

Interview with Juliet F. Kidney

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Labor Series

JULIET F. KIDNEY

Interviewer: Morris Weisz

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Q: This is Morris Weisz. Today is May 18, 1993, and I am sitting in the home of Judy Kidney in the Collington Life Care Community in Mitchellville, Maryland, interviewing her for our Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. Juliet Kidney, whom we all call "Judy," never worked abroad as a labor officer, but she had professional responsibilities in Washington, and on assignments abroad, she was able to observe State Department, AID, and USIA activities. Therefore, she can comment on the degree to which the Labor Department and other agencies in Washington got what they required from the Labor Attach# Corps as well as from USIA and AID labor staff. When I knew Judy at the Department of Labor, she worked in the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions, and made various trips abroad, which she will describe to us.

But first, Judy, can you tell us about your cultural and social background and how you came into the labor field and the Department of Labor? What was your family background?

KIDNEY: I grew up in Dayton, Ohio. My father and mother both graduated from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, and my father was Budget Director for the Frigidaire Corporation in Dayton. Both my parents were very strong conservative Republicans.

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Although they were concerned that Eastern colleges might be liberal, they finally agreed that I could go to Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. There I majored in economics and became very much interested in labor because of a professor there.

Q: Which professor?

KIDNEY: Professor Amy Hewes, an inspiring professor of labor economics, and she saw to it that I went as an intern to the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry. Q: How interesting, Judy! My sister was a union participant in that program, probably before your day, and, of course, Esther Peterson was teaching there.

KIDNEY: Well, I was there twice, first as an intern between my junior and senior years in college.

Q: Give us an approximate date?

KIDNEY: 1933. There was one participant from each of the "Seven Sister" colleges. That experience changed my whole outlook. I saw and got to know about things that I had never seen or heard of at all. And when I went home at the end of the summer, I asked my father why General Motors didn't recognize the U.A.W. [United Automobile Workers Union]. He exploded, and he said, "I remember very vividly—"and to think that I am spending all that money"—It was a thousand dollars at the time.—"to send you to that Eastern college!" And I have been a liberal, I think, and very much interested in the labor movement ever since.

Q: Did you make any labor/trade union contacts while at the Bryn Mawr Summer School on either a personal or institutional basis?

KIDNEY: None specifically. I remember more clearly the second time there after the school had moved up to Hudson Shore, the family home of the founder of the Bryn Mawr School, Hilda Smith. That was the summer of 1940. I had received my master's degree

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from Mount Holyoke in economics while working for three years as a graduate assistant in the Economics Department, and then I taught for four and a half years.

Q: At Mount Holyoke?

KIDNEY: Yes, with one year out to go to Radcliffe College to work on my doctorate. But in the summer of 1940 I had the chance to go to Hudson Shore and be a teaching assistant. I found that experience very good.

Q: Jane Smith was there at the time conducting the school?

KIDNEY: Yes, she was, and Eleanor Coit.

Q: Was Elsie Friedmann there?

KIDNEY: I don't remember her. Esther Peterson was there, and Oliver [Peterson] was in and out. I took notes, which I have somewhere and which I have always thought I should transcribe. I had some very interesting experiences. One woman was from the Laundry Workers Union in New York, Dolly Lowther. One night after dinner, there were about three or four black women standing around, and I went up to them-They were talking about going to Father Divine's place down the road.-and I said, "Oh, may I come? I would find that very interesting." Dolly turned to me and said, "Judy, no whites allowed."

I felt very excluded; that gave me a tinge of understanding about what being excluded meant, what it did to you. But then when I ran into Dolly some years later at the Women's Bureau [in the U.S. Department of Labor], we had a laugh over the whole incident.

But both of those summer experiences certainly cemented my interest in the whole labor picture. While I was teaching at Mount Holyoke, I joined the American Federation of Teachers Union.

Q: Local 189?

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KIDNEY: I don't remember, but Amherst, Smith and Mount Holyoke [colleges] were in it, and I became secretary of the local. One of the most interesting members was [Senator] Paul Douglas' first wife, who was a professor at Smith.

Q: Emily Dunn?

KIDNEY: I don't remember [her name]. But that was the only outright union experience that I have had. I passed my Ph.D. orals in economics at Harvard University in February 1943 and returned to Mount Holyoke and teaching, but I wanted to get into the war effort, so I left Mount Holyoke and after a stint in the local Springfield office of the Office of Price Administration (OPA), I went to Washington to work for the OPA there. I was almost immediately sent to Puerto Rico as the economist for the Puerto Rican office. In those days Puerto Rico was even more of a foreign country than it is now.

Q: Did you know Oliver Peterson at the Price Administration?

KIDNEY: No, I didn't. I was in Puerto Rico about a year and a half, then came back and worked on the pricing of construction materials until [the Office of Price Administration was abolished]. I married in the meantime. Then I worked for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Q: Before we get to that, was your maiden name Kidney?

KIDNEY: Fisher. Juliet Fisher.

Q: Okay. Then you completed your non-labor career, as it were, at the Office of Price Administration (OPA). Were you engaged in labor work at the CIA?

KIDNEY: No. I can talk about it. I was engaged in monitoring illegal shipments to the [Communist] Bloc of strategic minerals, such as copper and nickel.

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Q: This was after the Second World War?

KIDNEY: Yes, this was in the 1950s, and I worked only half-time because of the responsibilities of [raising] children, until they called me in and said they didn't like anybody working half-time. I went home and they called me that day and asked whether I would come back until they found somebody. I stayed at CIA another year after that. (Prior to my assignment, however, I took a full time course in Russian at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, but then they gave me a job in which I didn't have to use it.) How much of this do you want?

Q: Well, as much as you are willing to discuss, but chiefly any element that resulted in your resuming your work in the labor field or your interest in labor.

KIDNEY: I always had an interest in labor, but there was no labor element in that [work at the CIA], so I was not unhappy to leave when they finally called a halt to my part time work. So I stayed home until Esther Peterson called me up and asked me if I would come as a consultant to the Women's Bureau [in the Department of Labor]. She had some articles [she wanted me to work on].

Q: Was this when she was Director of the Women's Bureau?

KIDNEY: Yes, she was Director of the Women's Bureau.

Q: But before she became Assistant Secretary?

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: What made her call you? Earlier knowledge of your work?

KIDNEY: Yes, we had kept in touch over the years. I was very happy to take the opportunity, and while I was there I filed papers for Civil Service status. I was then offered

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a position in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That seemed to offer more scope for me than work in the Women's Bureau.

Q: And when did you enter the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions [DFLC]?

KIDNEY: In 1960 or early 1961.

Q: It must have been early 1961, because Esther [Peterson] wasn't appointed to the Women's Bureau job until [President] Kennedy became President in January 1961.

KIDNEY: Well, then it was a little later that I went to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and after a month or two there, I guess-I'm not sure-I. . .

Q: You got that from the Civil Service list?

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: And the head of that office was Weigert?

KIDNEY: Bill Shelton.

Q: Bill, already! That's right. That was after my day.

KIDNEY: Alice Shurcliff hired me, but she left shortly thereafter, and I gradually took on the monographs that the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions was doing on labor law and practice.

Q: I think that we should have on the record that the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions really had two branches to it, one that did the substantive research on country studies and the other branch dealing with the training of foreign statisticians.

KIDNEY: That's right, and I was in the former. We had about ten economists. They were chiefly people who had some foreign language skills. There were also several, I think, who

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had a lot of background in sociology. I believe that several had worked in the American University studies [program] in this field.

Q: Do you want to give us some names? Bill Gerber?

KIDNEY: Bill Gerber was Shelton's assistant. Harriet Micocci and Joan Clark. . . I can give you some names later.

Q: All right. Now in that capacity, you concentrated on what sort of work?

KIDNEY: I concentrated on managing the program. Individuals were assigned to do research on a [particular] country. I think we did 19 studies in all before [the operation was abolished]. Some were revised during the course of this period. I know that it is no longer classified that these studies were done under a contract for the Department of Defense. We were also doing some studies-similar to these but not exactly the same-for the CIA.

Q: What about the Agency for International Development (AID)?

KIDNEY: No. We didn't have much connection with AID at that time. We did later on in terms of the [BLS] training program.

The individuals doing these studies did all the research they could in this country, and during this [phase] we asked and received information from labor attach#s, and in some countries where there were no labor attach#s [assigned] from the political officers. There was a good deal of traffic back and forth. Some of the material was classified, particularly that [material] that the CIA was interested in, but we could not use any of that [classified material] in the monographs. The [authors of the monographs] went to every source they could find in this country and were then sent to the country in question for several weeks of research. They talked with the labor attach#, who would usually put them in contact with labor union leaders, if there were any, and with knowledgeable government people. The labor attach# would go with them to introduce them to these people and I think it was a

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highly successful situation. The researchers were particularly interested in whether the laws they had information on were actually being carried out in practice.

Q: That's why we refer to "labor laws and practice."

KIDNEY: . . . and practice.

Q: That is a very interesting thing in the light of what the International Labor Organization (ILO) looks into: the law and the practice and the difference between the two.

KIDNEY: We got into trouble, I believe, on Iran, when the government representative to the ILO complained bitterly that we had misrepresented his country in terms of child labor working on rugs. The complaint never amounted to anything, but it certainly caused a stir.

I went to visit Australia and New Zealand because the person who was doing the studies on those two countries was unable to go. I was the only one really who was available, so I went over and spent two weeks in each of those countries. The labor attach# in Australia was extremely helpful, setting up appointments for me with judges of the labor arbitration courts and other people [such as] labor leaders. I even went out to Perth because of the special situation there between our U.S. Navy base there and the Australian Government.

Q: Who was the labor attach# then?

KIDNEY: Juan de Zengotita. Then in New Zealand, I already had a friend there who had been with the [New Zealand] Embassy here [in Washington] and he was very helpful to me. The labor attach# at that time was Roger Schrader. In New Zealand I had some very interesting experiences, which Roger helped to arrange. One of them involved an electric power plant they were building on a lake in the southern part of South Island. They had to tunnel through the mountains from the fjord on the other side; and they had Yugoslav workers doing the tunneling and living on a hostel ship on the other side in the fjord, and a totally native group of workers handling the building of the electrical plant.

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Q: *By "native" do you mean native Maori?*

KIDNEY: New Zealanders. Well, not many Maori. This was a pretty technical job.

Q: *Oh, you mean the native New Zealanders, that is [people of] British [extraction]. When you said natives of New Zealand, I was thinking of Maori.*

KIDNEY: Well, there were some but not many.

So there were two different local unions, one working with the Yugoslavs and another one at the electrical plant, and they didn't always agree. And so-I don't remember the details now. I wish I did.-it was a fascinating study and I would have liked to have been able to do more with that. Then I went down to Invercargill, the very tip of South Island. I talked to a union there, which, as I remember, was going to be very much involved with the electrical output of this plant and the handling of the local distribution of the power. That was one of the major interviews. I also talked to judges of the labor courts and so forth. So after those four weeks, I then went on to India, where Morris Weisz was the labor attach#, and I stayed with him and Yetta and discussed some of the questions we had about the Indian study. From there I traveled to Israel, where the labor attach#. . .

Q: *Excuse me, before you leave [the subject of] India. . .As a matter of fact, I am very hazy in my recollection of that visit. I think I asked one of our local employees, probably Krishnan, to help you with the visit.*

KIDNEY: Yes. Q: And if your experience was like everyone else's, Krishnan added an important dimension to the understanding that Americans had of what was going on. Did you see Krishnan when he was here last year?

KIDNEY: No, I didn't, but I remember him in India, and I should have mentioned him, because he was very helpful.

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Q: I should have remembered that, but I didn't. Krishnan came here with his wife, and we had a wonderful reception, which was attended by many people whom he had helped, the various labor attach#s he worked for, and other people. It was a wonderful trip, and I am sorry that I neglected to invite you to that [reception], but I guess I forgot. That's all.

KIDNEY: That's all right.

Q: Anyway, the point that I wanted to make was the significant contribution made by what we call "Foreign Service nationals."

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: We used to call them "local employees." I don't remember the specific substance of your inquiry, but I normally would have referred you to Krishnan as a person who could help you, and I gather he was helpful.

KIDNEY: Yes, most of our discussions in the country in question were to check to be sure that we had our figures right on the labor force, union membership, and so forth, but even more to check on the actual practice of carrying out the labor laws. And the local employees were very helpful in almost every country we went to.

Q: [When I was in India], we used to encourage people also to go out of Delhi. Did you?

KIDNEY: Yes, I did. I went to. . .

Q: You obviously went to Agra.

KIDNEY: Everybody does. I went with one of the employees of the Embassy who hadn't gone yet. We went together in a car, and we had a chauffeur.

Q: But in connection with your research, did you visit any institutions outside of Delhi?

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KIDNEY: We stopped in several villages at my request, and, of course, traveling along the road in India you always see quite a bit.

Q: But in connection with your research, did you check out any of the information outside of Delhi.

KIDNEY: No, I didn't. I was not the main researcher. Neither was I [the main researcher] in Australia nor New Zealand, but I felt more at home there.

Q: Who was the main researcher for India?

KIDNEY: I don't remember now.

Q: In any event, you did issue a publication, which I remember very well, Labor Law and Practice in India. I forgot who the author was.

KIDNEY: We have a file down at the Labor Department. Then I was in Israel and worked with the labor attach# there, whose name I am sorry to say I don't remember.

Q: Reichard?

KIDNEY: Yes, that's it.

Q: Luckily I trained most of these people, so I remember.

KIDNEY: That's good!

Q: About that time the labor attach# would have been Hugh Reichard, who has since died.

KIDNEY: He and his wife took me around one weekend to see the Sea of Galilee and some other places, and we talked about labor and we talked to some of the leaders there and in other parts of Israel. I had a friend who had relatives in a kibbutz and I stayed with

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them for a couple of days and talked to them about how the kibbutz worked. They raised oranges, I believe. I found it an extremely valuable experience.

Q: Were you the primary author of [the study on Israel]?

KIDNEY: No, I wasn't the primary author of any of these studies.

Q: You just had a lucky trip.

KIDNEY: I did, because a number of these visits were to the countries under review. And the original authors had already been there, but then when the final draft went to [the Embassy in] country [for review], there were usually still some questions. I must say that the labor attach#s tended to vary somewhat in the interest they took in this review. Most of them were very helpful, but occasionally you found someone who hadn't had much research experience. I think that was the chief reason.

Q: And also there were other "hot things" going on that might have prevented them from being more actively engaged in the review process.

KIDNEY: They just did not have the time to do this [kind of research work effectively], but having someone on the spot to take up specific questions with them or an assistant or a local employee, I think helped a lot to get these problems ironed out. Then I think I went to Turkey. My memory is a little dim here. Did we have a labor attach# in Turkey?

Q: At various times we did. Was Robert Caldwell labor attach# at that time?

KIDNEY: No. I'm not sure we had a labor attach# there.

Q: I don't know. I do know that we had an AID mission there, but you had little to do with AID at this juncture.

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KIDNEY: Our chief connection with AID really was later on through the training part of the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions (DFLC) more than with the monographs. Then I went on to Greece and visited the embassy there, and they were very helpful. Then I went up to visit the International Labor Organization (ILO). That was a self-education experience. I had a couple of friends there including Betsy Meyer. She had been a friend of mine in college. She was a little later than I was. She was a permanent employee, I believe, of the ILO. Then I came home.

Q: You had a long trip-this would have been you said in 1966-and you will be able at the end of this interview to give us some general commentary as to the types of assistance you could depend upon and couldn't depend upon from our embassies but we will leave that until the end.

You went back to BLS to continue supervising these monographs. What other work did you do? Did you do any work at the BLS/DFLC with the training function?

KIDNEY: Yes. About this time Jules Shiskin, who had been in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) became Commissioner of the Bureau. While he was in OMB he had abolished the monograph part of DFCLC, since it "wasn't statistical enough." That was the excuse given.

Q: Well, he had a background in statistics. Wasn't he with the Commerce Department in the Census Bureau or something like that?

KIDNEY: He may have been. I don't know. Anyway, when [the monograph work of DFCLC] ended I transferred over to work for Peter Henle in the Economist's Office of BLS. Then it was decided to set up a Division of Training in Washington for the staffs in the BLS regional and Washington offices in data collection, data analysis, and so forth. Included in the Division, much to my delight, was the Branch of Foreign Training, which had been started in the Bureau right after World War II. I found that to be very interesting and

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very enjoyable. Almost every seminar was held in Washington and only occasionally somewhere else.

Q: You are referring to the yearly programs in which we train foreign country labor statisticians?

KIDNEY: Yes, we would have seminars on various subjects, like how to conduct a survey for determining employment and unemployment in a country by occupation.

Q: Minimum wage study.

KIDNEY: Wage practices, inflation. Both government employees and others financed by non-government groups would come to Washington for perhaps five to six weeks for a seminar in Washington, but with field trips to regional offices.

But it seemed to me and to the staff that it would be much more helpful if we could have these seminars on a regional basis or in just one country if the need was great enough, so that we could concentrate on the culture of that country. We never tried to tell them that they had to do things the way we did in the United States, because that wasn't applicable. For example, we had seminars in Mexico City; the students there were both Mexican and from Central America. I taught at some of these myself. I found this experience both interesting and rewarding and I learned a lot.

Q: Were the seminars all given in English? Or were some of them in Spanish?

KIDNEY: We always had an interpreter. The staff could read some Spanish, but our staff was not always very eloquent in speaking it. Our students knew enough English that English did not present a serious problem. I went to a training session in Venezuela and in Colombia. In Colombia the participants were almost entirely government employees. That experience was in the middle of the drug traffic. We were limited severely by the Embassy to the hotel and to only one street to walk on to the place where we had the classes. Then

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we were invited to the Embassy for a party. An armored car came for us and took us up there. There were Marine Guards all around. An armored car took us back. It was very difficult but the Embassy was extremely helpful. We had very good students and a very interesting exchange of ideas, as we did in almost every seminar.

Q: What you are telling me is that your educational work had an impact well beyond the subject matter.

KIDNEY: We established personal relationships. For instance when some of the Mexican students came up here for one seminar, a couple of them wanted very much to see a basketball game at the Capital Center. I took them there. I had never been to the Capital Center and I didn't really care much for basketball, but it was a great evening and ever since whenever they come to Washington they always call me up and once in a while I get to see them. And these relationships have been kept up through the years with other members of the staff. We tried very hard to set up a training session in India. I don't believe you were there. I think you had already left.

Q: No, I do not remember anything like that, but I can tell you what the Indian reaction would have been. They were worried about too much American impact on them.

KIDNEY: There was a very good Indian woman who was head of an office in the central government that I was working with. I don't know whether our relationship had anything to do with it, but she was later transferred out of New Delhi.

Q: Well, a whole lot of the statistical work was done at the summer capital, Simla, where the Indian equivalent of our Bureau of Labor Statistics was located.

KIDNEY: I didn't go there.

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Q: In fact, I wanted to ask you whether the name Rothman meant anything to you. He was a BLS employee whose appointment I arranged to go up to Simla to help the Indians with their computer.

KIDNEY: I didn't know him. Anyway, this woman was very interested in [having one of our seminars]. She had been to the United States. I had dinner at her house one night, and she told me that she couldn't get [the idea] past the men in her department to set it up.

Q: I would be more inclined to think that the Indian Government had-what we noticed in a number of areas-qualms about Americans conducting programs there, and Indian officials who were very friendly with us would make comments like, "If we were to ask you to conduct a program, we would have to ask the Soviet Government [to conduct one]." Putting us on the same plane with the Soviets was really ridiculous. So you had quite a number of contacts with foreign people who were being trained on both the training side and the research side later on.

KIDNEY: And the labor attach#s were very helpful. Jim Leader was labor attach# in Venezuela and that [relationship] worked very well.

Q: Did you get to Sri Lanka/Ceylon at all?

KIDNEY: No, I didn't. I would have liked to. We had others [who made trips], Jerry Mark. Do you remember Jerry?

Q: Oh, yes.

KIDNEY: I think he conducted a seminar in Singapore.

Q: Well, let's get into that. He was not in the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions (DFLC).

KIDNEY: No, the DFCL did not exist at the time I am talking about.

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Q: [Jerry conducted the seminar] in his capacity as head of another division.

KIDNEY: The International Price Division. [Actually, the division covered] international trade; it covered more than prices. We used BLS staff and of course everybody liked to take a trip. In all the training seminars, we used our own staff and experts like Jerry and various others. Jerry comes more quickly to mind. Q: Because he was so good. He was wonderful. What were the budgetary arrangement there? Suppose you asked Jerry to go out for a month or two months, did you have to reimburse his division from some other BLS funds for the use of his services? How did that work out?

KIDNEY: I am trying to remember. I think he used his own travel funds.

Q: Both travel and salary? You see there were some funds allocated to the international educational programs, some of them from AID. Did AID reimburse his salary?

KIDNEY: No. All AID did was to pay the expenses of the students coming here.

Q: Of the participants but not of the staff.

KIDNEY: No. We had our own budget, but it didn't cover expenses of other staff. Fortunately the top BLS staff appreciated the value of this program. It is still going on, as you know.

Q: What's the name of the fellow who is running it now?

KIDNEY: John McCracken.

Q: Did he work with you or did he come after you?

KIDNEY: He was my assistant when I was running it, and he took over when I left. By the way, there was one seminar that I shall never forget that was held in Washington. "Labor-Management Relations," I think, was the title, and I didn't know how that would

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turn out, because the “students” were almost entirely representatives from black African countries, plus three white representatives from South Africa, two management officials from the [mining industry] and one professor. We just held our breath. It turned out very successfully. They all became friends; they had meals together.

Q: You mean the South Africans and those from black Africa?

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: Well obviously the reason was that they had nothing against black Africans outside of South Africa

KIDNEY: No, but I thought that maybe the feeling about blacks was so strong that they [would not get along]. I think that there was some hesitation at first. Then at other times we had a couple of cases-from the Middle East. I won't name the country-but a couple of wealthy young men were sent over and in one case I remember we were asked to put one young man in an all male hostel, but he refused and went to one of the fancy hotels and hardly ever came to class. So we called his embassy and told them what was going on and they sent him home. He was the son of a high official. He bought a fancy car.

Q: Let's spend a minute on that type of activity, because, as you know, I was briefly involved in training. In fact one of the groups that we trained had a Ceylonese fellow who became very valuable. To what degree was there a tendency to name people to these seminars because they were related to big shots? To what degree did we have to weigh the appropriateness of candidates for training in the United States? To what degree were we free to say to the officials of the country that selected the participants, “Look, we just don't think that this candidate is qualified to take a course in this subject?” Or did we just take anybody who came along?

KIDNEY: Well, they were supposedly cleared by our embassy.

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Q: But our embassy may have cleared them for internal political reasons.

KIDNEY: Right.

Q: Do you have any feeling about what percentage were selected on a non-substantive political basis.

KIDNEY: I would say that this happened more among those from the Middle East, but probably John McCracken could tell you more.

Q: Well, he can't be interviewed until he retires. Now when you said before that you didn't want to say the name of the country, you were not implying that it might have been Israel, were you?

KIDNEY: No, it was an Arab country.

Q: When you say Middle Eastern you are talking about the Arab countries. Did you train any people from Israel?

KIDNEY: Yes. We also had several from Europe. The Foreign Training Program was only part of what I was head of. The training of the Bureau staff was really the major part. I had to travel to all the regions, but actually the Foreign Training Program was my real love. I found it most [rewarding]. But I do not believe that we had many who were of the stripe that I described before. Most seemed very interested and worked. Of course, they usually took a field trip in the United States and visited different factories and unions. Each seminar was different depending on the subject and the people.

Q: Who would be the repository of all those records? McCracken's staff?

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: I hope he is keeping all that material.

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KIDNEY: Well, I would think so.

Q: I will have to talk to him about that. KIDNEY: You know that BLS is now in the Postal Square building, where the old main post office used to be.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that. You mean that they are not in the General Accounting Office building at all?

KIDNEY: Nobody. All of BLS went over there right across from Union Station. I have only been there once. They have much better quarters. They have a set-up designed especially for the training group and that is wonderful.

Q: One question before I forget it. The last time I was concerned with this I was doing a paper for the Bureau of International Labor Affairs on India long after I came back to the United States. I had to dig through John McCracken's files and one of the things that distressed me was the fact that the files were not being kept, and I'll have to telephone about that.

Now you were going over your experiences, and the BLS has moved, and John McCracken is still in charge of those seminars and we should have that on the record, because there will be a whole lot of interest, I think, in the Labor Department's work in this area.

Now how long did you head that program?

KIDNEY: It was about 15 years, from about 1971 or 1972 when the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions was abolished until I retired in 1986.

Q: But you didn't retire from that job. You retired from a job in what we call ASPER, didn't you? Or was that whole function in ASPER?

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KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: You retired in 1986. Whom did you work for directly before retiring? Who was in charge there?

KIDNEY: I was an Associate Commissioner for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. I was in the senior executive service, and I reported to [the Commissioner], Janet [Norwood].

Q: Directly to the head of the BLS?

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: And John McCracken?

KIDNEY: He reported to me.

Q: What did they call him?

KIDNEY: He was Branch Chief of the Foreign Labor Training Branch. It was a branch. It wasn't a division.

Q: And what else did you have reporting to you?

KIDNEY: I had [responsibility for] the administration of the regional offices of the BLS. There are eight regions. The regional offices are the chief sources of the collection of data.

Q: State and local data?

KIDNEY: Right. The data collectors.

Q: They have nothing to do with international [data collection]?

KIDNEY: No.

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Q: So your responsibilities went beyond the international work?

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: You started in 1971 on totally international work before you became an Associate Commissioner?

KIDNEY: No, that was both. That was when I developed the training [program]. They had limited training in the Bureau for data collectors. They had some.

Q: Okay, so it was not only international training; it was all the training.

KIDNEY: It was all the training. It was training state people, who collect some of our manpower and employment data and work through the regional offices. Some of the data collection is done by mail in the national office, but most of it is done by individual data collectors. For instance, in [calculating] the Consumer Price Index (CPI) they go into all the grocery stores and garages and so forth.

Q: After you retired in 1986, what, if anything, did you do that is relevant to the labor field?

KIDNEY: It is not directly connected to the labor field, but I have been an active member of the Women's National Democratic Club. We have speakers, and I have taken some friends from the labor movement to speeches there. I didn't know members of the unions closely, since I hadn't been a trade unionist myself since my teaching days.

But [before we close] there is one thing that I would like to mention. We were having an argument in the International Labor Organization (ILO) about how to measure unemployment. Do you remember that?

Q: Yes.

KIDNEY: And the Russians were determined with a number of their. . .

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Q: *They had full employment.*

KIDNEY: Yes, and we defeated their proposal [on how to measure unemployment], and that was because the majority of the delegates who defeated it had been trained in the United States in our statistical methods.

Q: *Now when you say “the majority of the people,” do you mean a majority of the representatives of other countries [at the ILO]?*

KIDNEY: Yes.

Q: *[People from].all over the world saw the validity of. . .*

KIDNEY: . . .of the way we did it.

Q: *Right.*

KIDNEY: And were convinced of the falseness of the way the Bloc was doing it. And of course, there were third world countries on both sides, but of those who had been trained in Russia and those who had been trained [in the United States], we had the majority of those countries, plus most of the European countries, through our international and statistical program that Jerry Mark was running. I really don't know much about that, but Jerry might have some things to contribute.

Q: *I really should talk to him about that, but let me get your impression about what the reason was for this Russian [initiative]. There was obviously a political reason why they did not want to follow the American practice. What was the alleged [reason]? I assume that the issue was that they maintained that they had full employment. Everybody was employed. There was no unemployment. We are certainly finding out now what the truth really was. How did they rationalize that? How could they say that there was no unemployment? On the basis of the fact that every week a worker received a paycheck?*

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KIDNEY: That and their system provided employment for everybody except the sick. And our system, the capitalist system, was so poor and we have all the “street bums.” We just had a bad system. I think that was basically it. One of the problems that I always had trying to look at their data was that they always gave percentage changes. You never got the base figures.

Q: Of course. Do you have any recollection of how the Indians sided on this issue.

KIDNEY: I am not sure.

Q: It would be interesting to look into. I'll have to ask Jerry [Mark] about that, because on the one hand many of the Indian statisticians were trained here, but on the other hand the Indians were always very worried about voting against the Soviets.

Now, let me ask you for some general [observations]. So far you have given us facts and a few opinions. Are there any general comments you might want to make about the value of the work of the embassies in this area, the validity of the information they gave you, limitations on the substance of what was supplied and the people who supplied it? Any comments as to how the U.S. Government should select people in the labor field abroad? What background is more or less valuable? Anything that you would like to say about labor diplomacy, one aspect of which was your special interest?

KIDNEY: Well, I would say on the whole the embassies were very helpful. They did provide us with information. It was uneven, and I am sure that some of that depended on the situation in the country, how open information was, how close their relationships were. I definitely felt that some attach#s were closer to the labor movement [than others]. I can't say whether those who were had come from the labor movement here or not. There were just one or two instances where I felt we were just a pain in the neck to them, that they felt that their real reason for being there was to actively work with the labor movement and it was a bother for them to get into any kind of research or looking up data for us, but that

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was minimal. We would always send the labor attach# the finished copy, and I think that most of them found that useful when it came back to them. They were always very helpful and gracious to me and our people when we visited a country.

Q: Was there any disposition on their part to say, "Gee, I got so many other things to do. Shouldn't the International Labor Organization be doing that?"

KIDNEY: I don't remember a specific remark like that, but that does not mean that it might not have been made, especially to the staff who went. Most of the time it was the writer of the monograph who visited the country and who was the staff person. Some of the Washington personnel were not always tactful. I know that. Most of them had had some foreign experience but not everyone, and it was not easy to find people who had the right combination of background and experience and tact and language to handle these [studies].

Q: I would like to ask you to comment on one aspect of that. When I was Labor Counselor in India, I felt that I was very, very busy on things I thought were very important in the labor relations field and all that. The fact that I had a local staff made it very easy for me to be accommodating and friendly and cooperative. I just wonder how much there may be a lack of appreciation of the need for this staff support. People in the Department of Labor felt they needed information for comparative labor statistics purposes, for meeting a deadline or for whatever it was. But when a labor attach# gets out in the field and is working for the ambassador and the ambassador asks him to see what he can do about this strike or something like that, it is very hard for him if somebody comes from Washington and requires the sort of assistance that a statistician would need for something which may seem to be of only esoteric or incidental importance.

KIDNEY: I think that was true to some degree, especially if the labor attach# was in the middle of some particular event. Something else I should maybe tell you. I served on

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the State Department selection board for grade four to three for political officers which included labor officers. Did you ever serve on one?

Q: Yes, I did once, relatively recently in the 1980s.

KIDNEY: Well, I served in the 1970s, I think. As part of that [promotion] panel, I certainly felt it was very important that a member of the Labor Department be on that panel. Otherwise, the panel would not have given the time of day to the labor officers. As you know, most of these people [on the panels] were members of the State Department and had been in the field.

Q: There is also one public member.

KIDNEY: I really had to argue in some cases based partly on my personal knowledge. I think that a lot of the reports that came in from the field showed not exactly a disdain toward labor officers but a downgrading of them.

Q: Labor was not part of the main focus of the embassy's effort.

KIDNEY: I doubt whether you ever felt that on the staff [at the embassy] in India, but I am sure that other [labor attach#s] did.

Q: Are you interviewing me? I could tell you something about that. Let me ask you to comment on that. The feeling that we had about the Labor Department mandated annual labor report was that it covered certain things that you people needed in order to fill in boxes because of the comparative statistics. I did not get a feeling for how useful that annual labor report was or how that information was used, and on one occasion-I was very busy with other things anyhow-I purposely neglected to send my annual labor report. I sent in a whole lot of spot reports about this thing and that, so that people could get the idea that I was working, but not on Labor Department stuff.

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KIDNEY: Did you get any response?

Q: That's what I am going to tell you about and ask you to comment on as one of the former end-users. Let's say that I was supposed to submit the report by June 30th or whatever it was. I didn't submit it at all. This was at the time of the Indo-Pakistani War, and I was very involved in something or other, so I was reporting and people appreciated my reports and all that, but I didn't get any response until I got a print out from Harold Davey in the Bureau of International Labor Affairs. It was the sort of thing you get from the Internal Revenue Service saying, "You are incomplete" or something like that. I promptly ignored that too. I had the feeling that I did not know what was being done with the report. I don't know whether I complained at the time, but I think there should have been some kind of internal critique like "This was a good report" or "The report did not include this" or "Why did you leave out that?" or "This is very good. We used it as the basis for our position on this trade issue" or something like that. So I think that in terms of comments that one would make on the work of the Bureau of Labor Statistics in this important area-and I was responsible for it for a while-I have the sense that there is a need for something more than such a printout as a comment.

KIDNEY: Morris, you know I do not think that the Bureau of International Labor Affairs and Bureau Labor Statistics work very closely together.

Q: Now I would like you to expand on that. I heard a little about that in my interview with Alice Shurcliff but you were more concerned with the bureaucratic requirements than she was. What do you have to say about that?

KIDNEY: Well, it really seemed to be sort of an individual matter, but I also had the feeling that the rest of the Labor Department didn't give much of a damn about those foreign connections. They, too, were more interested and more involved in other things. I suspect that it depended to some extent on who was Secretary [of Labor]. This was just a feeling. I can't point to any specific examples. It was just that domestic issues were overwhelming

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and certainly politics was very much involved, and what the relations were with the countries. And, of course, the Defense Department was very concerned. That was why we were doing the studies, and they were classified because they didn't want people to think that we were going to war with such and such a country because we were doing the study.

Q: That's interesting, and we will have to get into that much more. It may interest you to know that I'm scheduled to interview-They have agreed to be interviewed-three former Secretaries of Labor Usery, Marshall, and Dunlop. Others have not yet agreed to be interviewed. I propose to go over that with them: How central to your concerns were such issues?

KIDNEY: That would be interesting.

Q: That's why I am doing this. It's fascinating for me. I don't know if anything will come out of it. Are there any other general comments that you would like to make? The types of Secretaries of Labor who were interested or not interested international activities?

KIDNEY: Well, I was there. . .

Q: You were there beginning with President Kennedy. Or did it depend on the Secretary or the Assistant Secretary or the Deputy Under Secretary?

KIDNEY: I think that for us [in the Bureau of Labor Statistics] it primarily depended on the Commissioner of the Bureau.

Q: In the case of Commissioner Janet Norwood, she was very interested because of her background.

KIDNEY: But even before that Commissioner Ewen Clague was very interested [in international work] and gave us his full support. And [so did] Bob Myers, who was his assistant.

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Q: *But you weren't in the BLS at that time?*

KIDNEY: Oh, yes.

Q: *Oh, yes. I guess that in 1960 Clague was still there.*

KIDNEY: Then he was succeeded by Geoffrey Moore.

Q: *No, he was succeeded by that guy who committed suicide. What was his name?*

KIDNEY: Oh, yes. That's right.

Q: *From Michigan.*

KIDNEY: He was a strange bird. The guy who committed suicide was a real problem. And then came Geoffrey Moore.

Q: *Yes, he was.*

KIDNEY: He was there when I was working for Pete Henle, and he didn't have much use for the Economist's Office [ASPER] either.

Q: *He was a labor economist.*

KIDNEY: I don't think that he and Pete hit it off too well. I guess my feelings really were mostly that [Secretary of Labor Ray] Marshall was interested. I don't know how much [Secretary] Dunlop was.

Q: *He was interested in the industrial relations aspect of it.*

KIDNEY: He was one my chief questioners on my orals at Harvard.

Q: *Sharp questioner, wasn't he?*

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KIDNEY: Yes, he was.

Q: He is fascinating. Okay, Judy, I have nothing more to say except that when you get the transcript, you will have an opportunity to expand on these comments.

KIDNEY: Well, I wasn't quite sure what direction you wanted to go, but I have always been fascinated by labor issues and labor problems.

Q: Judy, thank you so much for this interview.

KIDNEY: You are very welcome. I have enjoyed it.

Q: Good.

KIDNEY: I hope it will be helpful.

Q: If there is any way we can be of help to you, let us know. Thanks very much.

End of interview