet approach to a problem could present a resolution. The organization began to get a lot of publicity from this. The most famous one of course was the one, which was supposed to have been passed originally in 1958 or 1959, favoring the recognition of Red China. It's a little hard to put it all together, but I think if you can get back in the records, and if you talk to some of the people that were in leadership then, it turns out that that

resolution was never really passed. It was considered not passed. But in some of the public newspapers over the years it became a kind of a mythology about CDC that everytime we got together, we passed a resolution about the recognition of Red China. It got to be, after a while, a kind of a standard operating procedure on the part of the leadership that they took all kinds of steps to see that we didn't, which was really too bad because it was a real, genuine question. Of course, in the early 1960s you just didn't talk about it. I think today you could pass it, and it wouldn't really cut much ice, but in those days it was kind of the epitome of radicalism or something.

The issues conference was designed to deal with questions on a deeper basis and a broader basis and a more systematic basis than resolutions. We went through various phases of this; it was always a question of how to really deal with [issues], and various kinds of formats and ways of getting at them were tried at the various conventions. The idea was that after the discussions, policy papers would be drafted, and these would be passed upon by the convention. These would be supposedly more encompassing and broader than resolutions would be, and would deal with the whole area. You'd try to have what we called resource people, or experts in the subject, come and give background, and that kind of thing. Then it got to a point where the effort was made to have a panel of experts draft these in

advance and have them in the hands of the clubs for discussion before they came to the convention.

None of this of course was ever completely satisfactory, which may be a little bit beside the point, in that the real point was that the effort was made to do it. It's an extraordinarily difficult thing to have groups deal with complicated social questions like tax programs of one kind and another or economic problems or drugs or things like this. Here was a group of people, nonexpert, not only in the subject matter, but even in the process of dealing with these things, coming together trying to make something out of it. It's no wonder that many of these efforts were shallow, dealing in kind of simplistic answers. For example, in my own view, too often the answer that would evolve out of some of these discussions was that the government ought to spend more money on it. Let's take education. Well, the federal government ought to spend more money on education. That's an answer which has kind of been an article of faith since the New Deal days among Democrats. And we did, you know. That's one thing the Johnson administration finally did--it began spending on all these programs. Well, it hasn't solved the problems, and it's not so easily solved by simply spending money. Just as we found in the war on poverty, you don't solve poverty by spending money. The problems of poverty are much deeper and psychological and

don't lend themselves to that kind of a solution solely. So it seemed to me often that the one sure answer that you could get a group of Democrats--not only CDC Democrats but any Democrats--to always endorse was to have the government spend some more money and that will solve the problem.

But all this aside, there was this effort, and I don't know of any comparable situation where it has existed. Now, in some ways I think we're getting to it in some of the things that are going on at the present time in terms of all the teach-ins and so on that we've developed during the Vietnam War issue and which now appear to be broadening out. Taking one example, the Environmental Day that is projected for April. And this is something that I'll come back to later on. But in any event, the question of whether one dealt with issues was always of course a controversial thing. Legislators in particular often took the view that it was something that the volunteer groups ought to steer clear of because once again they were divisive, and were matters that ought to be left to the legislators. Issues do tend to divide people. There's no question about it, and in the end it was an issue which kind of delivered the coup de grace to CDC, namely, the war issue, because it couldn't resolve the issue within itself. On the other hand, I don't think that that was any reason not to deal with it. I think the experiment was a good

one. I think in the end that CDC didn't find the answer as to how to solve it, but I think it needs to be, or should be, congratulated for having tried to do so. And if you seek to find one way of distinguishing CDC from ordinary political activity, it would lie in that kind of an effort, I think.

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GANT: Whereas the failure to carry the campaign in 1964 for Cranston was a psychological failure for CDC, I think that the real problem, both in the party and CDC as an element of the party, goes back to 1963. During the first four years of the Brown administration, the party had stayed together and worked effectively. We had gone through the 1962 campaign and had in a sense taken on the best that the Republicans could offer in Richard Nixon. I say that with some tongue in cheek, I guess. Then we began to have a problem of factionalization. And this largely grew out of what I think can only fairly be called--some of the ambitions on the part of [Jesse] Unruh as opposed to [Governor] Brown. There began to be a split in the operation of the party between the legislature and the administration proper. And I think it is a fair statement to say that in 1963 Unruh sought to gain a working control of the CDC organization. The election of directors in that year was largely dominated by contests in many districts between Unruh-backed candidates and non-Unruh candidates, which is the only way I can describe it. There are--and I'm not sure to what extent this is true, but I think there is a certain amount of truth in it--people who were bussed to the convention which in that year, as I recall, took place in Bakersfield, in an

effort to accomplish this. And in the end it failed. A number of the Unruh people were elected, and continued on the board. Some eventually dropped out, but during the next year or two, board meetings were always characterized by people who were considered to be Unruh people and those who were not.

I think what was happening then was what happens to most parties once they arrive at a certain objective. They begin to divide up into various kinds of factions. There was also creeping into the organization a kind of antagonism between incumbent officeholders and legislators, and the volunteers themselves, that is, the CDC people. I guess this is not an uncommon phenomenon. There is a kind of an understandable tendency on the part of an officeholder, once he gets in, to feel that the volunteer group ought not to take positions which would embarrass him, that dealing with issues is something which at best they are going to be amateurish about, and they ought to leave alone; they ought to be available to work when they are needed but they ought not to assert too much, or presume too much influence. I can recall a discussion when the executive director of Americans for Democratic Action described what happened to the Minnesota ADA chapter in 1948, when Hubert Humphrey became mayor of Minneapolis. Humphrey took the view then that ADA was no longer needed, that he was then in office, and it ought to go out of

existence. As a result, the ADA thereafter did not ever have a very effective operation in Minneapolis, despite the fact that Humphrey himself went on to become a vice-president of ADA and a very close, well-thought-of person in ADA up until 1968 when the war issue divided the two of them. It's the same way, I think, with CDC. That kind of feeling was creeping in all over the state. It was most apparent in the opposition between Unruh and the governor, and it was also there in the Cranston-Salinger situation. I think that in the end CDC came to look upon Salinger as a reasonable candidate. He certainly was right in some of the things that CDC stood very strongly for, particularly Proposition 14, which probably cost Salinger the election that year.

TAYLOR: That was the fair housing issue?

GANT: Yes. He took a strong stand on it, and I think that probably beat him. The primary, of course, was a very close thing, and I suspect there were two things that probably cost Cranston that election. One was the ITA [inheritance tax appraisers] situation which he ought not to have let happen, and why someone with his general background and feeling ever did let it happen, I have never understood. I have always thought that Cranston was less than honest and less than straightforward in his position with respect to ITA, because it was a patronage thing and a lot of them were just not competent for

that job. I don't think there was anything corrupt about it, but it was an anachronistic situation, and Cranston ought to have moved to change that system. He ought to have gotten rid of it. Another thing was one which I think he could not have done anything about-- namely, Mrs. [Jacqueline] Kennedy's entry into the campaign in the last week, and her endorsement of Salinger. Normally I am of the opinion that endorsements by one person or another in a campaign are of minimal influence. I think that was an exception to the rule, because it was a very special circumstance. She is a very special person, and I think that her endorsement influenced that campaign quite decisively. In any event, at the conclusion of the campaign, CDC was thrown into a kind of spasm of self-examination.

TAYLOR: This was their first defeat, in terms of endorsed candidates?

GANT: Yes, at the state level. Now the question of the record of that is a complicated one. We used to put together all kinds of statistics about how many of our endorsed candidates won and that kind of thing, but the picture was never as completely clear as the statistics would appear. For example, if you endorse an incumbent, the possibilities of his winning are very good, and so your statistical record looks much better than it actually is. I mean the real test would have been where you

endorsed someone against an incumbent, and your endorsed candidate went on to win. That would have been the decisive evidence of influence. But things are never very clear, and it's like what causes someone to win an election and what causes someone to lose. You can never really pinpoint these things. All you can do is to get indications, and no one can ever prove one way or the other when it's all over exactly what did cause an election to go in the way it did.

But in any event, CDC made an attempt to do some examining, and there was a committee formed of which I was co-chairman with another man by the name of Roy Greenaway, who is now--I guess his title is legal counsel to Cranston. He was an ITA at the time in Fresno, and had been long active, much more than I had, in the organization. This was known as the Gant-Greenaway committee, and we held a number of hearings during that summer and into the fall and wrote a report making certain suggestions, intended to improve the organization. In the end most of these were rejected because they became, somewhat to my surprise at least, all caught up in local inter-organizational campaigns in strange ways which I had not expected and which were somewhat of a revelation to me. I mean, in local situations candidates took sides on these and campaigned for or against them and used them as means of attacking their opponent or in other ways

furthering their own ends, so that in the end most of these things became kind of campaign issues and were never acted upon. A few of them did get passed.

As a result of this we set up the offices of what were called senior vice-presidents, or vice-president north and south. This was the first time they came into the picture. There had been regional vice-presidents previous to that, but this was the first time that these came in.

This report was acted upon in the 1965 convention which was held in Sacramento. I was elected vice-president from the south and Greenaway was elected from the north. I don't know that either of us had any great desire or motivation for the jobs, but in the end we ended up with them. I'm sure that some of my unfriendly critics would not accept that statement, but I think it's probably an accurate one.

It was, of course, at that convention that Simon Casady was elected president and that the Vietnam War issue first came to the fore. It came to the fore because the convention was held in mid-March, and we had started the bombing of North Vietnam, as I recall, on the 15th of February. So it had become a significant issue.

The question of how Casady came to run for the presidency has been a subject of much discussion in the ensuing controversy, but I think the record is fairly

clear on this. Tom Carvey, who had been president and was then in his second term, had concluded not to run; and there was not any obvious candidate to take his place. There were three or four around, but there was no one of such stature that he was an obvious kind of a candidate. The governor's office began to be concerned about this because the governor was going to run in 1966, and he wanted to have a good organization in CDC. So it was suggested--and I think the suggestion came from Cranston, I can't be positive about that, but I think it's reasonably true--that they sound out Casady. Casady had just sold his newspaper in El Cajon and was at the time uncommitted to anything. He had been in a very conservative area, had been a liberal editor, had written strong liberal editorials, and I think was known to Cranston more than to anyone else. And so, if I'm not mistaken, it was Cranston that made the first contact to sound him out. And I think that it just hadn't occurred to Casady at the time that he should run, but then the more he thought about it the more he kind of liked the idea.

There were further contacts with the governor's office; there was certainly encouragement. There were people who were active in the organization that had ties through, for example, inheritence tax appraisers, and others who actively campaigned on his behalf, and there was no question among the people who were knowledgeable

about the organization that Casady was, so to speak, the governor's candidate, and the others were their own candidates.

Well, there were many things to recommend Casady. One, he had the financial means to do this. He had his own private plane. He was liberal. He was attractive. He was a very attractive man, as a matter of fact. A handsome man, quite articulate. And he began campaigning very actively up and down the state for the job. He wasn't elected on the first ballot. It took two ballots to do it. And so he was elected, and as I indicated, Greenaway and I were elected senior vice-presidents.

The beginning then looked quite good; it looked as though we might have come through the Cranston-Salinger thing, and of course we had the 1964 election behind us. And on the national scene, things looked quite good. Johnson had the consensus that he sought and so on. But it very quickly began to develop that things were not going to be so good, primarily because of the war. Casady began to visit clubs and began to speak against the war. What quickly came out was a philosophy about the role of the organization, and by mid-summer it was clear how Casady felt versus how, for example, I would feel, and some of the others would feel about the role of the organization. He saw it as a kind of a gadfly to criticize and to pressure the rest of the party rather than as a

means by which the party carried out its activities. He always saw himself as a kind of critic of the status quo. We used to have long discussions about the desirability of having an alternative if you were going to criticize, and his view was that that wasn't his role. His role was to create unhappiness and dissatisfaction, and thus arouse [to action] the people who held the positions and were in a position to do something about it. That's a fairly important point, because it's the kind of thing which I think is prevalent in much of the political activity which has since transpired. I mean, much of the demonstrations are of that character, you know. You don't like the war so you protest against it. Now, what do you do about it? Well, that's the responsibility of the guy in power. This overlooks the problem that the man in that position may be hemmed and locked in. He has other pressures on him as well, and so you don't offer him any solutions. You just say, "What you're doing is all wrong; let's do something right." But you don't tell him what that is, and you don't solve these other pressures that he's subject to.

On the other hand, though I didn't think so at the time--I do now--the basic position was right and I suspect that in the end Casady made a contribution and CDC made a contribution toward changing the thinking of the country about the war. It's such a complex problem. It's very

hard to put it all together. I think I was wrong then about my view of the war. I think Casady was wrong in the technique he used to try to deal with it, as were many others in CDC. So in a sense it was a kind of a situation in which two wrongs came together--on opposite tracks, so to speak. In other words, we were on different tracks, and we were both right and we were both wrong. I don't know whether I completely convey the idea, and I hate to think how this would come out in the transcipt, but that was the kind of situation we came to have.

Now, whether our basic concepts of the role of the organization, the function of it, were right, I'm quite sure that some of the techniques that Casady used were wrong in the sense that unbridled criticism of the president, and of others, was a wrong way to go about it. In the end, that negated much of what he was trying to do and did in fact destroy much of what he was trying to do.

In any event, by April, I guess, I began to get letters from various people around relating what was happening, and protesting it. At first I was inclined to sort of pass these off. And then, of course, things began to get in the newspapers. The first of this came from Petaluma. Things began to get progressively worse as the summer wore on. By September, people all over the state were beginning to be concerned about it.

You'll probably find in my file a letter--I don't know whether it's in that file or not--from John Moss* to Casady. Moss, of course, is a congressman from up in Sacramento. He's as bad as Casady is, you know. He's a vitriolic kind of person, and he wrote Casady a very scorching letter about the whole thing. And others, much calmer people, began to get involved.

The first inkling I had of concern in the governor's office was when I was invited to a meeting down in the governor's office in the old state building in L.A., at which his L.A. staff men, Dick Klein and Don Bradley, were present. Hugo Fisher, who had been a senator from San Diego, and was then director of conservation, or whatever they call that supercabinet department, came in and sat in on the discussion. Phil Dreyer from San Bernardino was in on it. The governor's staff wanted to know if there wasn't something that could be done about stopping Casady from making all of these statements. And the meeting [ended] with no conclusion because I was convinced that we weren't going to by this time be able to do anything. But I wasn't disposed to think that the thing was all that serious. I thought it was serious, but I didn't think it was going to be quite as bad as they were viewing it.

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*John E. Moss, (D) congressman, Third District.

But in any event, I guess it was about a week later when I got a call just prior to a [CDC] board meeting, from our staff man in L.A., Ross Clark, and he read me a letter which he had gotten from Carl Greenberg in the Times, which is now quite a famous letter that the governor had written to Casady. Well, things began to come to a head at that board meeting in September in Fresno. We had an executive committee meeting on Friday evening, as we normally did, and we went through a lot of things; and nothing was said about this until at the end. I believe it was Alan Sieroty, who is now assemblyman from the Hollywood-Beverly Hills* area, said that he thought we ought to bring up this subject. Of course, it had been on everybody's mind. And so then we spent two or three hours in discussion on this, in closed session.

It became quite apparent that the thing was going to be very nasty because Casady's view was, in a sense, that the governor had no business doing this. He also enunciated a certain view about his role in the organization, which was to the effect that he wasn't responsible to the board, that the convention had elected him. If they didn't like him, they could remove him, but they couldn't really tell him what to do as president. A lot of the directors objected to this view, and I think rightly

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*Assemblyman, Fifty-ninth District.

so. I think the president of the organization ought to have a certain latitude in what he does and so on and so forth, that you can't circumscribe him. But on the other hand, there has to be a kind of an understanding and rapport between him and the organization so that there is a reasonable degree of agreement about things. In any event, that meeting broke up with nothing settled and everybody being unhappy about it.

We went into the board meeting the following day, and of course this thing was the first thing that came up. I cannot now recall all of the maneuvering, but in any event we agreed that we would put the thing off for discussion later on in that evening. It was clear that there was going to be a motion of censure or something or other offered. During the day, all kinds of pressures began to build up, and the motion of censure was offered that evening. I don't recall the exact wording. It was an equivocal motion in the sense that it sort of condemned what he was doing and asked him not to do it again, something of that sort. We left the meeting being quite unhappy about it. I was particularly unhappy. The whole thing, I thought, left us about where we were, in kind of a bad situation.

The next morning I got a call from Casady, and he suggested that we have breakfast together. Greenaway was there, and I'm not sure who else. We talked about it, and

the result of that was that it was proposed that the three of us--Casady, Greenaway, and I--go see the governor and try to arrive at some reconciliation with him. I guess Carvey may have been present at that meeting. I'm not sure. In any event, we did, in fact, set up the meeting, which took place about a week or so later at the Sheraton Hotel in Hollywood. Carvey was present; I was present; Greenaway was present; Casady was present, and he brought with him a man named [Harvey] Furgatch who had been active in his campaign for the CDC presidency. The governor was there; Don Bradley was there; I guess there were a couple more of the governor's staff. We spent about two hours in discussion with the result that we came to no resolution of the question.

Meanwhile, there was a group very much of a mind to take some more positive action, and the question about this began to ferment. As I recall, at the [September] Fresno meeting, some provision had been written for a special meeting to be held in October in Los Angeles, and that meeting was called. By this time it was clear that the group was going to move to try to unseat Casady. The provisions of the CDC constitution had never really contemplated this situation. They had some generalized wording about how you removed an officer as most constitutions do. I'm sure the people that wrote it never contemplated that the occasion would arise. So the

question became, what to do? Well, the end solution to this was that they submitted a resolution asking him to resign, and it was generally understood that if he did not resign, then they would in a sense seek at the next meeting to remove him. And for this purpose, it was going to be necessary to have some statement of the reasons for doing so. Well, the resolution failed, as I recall, by a very small margin. I forget the exact numbers at the moment. And so then we presented this document. Now, I think you'll find the document in the papers.

TAYLOR: This is the "charges?"

GANT: Yes. I don't think they called it "charges," but that's what they were. It's about an eight-page document or something like that. Most of the words in there are words that I wrote, though others had had a hand in it and worked on it, obviously. Most of it was put together in the small hours of the morning in the Hollywood--what was that hotel up there? I can't remember now. They state, I think, fairly clearly what the general feeling about it was of those of us who were opposing Si.

Well, we went back to Fresno then in November for this crucial meeting, for the decision. We went through the discussion of this, and rebuttals, and so forth and so on. Of course there had been all kinds of maneuverings back and forth in the interim. Various discussions with directors and efforts to find out where they stood and who would vote for whom, and various kinds of things.

There were a number of incidents. I guess prior to the October meeting there had been the [controversy over the account of the] September board meeting that was written for the CDC newspaper. This controversy is detailed in the ["charges"] document. We had an editor who wrote a story on the [board] meeting; and Si pulled that story and wrote his own version of it, which was obviously a very slanted version.

TAYLOR: The newspaper was the Observer?

GANT: Yes. And which was obviously a very slanted version. And so all these kinds of things were going on. Now a number of things came out of this that were very interesting in terms of human behavior under these kinds of situations. First of all, the constitution required that two-thirds had to vote to remove. And there were some ambiguities in the situation as to whether this meant two-thirds of those present and voting or two-thirds of the full board, and things of this sort, which were fairly legal and technical in nature. Because of this, I think that had the vote been to remove, Si was prepared to go to court to contest the legality of it. He had a lawyer there at the meeting, and they taped--well, I guess we also taped, but then everybody taped--the proceedings. It would make, I think, a very interesting thing if you could get hold of those tapes. I don't know who has them. I would not be surprised if Joyce

Fadem has a copy of those tapes, of the debate and so on that went on.

As in any situation like this, there were people who were committed on both sides, and then there were a large number of undecided people. One of the things that comes out in a situation like that is that there is a certain category of people that just resist having to make that kind of a decision. They don't want to do it. They don't want to have to face up to it. There is another group that enjoys having their arms twisted by both sides, because it makes them the center of attention, and so they hold out to get this kind of attention. And there are other kinds of personal motivations that get involved. People try to improve their own position in some way or other by this vote, gain some kind of a special status out of it as a result of their vote. So there is the group, then, that holds the balance of power, and you never know quite how they're going to jump until the very end. Some flip-flop back and forth, and we would have them for a while and then Casady would have them and you didn't know quite where they would come out in the end.

Well, we failed on the vote by about three, I think, something like that, I forget what. It was a highly emotional and dramatic situation. All that I think you can get on that tape if you can get hold of it.

Well, the decision was taken late Saturday evening, early Sunday morning, in the Hotel California, and then we went into the following day and Sunday over in the Del Webb. Things were very, very bitter. I resigned then as the vice-president and various steps were taken to constrain Casady and one thing and another. And at that point--I think in looking back, that the die was cast, that there was nothing much that could have been done. But it wasn't all that clear at the time. The situation was that a majority of the board had voted to remove, but that wasn't sufficient. So in effect it sort of became that as far as the board was concerned, and I think the organization as a whole, he was a minority president. But you couldn't remove him. It was a very awkward and a very messy kind of situation, and it was clear that nothing had really been solved.

There then came to be what was known as the majority caucus--I guess that term had been used beforehand--those people who had been active in trying to oust [him], who were in effect the majority, but who had not been successful. That group met after the meeting in Fresno and later at various times to discuss what should be done.

TAYLOR: Was this with or without you?

GANT: I was involved in it. I was out of town a couple of times, but most of them I was involved in. One of the things which was actively talked about was a separate

organization. And that might have been possible at the time had a move actually been made. A number of people--and I was among them--favored going in that direction, although I always had a lot of questions about it because it was the kind of route that the Republicans had gone when they had their problems. The [Republican] Assembly broke up and then splintered into three or four other organizations. But that seemed to me the only way out of it. But by and large, I think most of the old-timers, the people that had been in positions of leadership in the organization, couldn't bring themselves to do it. There was a kind of emotional commitment or attachment to CDC, and they just couldn't come to the belief that this was the way out. They kept trying to say, "Well, maybe there's some way we can get Casady out. Let's go to the convention."

Well, of course that year was not a [CDC] election year and there was no constitutional provision for removing a president. So then, if you're going to do it at the convention, how do you do it? Well, the idea was conceived somewhere--and I don't know where now--that what we should do is pass a bylaw which would vacate all offices, not just the presidency, but all offices at that convention and elect new officers. This

was drawn up, and when it became evident that this was going to be pursued, why, Casady took the view that, "Well, okay, if that's what you want to do, we'll solve it a little differently. I'll go before the convention and say 'Give me a vote of confidence, and if you won't give me a vote of confidence, then I shall resign, and then you can elect a new president.'" And, as it turned out, that's what happened.

TAYLOR: Did he feel that he was going to get a vote of confidence, since he suggested this?

GANT: Oh, yes, yes. He thought he would get a vote of confidence. He then actively campaigned for that vote of confidence. Now, the question was, if you deny him a vote of confidence, then you've got to elect another president, and who then is your candidate? A lot of people wouldn't face up to this, but others began to face up to it. I finally concluded to make myself available for the presidency if the vote of confidence didn't go through. Well, I didn't decide to do this until about two or three weeks beforehand. There were some misgivings, but there was no one else evident. Now, there was always the question of whether [Gerald N.] Hill, who had opposed Casady in the 1965 election, whether he would stand for the presidency. He had been out of the country during the whole controversy, in Argentina, and he didn't get back until December. So he was in some

sense kind of removed from all of it, and he did not make any commitments. Many of us supposed that he would probably do so. There was also a very strong feeling on the part of a lot of people that he was not a good man for the job. So that's the condition under which we went to that convention, which was in Bakersfield.

I said previously the 1964 convention was a highly dramatic one, but the 1966 convention in Bakersfield was even more [emotionally distraught].

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE 2

FEBRUARY 19, 1970

GANT: The 1966 [convention] was more emotionally distraught, because it was clearly dominated by this entire proceeding. The crucial session was on Saturday afternoon, and we had agreed upon a certain format under which Casady was to make his statement, and then there was to be a rebuttal by the majority caucus, which was given by Greenaway. Again I think if you could get the tapes of that convention it would be a valuable addition to your collection.

The vote was taken late Saturday afternoon, and as I recall it was reasonably close; but there was a difference of some 30 to 40 [votes]--something of that sort. It was reasonably like 1,040 of "no confidence" and about 980 for. I may be wrong a bit on the figures, but it was something like that.* It was a very close kind of a vote, at which point Si took off his badge and walked out of the hall, and the convention then went on to pass the bylaw change to throw open all the offices, and then of course the question about the election came to the fore.

Hill then very quickly moved into the picture and announced his candidacy. A third candidate also came

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* 1001 to 859.

into the picture, a man by the name of [John] Thorne, a New Leftist--a term just then coming into use--a very effective speaker, as a matter of fact, but very fiery and very radical. He was a law partner of John Stanton, who at that time was an assemblyman from around the lower end of the bay. I forget which town he's from. Stanton had been a very left, liberal member of the legislature, and very unliked in the legislature, and was later in that year to lose the seat. And Thorne was his partner and represented those on the far left who were bitterly opposed to the war.

Saturday night was spent in the campaigning. The whole situation was very, very bitter and very emotional. I felt in some of the caucuses, from some of the more liberal areas, that I was about to be strung up or tarred and feathered or something. Other areas, of course, were just the opposite. I mean when I went to a place like the Alameda area, which is probably the most liberal in the state, why, I felt I was lucky I got out whole. Thorne, of course, got the same kind of treatment when he went to some caucus like San Bernardino or something of that sort. In the end Hill got I guess a majority of the votes, and I forget exactly how the others came out. I had something like 400 as I recall. I forget what Thorne had. In any event, that's the way we came out of the convention.

In a superficial way things were kind of papered over, but I think that unquestionably in retrospect there was nothing really very much solved, that the divisions were too deep, that there was not really any hope for the organization, and the divisions continued on the board between the two groups. The board meetings thereafter became kind of catfights, and finally in the following September a group of the people left the board, and at that point things in the organization began to fall apart much more rapidly.

The 1968 campaign came along, and, of course, CDC took the position of supporting McCarthy and, I think, did a fairly effective job in that campaign along with non-CDC people who were committed to McCarthy. Of course, they completely alienated themselves from most party activists after the [Democratic] convention by voting to support the write-in campaign for McCarthy. But I think, as I know the organization at the moment, it still has pockets of activity, but it's reduced in many areas to small numbers of clubs and I think is largely reduced in numbers to say 10,000 at the outside. The whole thing, I think [was that] it became a one-issue type of organization, and one in which people with strong commitments continued to work together, but without having any influence outside of their own groups. That's a kind of perhaps natural rise and fall of volunteer

groups. Not many groups inside or outside of the large party structures are able to survive effectively over many long periods of time. It isn't that they go out of existence. The ability of an organization to persist long after its effectiveness is over is truly remarkable. I had occasion recently in the library at Irvine to look in a directory of organizations and, lo and behold, I find that the Greenback party still has a chairman and a mailing address. Some man up in Seattle, Washington is chairman of the Greenback Party of the United States, and he has an address--I presume it's his home or something. A hundred years after the Greenback party has ceased to be a factor in the political life in this country, it continues to exist. So I think CDC is going on for a long time, but whether it is going to ever be effective again I very much doubt. That, I guess then, is the story.

TAYLOR: Did the 1965 resignation on your part and the resignation of Casady mark the end of more or less your active participation in CDC?

GANT: Yes.

TAYLOR: Do you attend the club meetings at all now?

GANT: Oh, I go to club--there have been some other attempts to form organizations, and I was involved in an effort to get something going outside. One group up in the Central Valley started in the fall of 1967 and then a group of which I was president started in February of

1968, called Democrats of Southern California. There's also one in northern California. I was president of the Democrats of Southern California up until last fall when I resigned simply because I finally had come to the conclusion that there just is not enough enthusiasm and energy to make the idea work. In other words, it was the residue of a number of clubs which had been active and had been in CDC but which had become really kind of ossified, I guess. It was ineffective, and I could see no way in which to make it effective. I spent a lot of time and effort trying to do so. But the state of the party is such at the moment that I don't think efforts like this are going to solve things. I don't know what the answer is.

I think perhaps we are going to have to go through some "wandering in the wilderness" until we have expurgated various kinds of inter-party divisions and develop a program which will have appeal for people to find individuals who can articulate this and get people to follow it. Basically we were kind of bankrupt in terms of ideas. As I see the situation, the Democratic party, at least in the last 30 or 40 years, has been the innovating party in American political life. And we reached the high points of this probably in some of the Roosevelt days. We have been kind of drawing on the ideas that were developed in those New Deal areas ever since. We've kind of exhausted

our bank account of ideas. Much of what [Lyndon] Johnson did was kind of a culmination of the New Deal. It was taking the ideas that had first been developed then and bringing them to the final fruition, and now there isn't much left. There's got to be a new approach to meet some of the problems that are coming. I've felt for a number of years that we've completed the liberal agenda that was developed in the thirties, and now we've got to find a new approach. In effect, what the country's done is put the Republicans in charge for a while while we Democrats reorganize, regroup, and develop what is necessary to take the country on after this period of trouble that we're now in, emotional trouble and so forth. I think there's nothing we can really do until we've had time to work these things through.

I think, for example, in this coming election this fall we're going to take one hell of a licking, far more than any of my friends in the party are likely to admit.

TAYLOR: Do you think there's any chance in the Senate?

GANT: I think there's an outside chance but not a very good one. I think that there is a strong conservative wave in the country moving that hasn't yet reached its crest. [George] Murphy, you know, is really nothing very much as a person. Well, he's a kind of a nice guy, and he hasn't made anybody particularly mad, and I think he'll be the beneficiary of it. [John] Tunney is not a bad guy,

but he doesn't send people very much. He's got a little of the Kennedy image, but that's not going to help him a great deal this year. George Brown is a very fine man, a very good man, but unfortunately he's got an image which says he's a kind of a leftist guy, you know. He's of course been very strong against the war. He's not going to have the money that's necessary to do it. He'd make a hell of a good senator, just a hell of a good senator. He's a very good man, a very honest person, and very reasonable. But I don't think he's got too great a possibility of winning. I think that Reagan is going to beat Unruh, and I think that probably then Unruh's going to drop out, which is kind of a pity, because Unruh is a capable guy.

TAYLOR: This is an interesting point. Some observers of California politics feel that California has a tendency to make a politician who loses office sort of drop from sight. And in this case if Unruh is defeated, well, he's really taking a chance, isn't he, to run for governor this year?

GANT: He's made a decision. I don't know when he made it, but it's clear that he made the decision, that he's going for the governorship and if he loses that, why, he's without any kind of a political base. And, my own guess is, and I have no knowledge of this of any kind, but my own guess is that, reading the tea leaves, he's going to

drop out of politics; and he's going into some kind of a business thing. I think the arrangements with that are sort of already made.

I think we're going to come up with fewer seats in the legislature. Some of my friends who are tied up with the legislature tell me that things don't look so bad, and they do this and that with the seats, but I think they're kidding themselves. They're too close to it. We're going to lose at least three or four seats in the assembly. It won't be quite so bad in the [state] senate because there aren't so many up.

TAYLOR: So you're going to end up gerrymandered again.

GANT: Well, that doesn't really bother me. You know, everybody worries about that, but I'm kind of an iconoclast as far as this districting is concerned. Sure, the Republicans are going to do what they can to make things safe, but there's only so much they can do, because once they've tried to take away Republicans from a good Republican district to put in with some Democrats to make another Republican district, that guy over there is going to object, you see. So I think they're limited in how far they can go, and, secondly, in the end, it always sort of changes anyway, you know. The Republicans did it in 1950 and we licked them in the late fifties. We did it in 1960, and they licked us in the late sixties, you see. So I think they'll do it again, and we'll come back

in the seventies. This gerrymandering is a kind of temporary thing. But in the end it doesn't keep you from getting back in. It's kind of superficial.

There's no question but it has all kinds of influences in the thinking of politicians. Go and listen to these speeches, of which I've listened to thousands, and one thing that everybody always brings up is this business about how if we lose the legislature in 1970 we'll be out of office for ten years. Well, I don't think it's true. I think we'll be out of office until we get such a program and a slate of candidates that we can appeal to the voters. And I think we'll do that. But it's going to take some time.

This is true also on the national level. I think that we'll probably lose seats in the House. I don't know whether we'll lose control of the House. We may well lose control of the Senate because we have so many Democrats up, you see. We've come up in this year with about 25 out of the 33 Democrats that are facing [re-election], and I think all the Republicans are in safe. The Democrats aren't. So we may lose control of the Senate. But it's just a condition, I think, that there's really nothing you can do about. It's just that the cycles are such that it's going to take time to work itself out.

Now, it may well be that we're now developing in the country a different type of political process in the

activities of the young people. I think that this Environmental Day that is now set for April 22, or whenever, may be a crucial point in this. In some ways I'm inclined to think that the peace demonstrations last fall were very, very significant. I think it was a magnificent achievement, those couple of days that they had, particularly the one in October. Now, of course, they had the war issue, which is a very peculiar issue. But if they can do the same thing with the environmental question, pollution question, that they did with the war, I think that will be very, very significant. It's a kind of an outside-the-party thing, and it's an approach which may have far-reaching portents for the future in terms of how you go about doing things. I think it remains to be seen whether you can get people as concerned about a thing like pollution as you can about a war or something of that sort. I don't know. But I think it's surely worth watching and seeing what happens.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE 1

JULY 21, 1970

TAYLOR: Let's begin with a discussion of the 1962 election. That was the year that Nixon ran for governor. I'd particularly like to cover your work on the Richards-Kuchel senatorial campaign. You were county chairman for State Senator Richards at the time, weren't you?

GANT: Yes. I guess I can sum that up by saying that was pretty much a lost cause from the outset. Richards had had within the Democratic party a very appealing image, and particularly to those of us who had been in CDC. He'd been himself a strong CDC man. And when he decided to run for senator there was considerable enthusiasm within the organization for it, but it was quite clear once I got involved in the campaign that the enthusiasm did not extend beyond a small working group within the party, that the larger members of the party were not particularly moved by Richards, nor obviously, as the election showed, was the electorate at large. The whole thing came to kind of a miserable end, because the end of that election campaign took place in the context of the Cuban missle crisis. Kuchel, being in the Senate, received whatever benefit there would be from that kind of a crisis. And so any possibility of a good showing that Richards might have been able to make was kind of knocked into a cocked

hat when that missile crisis came along, the Cuban crisis. On the other hand, I think that he would never have made a very good showing anyway. Kuchel was just too strong, particularly with the electorate as a whole. And it was always the case, during the sixties, as far as Kuchel was concerned, that in any general election he would win. He had trouble within his own party, as was finally demonstrated when he lost to [Max] Rafferty in 1968. But with the electorate generally, Kuchel was very, very strong.

That about sums it up, and that's about all I can tell you. We had certainly the usual activities and so on and so forth. But it was not a very outstanding campaign or one which generated much enthusiasm.

TAYLOR: In Orange County.

GANT: In Orange County, yes. I think that's probably true statewide. There were certain areas of Los Angeles for which he had considerable appeal and so on. A lot of good people worked in the campaign and put a certain amount of effort into it, but I think anybody that's really honest would now admit, including Richards probably, that it was a lost cause from the outset.

TAYLOR: Now I'd like to turn for a minute to some of the political figures in the CDC organization that sort of grew up with it.

GANT: I presume this part of it is not going to be made

public for some period.

TAYLOR: If you prefer, yes.

GANT: I think it would be more valuable if I put that restriction on it.

TAYLOR: Okay. That can be done. Because I would like to talk about [Alan] Cranston and [Jesse] Unruh and Stanley Mosk.

GANT: Well, shall we start with Cranston? I take it what you want is my reaction to them in a personal way?

TAYLOR: Yes, and to their work in CDC.

GANT: I don't think you can say that I was ever very close to any of the names that you mentioned. I probably knew Cranston better than the others. My impression of Cranston is that he's a fairly intelligent man, surely conscientious, but he has very little ability to turn people on, so to speak, or to use the term of the day, he doesn't have any "charisma." He obviously wanted from way back to be a United States senator, and I think it extremely fortunate that he finally was able to achieve that, because I think he makes a pretty good senator. I didn't know him in the early days of CDC when he was an officer still in the CDC. And so I don't know quite how to evaluate his contribution to CDC. He obviously was a moving force in it, but by no means, I think, a dominant force. Other people contributed, I think, a great deal more to the original idea and to its evolution.

I suspect people like [State] Senator George Miller really did more intellectually towards its birth than Cranston did. But I think, on the other hand, Cranston put a lot of effort into it because he had the time available and the financial means to do so. I think that as a result of this he got considerable experience and acceptance around the state, and I think has done a reasonably good job in the offices that he's held. But I don't think he's ever going to set the world on fire. And that's just the way the ball bounces, as far as he's concerned.

TAYLOR: Do you think he was using the CDC as a vehicle for his own advancement?

GANT: Oh, in one sense, but in no derogatory sense. Alan, I think, is a very honest man. In other words, I don't think he would set out consciously and in a Machiavellian way to use an organization. I don't think he has that kind of personality or approach to things. That's the kind of thing that Unruh could do, would do, tried to do, but I don't think Cranston would do it. Now I think that CDC was a vehicle by which he came into public notice and it served him, but on the other hand, I don't think he ever consciously did anything that he thought would hurt CDC. I think there were times later on in the Casady thing where he did serve the organization badly, but I don't think he did it consciously or knowingly; it was a genuine

mistake on his part. He may not have done what he should have done with respect to it, but whatever he did I think he did thinking he was doing the best for the organization.

TAYLOR: You mentioned Unruh could use it and tried to use it. This, I gather, was when he attempted to take it over.

GANT: Yes. I don't think there was any question but what Unruh tried to get effective working control of the organization in 1963, as I recall. He had a number of directors who were his people and they tried to enlarge those numbers in the election of 1963. After that he, of course, sort of withdrew from the organization, and although some of his people continued on, he himself took a fairly arm's-length stance with respect to the CDC up until 1968 when there was a rapprochement. At this point in time I don't exactly know what the relation is, but I don't think it's important.

I never knew Unruh as well as I knew Cranston. I don't know him yet. I know people that are close associates, and I have observed his public performance and so on over the years. I think he's a very capable person. I think he's very quick, has very quick intelligence. I think he basically wants to do the right thing, particularly, I think, in the last couple of years or so. He's matured in a sense that he's trying to do what seems to be the right thing in the context of the times. I think

in the earlier years, conscious of his own abilities, he was too eager and too impatient. For example, I think much of the problem between him and Brown was owing to Jesse's just wanting to get on with his own career. And that's coming back to haunt him now. Some of the things that are happening in the present campaign in terms of the supporters and some of the stories that are going around and so forth are the legacy of that period when he couldn't wait. I think there was also in those days a kind of a zest for the game. In other words, you know, it was something you had to win. It was a kind of game to win for the sake of winning, irrespective of what the long-range consequences might be. I think he's somewhat different now. But he still has, and it still comes to the fore from time to time, this ability to play the game rough and do what you have to do to win no matter what the consequences may be.

TAYLOR: In connection with CDC, it's been said that Unruh doesn't believe so much in volunteer politics as in the paid political worker.

GANT: Well that, of course, was the standard viewpoint of a lot of people, particularly those in CDC, and I think there was a phase in his own career where he downgraded the volunteer and relied more on the paid. Now, I think at this point in time that's changed somewhat, particularly now, faced with running a campaign for the governor's

office where he doesn't have the monies available to him that he used to have in the past. He's now making public remarks to the effect that he's going to have to rely on the spirit and enthusiasm of the workers, and so forth and so on. So I think it's just a question of where you are in your life cycle, so to speak, as to whether you believe in this or don't believe in it. I think that's the problem Jesse has, that at the time when he was making those remarks, particularly at the time of the famous remark about money being the mother's milk of politics, he was in a pretty good position; he was able to raise money because he was the speaker of the assembly, and he had a great deal of power in the legislature. He was in a sense opposed to CDC, which was the volunteer organization, and so it made sense from his standpoint to say the volunteers are not very effective--I'll take the paid workers. But now when the worm turns and he gets to a situation where he can no longer have the same access to the money, he no longer is opposed to the volunteer organization--volunteers are great things. So, above everything else, you have to say that Jesse is a very pragmatic person, you know. He is, particularly in these kinds of things, going to shift with the winds as they blow.

TAYLOR: Well, then, this brings us to Eugene Wyman as national committeeman and sort of financial head of the

Democratic party in the state for awhile. What was his attitude toward CDC?

GANT: I guess Wyman's role is to me a little more difficult to perceive than, for example, Unruh's or Cranston's. First of all, because Wyman is essentially a behind-the-scenes operator, what you may see of him or what someone active in the party may see of him, of his activities, may only be the tip of an iceberg. But I think unquestionably during the period of the sixties Wyman was far more successful in the field of raising money than any other person in the party in California. He certainly was responsible for rasing the funds that were required for the Brown campaigns, at least, in 1962 and 1966. I don't know about 1958, but I would gather that he was in the picture then. He did this basically through contacts that he has through his law practice and in the business world. I'm not sure I understand quite how he has developed all of this over the years. My impression is that he is an attorney and lawyer in practice, but he is in that branch of the law which doesn't deal so much in jurisprudence and practice in the courts and the development and the application of the law as it does in arranging things, acting as the intermediary between people either as private citizens or between private citizens and governmental entities and one thing and another. You're more likely to find that kind of lawyer in Washington or

New York than you are in Los Angeles. But they exist everywhere.

I've been aware of certain legal activities that Wyman's friends have undertaken, but never any that have involved him. Now, I may be doing him an injustice on this, but that's my impression. That's the kind of lawyer he is, and that calls for having connections and close contacts; and he had all of these and was able to raise money. He didn't altogether do it by himself. There were people like the Boyars, [Neill Lehr] who ran the Cadillac thing out in the Valley, and [Martin] Pollard, I guess his name was--various people of this kind who participated in this. It was a fairly cold-blooded operation. Usually what he would do in a campaign was to send out a telegram inviting people to come to a dinner at some place, say, like Chasen's, and some bigwig say Brown or somebody else would be present. You'd have drinks and then you'd have dinner, and then after that there would be a call of the roll on which each person would be called by name. Frequently they were there as representatives of some business organization or something, and they would make a commitment of some kind at the time, and so on. Everybody knew what was going on. Even as late as the 1968 campaign, the presidential campaign, there were times when Wyman almost alone kept the campaign going, from what I've been told. If I'm

not mistaken, the Humphrey speech in Salt Lake City, which was the one that he made on the war which was a big speech, was the first, nationwide television [appearance] that he made after Chicago. The financing of that was largely in Wyman's hands; it came at the very last minute, and he had to put it together. Well, there's no question about his role in that respect.

Now, his role as national chairman--not national chairman, national committeeman--I don't know that I can say very much about it. I was never aware of any great activities that he did in connection with the committee, but [being] a national committeeman is a kind of peculiar thing. For example, if he was raising money for the national ticket, he was performing, obviously, as a committeeman.

With respect to CDC he was by and large, I think, friendly. We always regarded him as a friend. There were certain types of things under the code [of elections] which you could do with the acquiescence of the national committeeman or committeewoman. He was always regarded as someone you could rely on in this regard if you needed him. I don't think you could say that he was ever overwhelmed with the idea of a volunteer organization such as CDC. I could be wrong about that. It's just hard to know. He did not like to take part in a lot of the public functions, you know. He wasn't a platform man.

He didn't like to get up on a platform and harangue a bunch of people in a political meeting. He would come and say a few words, and that would be it. But he didn't have that hankering for acclaim that many political figures do. And so it would be hard to know, I think, exactly how he felt about CDC. I think on the whole that he probably has a fair set of convictions about issues. Nothing that's very prominent, but I think he probably cares about them and is interested in putting them into effect.

Obviously he came to a falling out with Unruh back in the sixties. Much of it, I presume, because of the Brown relationship. That's a fairly deep rift, and it's not by any means healed. There are some rumors to the effect that the results of it are now coming out in the present campaign. There's no question but what he doesn't have any love for Unruh, and that's a pity, because he could be of assistance to Unruh in the present campaign.

TAYLOR: That's what I have been reading, that some of these political backers have contacted Wyman, and he's been telling them that they are on their own as to whom to support.

GANT: That's a story that was in the paper. I've heard it independently of that story and I don't know how true it is. But it is, I think, understandable, because there's no question that he just has no use for Unruh. I suspect

it's easy to reason that the political situation being what it is, Unruh doesn't have much chance, and therefore he's not going to hurt the party very much by indulging his emotions in the matter.

What about Brown? You didn't get Brown down there.

TAYLOR: Yes, Governor Brown, of course. He seemed to go along with the CDC.

GANT: Oh, no question about that. I got to know Brown much better after he was governor than I did while he was governor. I think it can be said that you can find probably no more compassionate man than Brown. In his personal relations, a very likeable person, very easy to talk with, to deal with. He doesn't have any of the assumed self-importance that a lot of figures like this do. He can make fun of himself, and he's indulged others doing the same sort of thing. He's a very human person.

I guess I'd have to say I don't think that his public posture was always what it ought to be in the presence of difficult problems. That was, I think, his greatest weakness. He let what could be honest indecision on subjects show through. The best example of it was probably the [Caryl] Chessman case. It was an extraordinarily difficult thing for him, where he was torn between the problem of, I think, being basically opposed to the death penalty and yet having the problem of maintaining the law and order posture. And so he vacillated, and he looked

very bad in the eyes of the public, very bad, and in the end kind of sought to get out of it by some very unworthy stratagem. As I recall, when he first gave a stay in the Chessman thing he alleged that it had something to do with Argentina or Brazil or something. I don't know. It was a very unworthy thing because it was an obvious put-on sort of a thing. But I think that his instincts were good; he had a good grasp of what people needed, wanted. He wanted to do things and he liked to do them.

When you go through these campaigns you hear people talk on various conditions and so forth, and one of the things that Brown would talk about, both on the platform and in smaller groups, was Oroville Dam, you know, and he told about how he first started the dam and so forth. He was always saying what a great thing that was. It was a great pity. I just almost cried when the time came to dedicate the thing, and he was no longer governor. Reagan put the thing together, and they didn't invite Brown to come to the dedication. That, I think, must have hurt him a great deal. He had all these fine qualities, but I must say that he gave the impression in public oftentimes of being vacillating and kind of bumbling, and that was the impression that people got. In the end it hurt him a great deal in the final elections.

He was always very friendly towards CDC. Basically he believed in that kind of thing. I think he wanted to

see CDC prosper. First of all, because he thought it was a good idea. Now, you can criticize what he did in connection with Casady. But that's a technical kind of thing, and judgments that lead to an action of that kind don't necessarily vitiate the general attitude and approach that he had to the organization. If it was indeed a mistake, I don't know. That's hard to say. I think it probably was, in retrospect, but I don't think that it was done to harm CDC. I think it was done to help. I think basically, fundamentally, he felt CDC was a good thing, and he'd like to have seen it continue.

You mentioned Mosk. I never knew Mosk very well. I don't know whether I can make any comment on him.

TAYLOR: Well, I was thinking in particular of when he tentatively announced his candidacy...

GANT: That he was going to run for senator in 1966? Yes. Well, I think about that campaign--it's never been clear to me exactly why he wanted to run for senator, although he obviously does because the matter came up again in 1968. There is some report to the effect that his wife wanted him to do so. I don't know whether this is true or not. I think there's no question but what Brown exercised considerable influence to persuade him not to go ahead with that after he was--I guess he never actually submitted his name to the CDC convention. But there seemed to have been an understanding, and I don't

know the details of this, that Cranston was to have a chance at this. Brown would support him, and he did some twisting of Mosk's arm to keep him out of that campaign, and I presume did so by promising him the seat on the supreme court, which later he made good in the summer of that year.

We mentioned 1966, but we must be off two years. That was in 1964. And then, of course, since then he's been there, and there's not been much heard from him. He then surfaced again in 1968 when the senatorial campaign came up, and made noises about running. But that never seemed to me to be at all a very likely possibility, and in the end, of course, it all faded away. He was, in 1958, a considerable hero to many of the CDC people. Presumably he was always friendly, and continued to be so until he went out of active political life. But I don't think he ever had much influence during the sixties, after he became attorney general in 1958. There was never any question of him being a successor, an heir to the governor, even though the attorney general has often been that kind of a position. Nobody ever took that for granted [with Mosk] or talked about it or anything. Actually, in the Brown administration, of the elected officials the only one that really played much role was Cranston. Let's see, who else did we have? We had [Bert A.] Betts, who was the treasurer, and he was not very much.

TAYLOR: Was Glenn Anderson a strong CDC supporter?

GANT: Oh, yes, Anderson was always a very strong CDC man, had been a CDC director, married a woman who was a CDC director, was always I think genuinely liked. He never played much of a role. I don't think anyone ever thought of him as being much of a successor. That was one of the problems in the party. There were not people that were genuine comers, so to speak. Unruh was clearly one of the people who was going to try to move ahead, but beyond that, you know, there might be a lot of ambitions, but you didn't see much. There were always certain legislators that were considered CDC types: for example, [Anthony] Beilenson, when he was an assemblyman, and then as state senator; George Miller, Jr. was always very friendly and very helpful; the Burtons, both Phil, and then after him, John, and then the third one, Richard, I guess his name is, from the Bay Area; Willy [Lewis] Brown, [Jr.], when he came into the picture, must have been about 1962, 1964. [Edward R.] Roybal has always been fairly well liked and so on. There were people like Shoemaker up in Ventura. Back in the early sixties, why, there were large numbers that were very close to CDC and friendly, but as the years went by they drifted away, or they got replaced.

TAYLOR: Another figure I wanted to ask you about is Carmen Warschaw. Her position in Democratic politics

has always rather fascinated me, particularly because she seems to come out for Yorty when he needs her.

GANT: Well, Carmen--well, first of all, I think you have to understand that the Harveys--she is a member of the Harvey family--have been active in Democratic politics nationally and locally for a good many years, and the Harveys owe the Democratic party, I think, a great debt. I think much of the success--I have no way of documenting this or anything--but I am convinced that much of the business success of the Harvey Aluminum Company is owing to the relationship of the Harveys and the Democratic party. I don't know; I think in the period after the war they got certain kinds of concessions from the war surplus and one thing and another. I have the strong impression that they have prospered in part because of this relationship to the government, in part because, I think, the old man was a very good businessman, and I think the son--Leonard, is that his name?--that continued it is also a good businessman. It's that combination which made the company successful.

Carmen has been in many ways a kind of local representative. She's been the active one in the party in California. But with her I think it's more than just simply a matter of protecting the family interests and so forth. She participates because she gets a great deal of fun out of it. With her, it's a kind of a game, and

although I think she's got some reasonably developed and [strongly] held convictions about things, the overriding, driving force on her part is playing the game. In other words, she's there to win, and she doesn't care how she wins or who she hurts or how she goes about it. That's the thing that is of primary concern to her.

Now, why she has this relationship with Yorty I don't quite understand, but I suspect it has something to do with the internal relationships between Yorty and politics and business interests and so on in L.A. Exactly what the reason for it is, I don't quite know. She, of course, has been on various sides and various factions from time to time, but in the end it comes down to the fact that she's in this faction or that faction because at the moment it looks as though it will serve her own personal intersts best.

In summary, I think she has not been good for the party. She has been a divisive force. She has made no real contributions in the way of organization or ideas or leadership or anything of that sort. She is now a national committeewoman because Jess made her national committee-woman, and I guess in some way she's served as well as previous committeewomen have on the job in terms of the committee as a whole. But, I repeat my summary, that she has not been a help to the party. Taken all in all, she's been a negative factor.

TAYLOR: Could you take a look at some of the CDC office-holders themselves, for example, [Joseph] Wyatt as president? I don't know if he was president while you were an active CDC member...

GANT: Yes. He was president for a year or two after I became active. He was surely president when I first started in San Fernando Valley and then when I began to participate on the state level he was still president. He was president till 1963, wasn't he?

TAYLOR: Until 1961.

GANT: Yes. Joe's a very, very bright person, very sharp, very quick, very articulate, a tremendous man presiding over a meeting. He was just a great presiding officer. He tended to be a little bit overly "cute," I guess is the way to put it, in some of his personal relations, not offensively so, but at times sort of overdid it. I guess he was reasonably effective as president of CDC. I think in many ways he probably infused a kind of enthusiasm and gaiety into the organization that it did not have after he ceased to be very active.

[Tom] Carvey, who succeeded him, was much more sober, a very genuine kind of guy, obviously very committed to the concept of CDC and to liberal viewpoints. I guess I'd have to say he did not actually set the thing on fire. He didn't set people on fire. But under the circumstances, he was probably as capable a man for

the job as we could have found, I guess.

TAYLOR: And Gerald Hill...

GANT: Gerald Hill followed Casady. Hill I don't have much respect for, either from a personality standpoint or from the standpoint of his own personal abilities.

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TAYLOR: You were speaking about Hill. How long was he in office, do you remember?

GANT: Oh, he was in office from 1966 until 1969, I guess. Completed the Casady term and then was elected one more term. Yes, three years, so it'd be 1966 to 1969.

TAYLOR: And what about Roy Greenaway? Did he stay on as vice-president north after you had resigned?

GANT: He stayed on until 1966 and then he did not run again. He's now in Washington with Cranston. Roy I knew quite well, working with him both before we became vice-presidents and afterwards. It's hard for me to judge him in a position of leadership, as he never really was so much in that role, that I saw. He was considered one of the more liberal people in the organization, although I think when I knew him and worked with him he wasn't much different from most of the rest of us. He did have, I think, a reputation for being somewhat more liberal, but I don't think it really meant very much. Oh, gollies, I don't know quite how to summarize Roy. He was a very good speaker. In other words, he had good command of language. He'd had some training in public speaking. He had a very good platform appearance. He never made, however, I think, any very great contribution toward the organization. He and I served as chairmen of a

committee. I forget what the official name of it was. It came to be known as the Gant-Greenaway or Greenaway-Gant committee, having to do with the organization. I guess he contributed to that quite a bit, although I did most of the writing of the report and so on. This is all kind of loose jointed. I don't know quite how to summarize it, really.

TAYLOR: Does he have any political ambitions?

GANT: Ambitions? Oh, I doubt it. I would doubt it. I think he may have had at one time. As I recall, vaguely, he ran for supervisor in Fresno County, I think, at one time. But I could be wrong about that. I'm not sure about it. I have no memory of ever having discussions with him ever indicating he wanted to run in public office or anything like that, and at this point, why, of course, being out of the state and so on, it's not likely he's going to have much. His home base was Fresno, and he did not have, from the time I knew him, I think, any widespread acceptance or identification in Fresno or the community at large.

TAYLOR: Well, that's about all I had for that, unless there's anybody you want to add, anybody you've forgotten. George Brown you mentioned last time.

GANT: You are talking now about George Brown the congressman.

TAYLOR: Yes.

GANT: Well, he, of course, has always been friendly to CDC, was always considered a CDC-type person, I think a very good person, a very fine person, one of the few people in public life that I think is thoroughly and completely honest, honest in a sense of stating what he believes in. I think there were a few times in this last Senate primary, that he got off base a little bit. Some of his attacks on Tunney were out of character, and I think, from what I understand, were urged on him by some of his campaign staff. He later recanted. But I know of few people that will say their minds as straight out and as honestly as he does--a few people like [Mike] Mansfield, who I think is in that category and so on. But in local California politics, I don't know of anybody, many, who will do this sort of thing.

TAYLOR: There is one area that's of particular interest to us right now. Are you aware of any connection or any attitudes that the CDC had toward the loyalty oath controversy that took place in the late fifties?

GANT: In my time that never was an issue. It was kind of in the background, but it had all died down by the sixties. But I'm sure that the CDC position was flat out, unequivocal opposition to it. I don't think there's any doubt about that. Whatever their role, I would guess that CDC was just out-and-out opposed to it, to the loyalty oath.

Let me think. I guess we had a resolution or two on it from time to time, but it had sort of drifted away into the background, and then it might come up from time to time, but it was one of those things that I think almost everybody recognized as being a kind of cant issue, you know. Nobody really was worried about loyalty oaths or anything in that time and period.

TAYLOR: In 1964, the Volunteer Politics Conference took place in Atlantic City. Would you discuss that, how that came about?

GANT: Yes. That was my idea, I guess, almost wholly in the initial stage of it. I was an alternate on the [state] delegation, and there had been previously a meeting in 1961 or 1962, a dinner meeting in the days when Paul Ziffren was still active in things, and people who were interested in this thing had come from all over the country. They had a dinner in L.A. I had not participated in that. I knew about it, I guess, at the time, but nothing had come of that, nothing had ensued from it. And when the time came for the planning on the delegation and so forth, I got the idea of having a conference at the convention, because obviously many of these people would be present, or so it seemed. In time I got to be a little more knowledgeable about this sort of thing.

I got several other people that would be on the delegation that were interested, including Carvey and some

of the other officers of CDC, and we concluded that the thing was to try to get this organized. We got the old list that they had had and began making some written contacts with people around the country. And that's a pretty tough job, I tell you. There were certain places to go like New York, the group in New York, some in Illinois, and so on. I forget exactly how we did try to reach them all. On a certain day we were going to have this thing. We were going to have it in whatever hotel we were at in Atlantic City, just for the purpose of discussing this. And once we were there, we tried to get word to additional people by one technique and another. It's very difficult at a national convention because there's so much going on and people are spread all out.

We came out with a bit of a program, as I recall, although I forget exactly what. I arranged most of this. I was in the East a couple of times that summer, and I got in touch with the people in New York. I got [James] McGregor Burns, whom I had met on some of his visits out here. He participated in it. Then at the last minute Toby Osos, whose name you've at least seen, if you don't have some of her papers, happened to have some contact with Adlai Stevenson. It was on the floor of the convention on Monday night or something. She mentioned [the conference] to him and invited him to come, and he said, "I will come," and so he did come. So we had him

there to talk about it, and we had about 75 or 80 people. We managed to get people from various places around, like some from Florida, some from Iowa, from Texas--places where you never would have thought they existed--North Carolina and so on. We had some discussion. At the end of it there was a motion made that the California and New York groups get together and formulate a plan which could be circulated among the people at the conference in an effort to get something going on a wider scale. Well, that seemed a reasonable outcome, about all one could expect of the thing.

So we came back, and I made several contacts. We got the CDC board to approve all of this as a sponsor. And then I tried, during the fall, to arouse some activity on the East Coast, but the New York group had gotten itself all embroiled in the primary and so on in New York, because they were opposed to Bobby Kennedy's coming in. That was the year he ran for senator, you know, came in at the last minute, and that just really tore things to pieces in the party in New York--never been put back together, either. We could just never get anything going, so the whole thing sort of dropped to the wayside.

In many ways, I think the idea that we were talking about here was an idea that grew out of the Stevenson campaigns, and I think perhaps we touched on this the

last time we talked. I think the real father of this kind of thing is Stevenson, not the Kennedys or [Estes] Kefauver or any of those people. Not any direct act of Stevenson's or anything of that sort, but just an outgrowth of a Stevensonian approach to, and viewpoint about, political activity. The same thing had taken root elsewhere in the country: in Illinois, where, of course, it had had the Douglas campaigns to kind of further it; and New York, New York in the sense of Manhattan, mostly Manhattan, but maybe a little bit out in some of the other boroughs, but not upstate New York; a little in Massachusetts; a little bit in Philadelphia, but the Pennsylvania thing was very rudimentary. Iowa, strangely enough, was another place. Minnesota; some in Michigan, very spotty. But it had never quite bloomed in the way it did in California. It grew here, I guess, because the party was so poorly organized during the fifties and was such a shambles that it had an opportunity to grow. In some of the other places the party was much better organized: Pennsylvania, for example. When I tried making contact with the people in, say, Philadelphia, they said to me, "Well, you know, it's fine for you people from California to think that we'd be on a delegation, but things don't work that way in Pennsylvania. We wouldn't have a chance of getting on the delegation to a national convention in Pennsylvania."

And so [volunteer politics] just didn't grow in those areas or come to the fruition that it did in California. I think that even where it did, like in New York, where it had a fairly good life, that it's gone much the way that it has in California. In other words, it's gone downhill and suffered along with the degeneration of the [Democratic] party as a whole in the last four, five, six years.

TAYLOR: There hasn't been any followup, then, in this sort of volunteer politics?

GANT: No. There has never been any effort whatsoever to do anything more with it beyond that. It's a big, big effort, you know. Doing things on a national scale is very, very hard.

Well, maybe I ought not say that. I suppose something of that sort took place in 1968. It was one of those New Left or leftist coalitions particularly in behalf of McCarthy, like the Concerned Democrats.

TAYLOR: This is what I had in mind. Was that similar to CDC's volunteer activities?

GANT: Well, the percentage of that is altogether different from this other we're talking about. That was aimed at a specific kind of issue and a specific personality, and, as far as I can see, it pretty well passed out of the picture once the series of events that called it into being had gone. It was not a thing that was

based on any idea of volunteer participation per se, which was the idea behind the thing we're talking about here.

TAYLOR: I'd like to turn to a discussion of Orange County politics in particular, specifically some of the organizations which are represented in your collection. Could you elaborate on a couple of them, particuarly the United Democratic Committee, which existed in the early part of the sixties? Was this connected with the local Democratic councils?

GANT: That was just kind of a campaign organization which was set up during the summer of 1960. It was the kind of structure that was used in the 1960 campaign in the county. It was mostly manned by CDC people. It was somewhat separate from the CDC organization itself, but it included virtually all the CDC people. The chairman of the county committee at that time was a strong CDC man. It was just a way of bringing all activities in the county together, that's all. It was just a kind of term or slogan.

TAYLOR: But I noticed it had bylaws and set up officers, etc.

GANT: Oh, yes. That unfortunately is a necessary evil in operations of that nature, or seems to be. I say it's a necessary evil, because great energies go into forming these things, and they have very little significance, but somehow people feel that they aren't legitimate unless

they do have them. And I used to argue that it was a waste of time to try to do this, because bylaws are at best just a kind of skeleton structure, and that the time and the working could be all handled informally.

But there were basically two reasons why some people wanted this. Some wanted it because they didn't feel legitimate. In other words, it's the having-a-child-without-being-married kind of a thing. And the other was that some people wanted a kind of a structure so that they could utilize it for their own aggrandizement, which was kind of silly, too, but that's the kind of motivation, I think, that's back of that sort of thing. But there are people in all kinds of organizations that always feel they need these bylaws, and most of the time they're absolutely useless, worthless. That takes in all the club organizations. You ought not really to have to have bylaws and so forth. I think much of the younger generation shares that view. I think that one of the distinguishing things between the younger group and some of the older group is that they don't feel the need for that kind of security blanket that older generations do.

TAYLOR: Then there is the so-called COPE Committee, Committee on Political Education.

GANT: COPE, of course, is the AFL-CIO political arm. They have them all over the country. Under the Taft-Hartley law the unions can't participate directly, so what they do,

they set up the Committee on Political Education and then the members supposedly make a contribution to that and then that committee goes out and does political things.

In Orange County we have our COPE, I guess, like they do everywhere else. But my observation is that the labor activity in Orange County has never been worth two cents, literally. I'm sure it's been effective elsewhere. It's obviously been effective in certain areas. For example, in the 1968 campaign there were times when a presidential campaign would have fallen into pieces if it hadn't been for the labor activity. But that's activity of the leadership of the labor organization; I don't see that in the rank and file. As a matter of fact, I've come to the conclusion that the thirty- or forty-year alliance between the labor organizations and the Democratic party is probably no longer a good one. In other words, I don't think that the interests of the Democratic party and organized labor are necessarily the same anymore. Indeed, I think that some of the most conservative elements in the country are in the labor organizations. And whereas the leadership tend to still do this and work this way, the rank and file are another thing altogether. And as far as the labor people in Orange County delivering their vote, so to speak, they just can't do it. They may make a lot of talk, but when the time comes, they just don't do it.

Now, I think back in 1960 they did some reasonably good work. They did quite a bit of registering of their membership. They supplied some workers on election day. That's a doubtful value, anyway. But beyond that, that's about all. In other words, if I were a candidate, I wouldn't even really seek the labor endorsement, because I don't think it's worth that much, either in what they can do for you or what it means in terms of the public generally.

TAYLOR: In actual terms of a solid Democratic vote, has Orange County ever really produced one, say, even of the Democratic party in the state?

GANT: It has not voted Democratic since the thirties. I think there was one national election when it was Democratic--in 1936, I guess. I think in one senatorial election it went Democratic. But basically, all through the fifties and sixties, it's always voted Republican. Now, in 1960 we did have a slight edge in registration. I think we had 460, as I recall, more Democrats registered in Orange County than there were Republicans. Since then that ratio has gone the other way. It's widened. It's 150,000 difference now. But that's never been a good indicator of the voting. The vote has always been much more strongly Republican than the registration has. In other words, we've got lots of Democrats in the county who are not honest-to-goodness Democrats in the way

they vote. They're passing the color line to Republicanism. They just haven't changed their registration.

TAYLOR: This includes some of the labor people?

GANT: I don't think there's any question about that. A lot of the labor people, particularly in the construction and trades and that type of thing, are really basically Republican, but the habit of considering themselves Democrats continues on. I don't know what is going to change that trend, particularly.

TAYLOR: You've been working rather hard in Democratic political circles and within your own county, which is so strongly Republican. Isn't this frustrating? Do you really have to seek your compatriots outside the county?

GANT: Oh, no. You find many good Democrats in the county, no problem about that. I've never lived in my life in a district that was Democratic, either here or on the East Coast, so I don't know quite what it's like to live in a district and go through an election and wake up and find that in my particular area things had gone Democratic. On the other hand, there's always a certain amount of frustration in it, because one of the typical things that's been the case in Orange County is that there's been a division between the eastern and the western part of the county. The western part of the county, which includes places like Westminster and Buena Park, Fountain Valley and Cypress and so on, has

been more Democratic than has the eastern part, which includes Anaheim, Fullerton, Santa Ana--they've always split Santa Ana--but Orange and Tustin and Newport and then on down the coast. The people who live in the west side of the county--where we have had a Democratic assemblyman and now a congressman and we have also a Democratic assemblyman over there--have always argued that all the effort ought to go into the west side, because that's where we could win. But then when you get down to thinking about it, even though it's true in the local elections, like on the east side of the county, our chances of electing with that part of San Diego with which we're adjoined, a congressman, is practically nil, or electing an assemblyman is nil. Nonetheless, a Democratic vote for U.S. senator or for governor counts as much in Orange County as it does in Alameda County. The counterargument, then, is that we ought to get the Democrats to vote in this county as much as they do in any of the others, to the extent that you really do influence them through various kinds of election activities, about which I have considerable skepticism.

I'm not at all convinced that much of what passes for political electioneering really has much effect in this day and time. In a close election it possibly does, but the combination of people's habits and what they see on T.V. and read in the newspapers is far, far more

influential than what you normally do in the way of registration or trying to get people out to vote. So I don't know that it's really more frustrating than it would be in some district that's overwhelmingly Democratic.

The problem you get into in an area or a jurisdiction which is heavily weighted in favor of your party is that you get into the internal factional fights, which get to be more severe, because the prizes are more realizable. In a district where that isn't the case, why, people don't feel quite so intensely about it. And so it's maybe a little different kind of a thing, but I don't think any more frustrating.

TAYLOR: In terms of local politics--that is, supervisors, mayors, councilmen, this sort of thing--are most of those positions really nonpartisan?

GANT: Well, they're all nonpartisan. I think to the extent that they are not nonpartisan, the Republicans have done more toward making them partisan than the Democrats have, not because we haven't wanted to or haven't talked about it, but just because in Orange County we haven't had the ability to do so. There's always constant uninterrupted talk about doing something in the nonpartisan elections, but, in fact, very little has ever been done, simply because the parties never had the organization or the discipline to do anything. There

have been cases where people have attempted to run for school board, never very successful. We have now a Democratic supervisor who came to the office because essentially the Republicans made some miscalculations in the people that they put up. They had a couple of kind of far-out Right people that got into the race. They couldn't get them out, and they split the vote. One of them ended up running second in the primary, and he was so bad that most of the respectable Republicans came over to the Democrats. It was not an out-and-out party thing, but it was pretty clear in that race that there were Democrats and Republicans running, just as in L.A. For example, you know who the Democrats in the supervisors are and who the Republicans are. It's the same way here. But I think it's a mistake to make these offices nonpartisan. I think it would be better to have them partisan because I think it would strengthen the party to do so. But I don't think there's a chance whatsoever, within the foreseeable future, in California, of doing so. The people as a whole think this is a good system, and so I don't think we're going to change it. I think we would do better for ourselves if we did make supervisorial jobs and some of the others partisan. It would strengthen the parties, and that would be a good thing. But I don't think we are.

TAYLOR: You were a member of the county central committee in 1966?

GANT: I started in 1964, up until the first of this year, as a matter of fact.

TAYLOR: What is the relation of the central committee to the CDC?

GANT: Oh, that's a very hard question to answer. I guess the way to come at it is like this: we have in the state system a provision for central committees, and these were set up back in the reorganization of the political system in 1911 or whenever it was. They have been, generally speaking, absolutely ineffectual. They consist of people elected in some counties by assembly district, in other counties by supervisorial district, depending on the size. The normal size is around 20 people, I think. We're a little bit larger in ours. We run to 27. Of course, L.A. County goes to 250 or something. It's fairly sizeable. But the fact that you're elected doesn't mean very much, because you're elected on such a large base that, as a member, you don't really have any contact with the people that elect you. They don't know you. And the manner in which you're elected is largely a matter of chance. If you're an incumbent, your chances are very good of being reelected. If you're not an incumbent, if you're the first name on the ballot, your chances are very good. You have a better chance if you're a man than if you're a woman, better chance if your name is Anglo-Saxon than if it's eastern European, and so forth. Occupation also plays a role in it. These [factors] are all pretty well established statistically. Your position on the ballot

is the most important thing, outside of incumbency, and that's determined by chance. So it's all largely a kind of a lottery.

The more usual route to [the committee] is to get appointed to it, fill a vacancy, then you're on it as an incumbent, and you're in there for as long as you want to be. Rarely does an incumbent not--once in a while they don't get elected. But there's no real sense of serving the people, because it's too large a group. In other words, they don't know who you are or anything of that sort.

Secondly, the functions are very ill-defined. All it says in the [election] code is that the central committee has responsibility for general management of party affairs in the county. Well, what does that mean? Nobody ever has been able to say. If the committee was able to raise the money, that would give it some leverage, but in the Democratic party it's never been able to do that. It has certain little things that make it kind of desirable, in the sense that the chairman serves on the state [central] committee. In the case of special elections, there are certain things that committee can do. In setting up the election, why, the county clerk will work with the chairman of the various party committees. But by and large, the party would work as well, perhaps even better, if the committees did not exist.

Now, I say "might work better" because the chief capability a committee has is to make mischief. It can do very little good, but it can do harm, particularly because the chairman can cause difficulties and so on by getting himself into the papers or getting the party into the papers or something of that sort. So the typical approach to the question of a central committee on the part of the practicing politician, that is, the officeholder, is to get a committee that's friendly to you, but don't let it do anything. That's what happened in L.A. During the late fifties, it had a committee that really came nearer to doing something than any that I know about. That persisted into the early sixties, and then, when Unruh began to get interested in moving ahead, he did, in fact, take steps to get a friendly majority on the central committee, after which the central committee became nothing. There's not quite that kind of a problem in Orange County, because although in times past there have been particular criticisms of [Richard T.] Hanna or [Kenneth] Cory or some of the other people, basically the relationship has been fairly good. But nothing of any great consequence.

Now, in the days of CDC there was always a question of whether there was a committee friendly to CDC or an unfriendly committee. In some areas the committees would not be friendly to CDC, and that would cause a great

deal of agitation and concern. But I'm not sure, looking back, it ever really made any difference. As I mentioned earlier, there were certain things for which, according to the code, you needed the approval of the official party. Like, for example, the code says anyone raising money in the name of the party must have the approval of the county committee or the national committeeman or the national committeewoman or the state chairman.

Well, there's always the question as to whether the county committee, when it was unfriendly, would give approval for raising funds. I think that was largely an idle concern, because as far as I know, no committee ever tried to stop it, and if they did, I don't know what difference it would make, because what can happen? They can take you to court, and I'm sure most of the courts would be tempted to throw the thing out. It was a kind of a useless little business that was in the law. In summary I think that CDC had varying relationships with [county] committees. Lots of times CDC people were on the committees. There were efforts in various places to get CDC people in the majority. I think in the end it was all wasted effort. I don't think it really made any difference.

TAYLOR: Were you elected to the committee or appointed?

GANT: I was originally appointed, and then elected after that.

TAYLOR: And then you stayed until...

GANT: 'Til I resigned at the beginning of this year.

TAYLOR: You're no longer active in politics?

GANT: In no political activity whatsoever.

TAYLOR: Retired, or just resting?

GANT: I have retired from political activity, yes, withdrawn.

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JULY 21, 1970

TAYLOR: I was asking you [off the tape] about the Negro Political Action Association.

GANT: Well, the Negro Political Action Association, as far as I know, was an organization that was brought together to further, I think, the candidacy of one Bill Williams, who at the time was the administrative assistant to Congressman [Augustus] Hawkins. It first came into being in 1965 and went out of existence about election time in 1966. Williams ran in 1966 for secretary of state, and the organization was presumably working for him, having nominated him in the spring of 1966.

Williams had a CDC background, and so did others in the organization, and, as I think you indicated, some of the structure of the organization had some of the earmarks of CDC. It may have been that the organization also had some larger views in terms of bringing Negroes into political activity in a way in which CDC had not been able to do. There's some indication that some of the people in the party, in the ruling hierarchy, were opposed to the organization. I don't know exactly why they should be, nor am I able to confirm that, but some of the members of the organization at least felt that was the case, that they had been sort of put out of existence. That's

about the extent. I was at the [NPAA] convention and a couple meetings, but I never was very active in the association. Indeed, I'm not sure that there was much activity to have been active in.

TAYLOR: I noticed you paid your dues.

GANT: Oh, I paid the dues, yes. That's the kind of active commitment that is involved in belonging to an organization like that [laughter].

TAYLOR: This organization was not restricted to Negroes?

GANT: No, but it was about 98 percent Negro. There were a few well-wishing whites that participated. There was nothing that said that whites couldn't participate, but clearly it was a Negro organization formed by Negroes for Negroes. We were just kind of auxiliaries, so to speak. We were members in expressing our support. But no white, as far as I know, ever tried to do anything in the organization. There was nothing, as far as I recall, in the bylaws, that said you couldn't be an officer if you wanted to be, but I don't think any white ever tried to be, and nobody ever expected them to.

You see, in some ways, as I indicated, CDC was not able to involve the Negroes in those districts which were heavily Negro. It might in the districts where they were living as part of an integrated community, but in an area like central Los Angeles, why, we were never able to bring them in, in an active way. In part, I think

this organization was intended to do that, along with the support of Williams. But it didn't do so; it came and went and the world has gone on, and that's about the way of it, you know. It's like a million other organizations that come into being with hopes and fade away with whimpers.

TAYLOR: Is Williams still active in politics at all?

GANT: No. As far as I know, last I heard he was--well, I guess he's in Washington. After the campaign was over he taught here at UCLA or at SC, I forget which. He had a master's degree or something in sociology or something of that sort, and this, of course, was a time when the schools were trying to enlarge their black faculties. I guess he went in and taught for a while, and then he went off to Washington, I understand. I don't know what's happened. I haven't seen or heard anything--let's see, I did see him. I guess I've got it in reverse. He went to Washington and then came back and was teaching. I saw him a year ago, and he was teaching at one or the other of the schools.

TAYLOR: And what about your future plans?

GANT: I've withdrawn from politics. I've discovered that Henry Adams was right when he said that you can't be a little in the world; you've got to be all in or all out. So I'm all out [laughter].

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