Tom Kiffmeyer
Prestonsburg Courthouse
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Tom Kiffmeyer: I knew I should've went before Loyal… I'm in a very untenable position to be speaking after Loyal Jones, particularly after you all have been through a long day. I know. I called John the other night, I think about, like, 10:30 at night, and he wasn't home yet, so…

(break in recording)

And, speaking about the War on Poverty is always sort of interesting, particularly in a situation such as this, 'cause I'm – well, Loyal was there – I'm sure other people who are here today were there as well. Well, you know, historians differ, so hopefully, if you don't like the story I tell, you can find one who will tell you a different one. There are other historians around here, so the possibility exists.

Every time I think about this stuff here, I'm going to try to tell my story and respond to other things at the same time, so if it seems sort of like of jumping around, that's the reason. Every time I think about the Appalachian Volunteers and the War on Poverty, I fond myself flip-flopping, which, given the issue around flip-flopping, I'm not sure if that's good or not. But I think that means at least I'm thinking about it. And I think, every time I flip-flop, ends up with better answers. So, take that for what it's worth. I'm also reminded of that story I think that uh, I think it was William Hutchins told, back years ago about, uh, you know, he's a… there's a do-gooder headed down the road and I can't remember what county it was and he's going' down the road and he meets an old-timer there on the side of the road. And it's getting' dark and it's just starting' to rain and he walks up to the old-timer and he says, "I'm looking' for the community church. Am I going' the right way?" And the old-timer looks at him and says, "Yeah." 'Cause, see, this guy's a do-gooder type, you know, old-timer answers, "Yes, you're going the right way, but you're on the wrong road." And so it illustrates a lot of reforms we have. We have good intentions, but somehow we get off course.

Anyway, I think when Robert Kennedy came to eastern Kentucky in 1968, I think he was entering a contentious area on many levels, not just because what was going on, which I'll get to in a minute – in eastern Kentucky in the late '60's – but the whole concept of urban and rural and what that means to us. A lot of people were trying to question, I think – and this is part of my flip-flopping – now looking at the War on Poverty in eastern Kentucky through Chicago, which may not make sense, but maybe it will at the end. A lot of people were wondering, after four years of reform programs, you know, why were things seemingly getting worse? Cause you're starting to have the race riots in places like Detroit. There was one in Cincinnati in '68 and various other places. And, well now, we're doing all this stuff…well, what's going on? Why isn't the problem solved? And they

start looking, actually, back to the south and rural areas as, sort of, to try to explain why we have problems in Chicago, Cincinnati, New York, L.A., places like that. And part of that was the migration we all know about of Appalachians and also African Americans to the northern cities. And so they start saying, "Well, you know, what we got t do, what we got to keep doing," I think, which was part of the intent all along, was to create in rural areas a situation where people wouldn't want to leave. The problem with that was, of course, they were looking at these rural areas through the eyes of people from Chicago, New York, Washington D.C. and whatnot, and didn't quite get what people in the south, in Appalachia, really wanted. So that causes part of the problem here. So, anyway, so I'm starting to look at this through urban, you know, eyes, and what they were trying to see. And another thing that struck me, looking at the War on Poverty and the Appalachian Volunteers, in particular, was they go from reformers and do-gooders to radicals and seditionists – which struck me – the first thing that got me involved in this is how is a bunch of guys going' out there trying' to solve poverty end up, you know, being arrested for sedition, which happens in 1967 in Knott County. So, that's what got me on this story. And I'm just gonna, kind of, tell you that story and what happens to them and the story of the sedition trial.

But first, the context that that the War on Poverty starts, I think, in eastern Kentucky is contentious again, just like it was in '68. Back in the late '50's, early '60's, some of you guys may remember, the Roving Pickets, which were a response to the miners down, the miner's hospitals being shut down, the growth of non-union mines, and the decline in employment and income and health care for people in eastern Kentucky. So, they were in a contentious atmosphere already. And it wasn't just – you know, on one hand you have the Roving Pickets, which are people from Floyd County and Pike County and Knott County who are upset – but eastern Kentucky became a fertile ground for people, other people, who had agendas such as us – Students for a Democratic Society – SDS. They sent, in 1963 as part of their education and research and action program, a bunch of people down to eastern Kentucky. This is prior to when the War on Poverty starts. So, already, when LBJ finally declares the War on Poverty, I think you have a contentious atmosphere. And you keep that in mind when we start talking about what happens to the AV's. You know, that contentious atmosphere, the Roving Pickets, SDS, insiders and outsiders and all these kind of things you'll see have come before. On August – I'm trying to keep this as short as I can. Does that clock work over there because it's been, like, quarter of five for, like, three hours?

Audience member: Fifteen to six.

Kiffmeyer: Fifteen to six. Oh, it's getting to be dinner time. No wonder. On August – I'll cut out some things – but I want to get to what happens to the AV's and how they changed, because I think they're the most significant change agents and the people who were changed in the sixties. On August 11, 1967,

Sheriff Perry Justice of Pike County, arrested a man named Jim Malloy, he's from Louisville, for sedition and it was on, the basis for this arrest was on Malloy had a communist library out of the world. Whatever that means. Of course, now, Malloy was an Appalachian Volunteer. He was one of those AV's that came down I think about late '64, early '65, so just two years later he's a seditionist. Though that law, the sedition law in Kentucky was overturned by a federal court in July, excuse me, on September 14th, '67, you know, this sedition trial thing has a lot of impact on the course of the reform programs, not just in eastern Kentucky but the United States. One thing is the AV's lose credit, I think, with a lot of people because they were saddled with these charges of being disloyal. So what happened? Why would these guys who'd come down here to help people be charged with sedition? What happens to these guys? Well, first of all, they come down here with an idea. And I think is the way that that urban thing fits in again. A lot of Appalachian, or, Appalachian poverty is rooted, the explanation for it is rooted in culture – a culture of poverty – you might've heard of this before, right? Well, it's a rural area. It's different than an urban area. There's urban eyes that those people are looking at this region with and seeing something different. So they see this culture of poverty, which means it's the way they live, you know, the way they organize their lives. This is what causes poverty. There was another way of looking at that, which, I think, the AV's would, will embrace in a few years and that's a colonial model, which says that Appalachia is a colony of outside interest groups who are exploiting and extracting the wealth for their own gain. But, because of that notion of urban, I think, and how you could perceive our society as being urban. In post-1920, the census of 1920 classifies most of Americans as urban. So, we're kind of ending our second generation, or first generation, and starting our second generation of urban America by the mid-sixties. But coming at this from a different perspective, if you look at the country life lived in 1911, 1912, it's the opposite. Most people were still farmers then and they looked at the "rural" as being the positive, as opposed to now, in the 1960's, it's "urban" that's the positive. So because of this urban perspective, I think, they see rural as being sort of odd and strange. And that's what we've got to find. That's why you hear so much talk about, at least in the sixties, or around here, a bunch of talk about development.

And I was looking over this, you know, this stuff about development. Period. Development. OK…? What does that mean? Well, I think, coming from this perspective, we're not asking that question – what does this mean? What is development? What does it mean? Who does it? What is supposed to come of this development? So this is an unanswered question. I think part of it is that they're coming at it from this perspective saying, "What development means," you know, "sky scrapers and this and that, and all these other kind of things that we have in Chicago, New York, Cincinnati, Detroit, and these types of areas." So, they come down here with this cultural poverty model, first of all. Now, was there poverty? Of course there was. We've been through some of this before. The coal was declining and mechanizing at the same time. More and more oil-powered, electric generation through other means, water power, hydroelectric

energy. And so coal is going. At the same time it's mechanizing. You know, so, unemployment is sort of, it's an exponential growth. Absentee ownership – the broad form deeds still exist. Then the pull-out of the UMW. So the government's trying to, the federal government, the War on Poverty's trying to solve all these issues. And now they recognize – and I think another thing that's come up in their mind's is there's different interest groups out there and poor people, I think LBJ knows this, I think the Kennedy's know this – poor people and wealthy people have slightly different interests. So, I think that's where that "maximum feasible participation of the poor" idea sort of comes in. It's coming from, I think, a pluralist analysis of American society where we all kind of get together in our interest groups and there we have interests. Because we share them with other people, we operate in concert with people of similar interests and we place demands on that system, right? It's like focus groups, I think, for advertising. You know, when do you see the beer commercials, right? When you're in your football spirit, where's your beer and where's your merchandise? Men are watching, you know, football games and different types of advertising for different TV shows, different time slots. So, there's focus groups and we get these groups to work together, though they're individuals, they work together in concert and then services, corporations, what have you, will respond to that demand. You get, you know, 5 million people who want to start a thing, they're gonna respond to that. You get a block of voters that're gonna demand certain things, you're gonna respond to that, right?

So the key, part of the development key, I think, is getting people in those groups. I think that's part of problem when they look at what's going on in Appalachia, and they're seeing this different, and I mean, in New York – I spent last, two summers ago, the entire summer in new York – I mean, there's a lot of people there, right? And we're running into each other all the time. But, you know, Appalachians are all spread out around the countryside and they're hidden in the hills and hollers and all this kind of stuff, you know. So, the reason they're poor, you know, the culture is poor, and they're not organizing in groups to place demands upon the delivery services – government, you know, services, corporate delivery services, that kind of thing. Nothing's going out there because why are you gonna go sell to one guy? One person? One family? That kind of thing. That's why we've got to work – that's where I think that the development concept sounds so vague. You know, if you get 'em together in groups and they'll be OK and services will be delivered. So I think that this Community Action Program and this maximum feasible participation where you have on the Community Action Boards you have one third of public sector, one third private sector, and then one third the poor – sort of a microcosm of your groups. Your public sector, your private sector, here's the poor sector – you get together and hash it out. And I think they recognized that you have to reform that private sector. And I think that's probably why they went (unintelligible). So I think, what LBJ, the community action programs resource co-opt, not the poor people, but I think it was a co-opt dealers on, to get them to sort of perform themselves and make them part of the process. So, I think, he's actually on the right track. He's

starting down the right road, right? He's going the right direction. So, the biggest Community Action Programs with the maximum feasible participation of the poor. OK. We've got another question. What's development? That's one of our questions. The other one is what's maximum? What's feasible? And what's participation? What do all these things mean? You know? How do they work? Another one of the, sort of, the unanswered questions that are upon this whole thing. OK.

Now, this is one of the thing's I'm gonna flip-flop on. If you've read John Gaventa, he talks about the Appalachians being quiescent, you know. This is a fatalistic kind of thing where, you know, they've been, you know, beaten down for years and finally got held up. You know, it's just the way it's gonna be. I'm beginning to, I don't think that's true anymore. Because what he'll talk about, you'll see what comes out of all this stuff is, you know, who ends up, I think, controlling the War on Poverty, or what's left of the War on Poverty. It's Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and these kind of things. So they're not quiescent. But, you know, they're struggling for what they want to get out of this. And in the problems, that's not gonna jog with either those they see as exploiting them and the volunteers that come down here and try to help them. So, they're not quiescent. They've just on their road. Everybody's got a different road. So, the War on Poverty starts and it starts off with Parlier, Loyal Jones and Milton Ogle. It starts in 19 – actually 1963, maybe not '64 – '63. Kennedy – John Kennedy – envisions a winterization program. Allegedly he read the Homer Beggart piece in the New York Times that was talking about the poor living conditions as the winter is setting in. This was late October I think it was when this piece was written in the New York Times. And Kennedy allegedly reads this and says; "We've got to do something about this right now." So he conceives of this winterization program. They're gonna go fix people's houses so they don't freeze to death in the winter. And the Council of the Southern Mountains had been, for a long time, throughout the fifties, since Parlier showed up in '51, had been lobbying the government. Of course, now, when Loyal talked about, you know, who lobbies and how effective can they lobby? The Counsel of the Southern Mountains is a non-profit and they're struggling to survive economically, so it's got one of those little voices. You know? It doesn't have the big voices, you know, like corporations do. This is little voices. But it's been, it's had this contact with, all through the fifties and into the sixties with the Kennedy administration. So, finally, this winterization program starts. And Loyal will probably jump on this – here's our chance – we're finally gonna get, you know, get something happening down here. And, so, they start the program.

The program is called the Appalachian Volunteers. And they're – they know what they're doing. They go to places like UK, Morehead, EKU, Alice Lloyd, Union College, all these places to get Appalachian Volunteers. And the term means exactly what it says. They want to get local people, you know, young kids from Appalachia going to college, get them involved in this reform program. You know, A: they're volunteers, so the paying them is cheap, and that's always

good. You know, especially when Kennedy's issuing his tax cut, so the government funds are kind of tight. And, you know, they're local and they're cheap, and they know who they're helping, so you're gonna avoid this welfare dependency, which is constantly on the minds of people when you talk about reform programs. So they get Appalachian Volunteers, and they are that. They're volunteers and they're Appalachian. And they go out and they start in, late in 1963, early 1964, that Christmas break there, they start fixing up schools and fixing up houses and they start helping people, you know, is this kind of way. And in 1966 the local Courier Journal called the AV's the "young Samaritans in Appalachia" and claimed they've done more good, quote, "more good per dollar spent than any group, public or private, in the history of oppressed areas." And then, in 1964, later on in '64, the AV's get their first OEO grant and they're on solid financial ground. Of course, they're having difficulty getting around and rough going because not all kids from Pikeville went to Pikeville. Might have been in a similar county. So they're having trouble getting around. The roads aren't so good. So, they go to school superintendents and they start asking questions like, "Well, who needs help? What can we do?" This kind of thing. These are going to be some of the very people they're gonna attack in a few years. And so, at first they're goin' around and fixing' schools, and then they in '65 – this is where I think there's a major shift – VISTA comes out of the OEO Act – the Volunteers in Service to America. They become part of the AV program. Essentially, the AV program became its own community action agency and the federal government assigned VISTA's to the AV's. Now where do VISTA's – this is Volunteers in Service to America – where are they coming' from? Originally, we got kids from Appalachia to come down to Appalachia to do the volunteer work. But VISTA's are coming from all over the place, so the whole notion of Appalachian Volunteers starts to shift. And as the War on Poverty gets more popular with people, you know, seemingly counterintuitive, the more contentious it becomes. So by '65, end of '66, Appalachia becomes a geographic destination, (meaning where you go), and volunteer, you're still in Appalachia anymore, you're a VISTA, you come from anywhere.

And oddly enough, again, this perspective of why this, why Appalachia needs help, as opposed to places like Chicago and New York, Peace Corps trainings, the last two weeks of your Peace Corps training were spent in Appalachia. And it was before you went to the Congo, or, you know, wherever you would go, you ended up in Appalachia, sort of, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere. OK. And then, in 1966, just give you a little taste of what the AV's are going' through – now remember, they're fixing' these schools and they do 'em on weekends – I mean, they didn't do much - Christmas breaks, couple weeks out of the summer, and then you'd go back to school. They'd go back to UK or Pikeville College or what have you. And then the next summer they go back. As they're coming back, they're finding out that these schools are now starting to fall apart again. And part of the idea was, well, you know, you fix your school up, you take pride in your school, and it will change your attitude because, you know, one of the other contradictions here is: Appalachians don't value education. So, why did

the Counsel of the Southern Mountains go to UK to get kids from college who were from Appalachia? And one of the things, one of the questions, I think part of the answer to that question is they were in such a rush to get this program going, they didn't ask themselves that question. But what they were, you know, as the AV's came back, so well, "We fixed the school," and now it's run down again. And as you read some of the reports and the letters back from the AV's, you know, the original ones, '64 '65, it's really kind of sappy garbage on a lot of levels. All this kind of stuff and I got a coat over there that I didn't bring with me, it's sitting over there in my Ford I brought with me, that I found, as I found this week, I was going' through this stuff again. And one young lady writes back and says, "Oh, this is so cool. It's so cool to stay there. These people – instead of having wallpaper, they have all these little old magazine pictures taped to their walls." And she thought it was neat! That it was quaint, you know, this idea that it was quaint and it's neat, as opposed to, well, they can't afford wallpaper or paint. There's something serious going on here, and they allowed this "Isn't this neat?" "Isn't this quaint?" kind of attitude. And "I feel so good about going down and helping these people and isn't this great?" and all this kind of stuff, right? It's kind of all more about them than it is, I think, about the people they're helping. OK. But, as you go through '65, '66, you start seeing those attitudes start to change.

I just want to read you a few quotes from – all these come from the same person – when she's in a place in Bell County. And, of course then, her first report is, "I feel so good, I'm helping people, and the greatest thing about this, you know, it's like, we get to know each other and, you know, we're sharing under a common human bond…" and all this kind of stuff. And then she goes back in the fall of 1966. She was there in August and the next report, the date just says "Fall" so it's hard to tell when it was – it was a few months later – and she says, quote, and she recalls, quote, "the anger and frustration that builds up inside you when someone shares a problem with you – a problem that everyone says has no solution, but still beats into the joy of living. A lousy school teacher, a coal leasing company that in no way recognizes that human beings are living on its land." You see this starting' to change – what's going' on their minds. At first it's all this happy, uplift people kind of stuff and this is so great. Now she's starting' to see that maybe there's something more to this than, you know, just, people who need a better school. She was back about 6-8 months later, and I'm going to, because some of these people may be still alive, this is stuff from the Berea College Archives, I swore to them that I would never use anybody's last name, because they made me do that and I think that's a good idea, but, so, there'll be blanks in here. "This place can be pretty rough. In three hours I learned one boy flew off of the mines and hit his father with a board, one of the girls is pregnant and unmarried, Richard still beats Christine, and Dave received the results of the health department's test – all three wells are unsafe. The kids don't have shoes. The people aren't holding community meetings anymore. One guy still drinks up the welfare money. A sixth grade girl's quit coming to school. There's not a lot of joy here. Sometimes I wonder what the real value is of AV's in a place like this.

There are so many problems without the solution to it." And I see the point when this one guy says, "We pass by the big problems and threw a lot of time, money, and effort into little things that don't amount to good memories of good times spent together. I get discouraged when I think of places like this because you know what we're doing? We're supplying candles for a place that needs to be wired for electricity." I mean, you really start seeing the change from, you know, this is all fun and games and good and it's a good experience for me and all this kind of stuff to there's something serious going on here.

And that's when I think, this is when the AV's started to ask the same question but expect a different answer. You know, they're starting down a different road. Before there was the county superintendents and the county politicians were helping them out and whatnot and they were getting donations from corporations. Then, they're realizing that for every school that they refurbished through their own efforts, you know, that the county wasn't going to refurbish that school. They did it for them. So the money was funneled somewhere else – not to where it needs to be. Which is why, the reason why they came back, why the school was busted up again is because it was, there's no money or way to keep it in good repair. So they start asking. They're making those demands on the system like they're supposed to, you know. But it wasn't for delivery for goods and services. It was, well, I'm placing demand on the system for control of my life and what happens to me. So they went down a different road. They're asking the same questions, but they're going down a different road. And it was in 1967 that you really start seeing Appalachians, like, that quiescence starts to disappear, because you'll see the formation of organizations like the Appalachian Movement to Save the Land and the People, which I think, is one of the forerunners of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. And they start fighting strip mining tooth and nail. And in 1967, in the summer of 1967, we go back to the beginning of the story. A bunch of, a group Appalachians up from the Appalachians to Save the Land and the People laid down in front of the bulldozers. Some of you've heard of the Jim Gray incident in 1967 in Pike County. And they do this repeatedly to stop this bulldozing from strip mining Jim Gray's land. And until, Ned Breathit finally comes out and suspends the permit. It turns out, and here's, you know, the old question I always ask my students, you know, when we talk about, "Well, there's a law against that." And I say, "Yeah, but when do you drive 65?" "Well, when I see a cop." "Yeah. When do you see a cop?" "Not very often." "Uh-huh." Turns out that Kentucky had a fairly stringent anti-strip mine law. And Jink Ray's farm, the one they stopped from stripping, was too steep, you know. The (unintelligible) was too steep to meet the regulations, and when, but, when do you drive 65? There's nobody there to enforce it. So the Appalachian Movement to Save the Land and the People ends up, you know, forcing the state to enforce its regulations. So then you start seeing a change. You know, they're starting to ask more questions, you know. Not delivering business services, but, you know, actually doing what your supposed to be doing. Deliver the goods that we're supposed to have. Not that which you choose to dispose upon us.

So, anyway, so Malloy gets arrested for the communist library out of this world and eventually the case gets run out of court in September of ’67. Well, what’s interesting about this, people thought, “Well, maybe that’s the end. Let’s not delay the end.” Turns out, anyway, how the forces that control the wealth and power of a given area, how far they can go. Even though they’re defeated in court. Even though the law’s not on their side. You know, still, when you go 65, you know. In the indictment, in Malloy’s indictment, there’s a statement in the document that says, you know, “Should this law be declared unconstitutional?” We petitioned the state legislature to do something else about that. Now, why would you slip that in an indictment? Should this law be declared unconstitutional? Because you know it isn’t declared in the constitution. And, in fact, in another district it already had been. In the fifties the Louisville District Court had declared that sedition laws are unconstitutional. It was in another judicial district, so it wasn’t binding on the same judicial level – you had to go to the next level up. So they knew it was going to be declared unconstitutional. They knew once, you know, Preston and Howard – and these are state laws that’re left over from the McCarran Act and the Smith Act of the 50’s and the anti-communist acts. What Kentucky does in response, the state legislature does respond, being that it was unconstitutional, and they create the Kentucky Un-American Activities Committee. Which we like to call “quack”. It’s, you know, here we go again… And they hold hearings back in Pikeville when Malloy was arrested about a year later. And they run through the whole litany of things – I’m not going to go through all the details – but, as I read this transcript, I was back and I read John Gaventa’s book, ‘cause somebody told me I had to go read that again, and I found out, you know, that when miners in the 30’s were trying to unionize they were called communists. Oh, that sounds very familiar to me. And I read through what Gaventa mentioned about how we label people communists. They hate God, they distribute propaganda – ah! The communist library out of the world – there you go. As I read through the hearing transcripts of the Kentucky Un-American Activities Committee, it struck me that, here it is again. You know, it’s thirty years later, roughly, from the 30’s to the 60’s, the same way that we labeled union organizers communists in the 30’s was the same way we labeled anti-poverty workers communist in the 60’s. So, the problem with it is, because those forces were able to turn the wheels of the state and had access to the courts, and essentially, I think they monopolized not just wealth and economic power, but political power and social power. You know, they had access. They knew how to operate the courts. They knew how to tap into those kind of reserves.

And though the law is declared unconstitutional in ’67, within a year they’re at it again the same way and they keep painting it with that red brush. And they do it again, and again, and again, and again. The last straw for the AV’s – there’s two strikes – there’s sedition trial and there’s the “quack” hearings. The last straw, I think, was Malloy again. And I kind of like Joe. I’ve met Joe and he’s kind of a nice guy. He decides not – I think it was one of the big lessons and what Loyal

was talking about with the War on Poverty – he decides, he gets drafted. His story is two days after he gets out of jail for sedition trial he was drafted for Vietnam. And he had an occupational deferment working' with the War on Poverty programs. So two days later he gets drafted for Vietnam. He refuses induction, which creates a big issue back in Pike County. You know, because he wants the AV's (who at that time split from the Council – that's another story), he wanted the AV's to back him up on a stance against the war. And there was a lot of people on the AV staff – it was very close – and some were saying, "We can't do this because that's not an issue that people here in Pike County see. Vietnam's not an issue." I mean, in terms of draft resistance. If you get drafted, you go. And the other half said, "What they don't realize is that it's a rich man's war and a poor man's fight and we've got to teach them that it's a poor man's fight." And split down the middle. And the AV's, and Edith Eastland, she tells the AV's, "You can't do this. You can't force the Vietnam issue upon us. That's not our issue." And, uh, they try to do that. But by this time you see that the sedition trial at KUAC and the Vietnam draft issue, you know, three strikes and you're out. Louis Nunn, under the Green Amendment dives the AV's funding and they're pretty much gone by 1969, early 1970. But the lessons we learn from this, I think, as A: the wheels of a state are much more grinding than they are in terms of economic or political power – you add all those things up and you have a formable force – but, I think, you know, when you look at the experiences of the people, generally, they were fighting for what they wanted. And when, though I think they supported the AV's to a great extent, even up until the Vietnam issue came, when it came to an issue that they felt was important, they were, you know, we can't do this kind of thing. And it was the force of those people themselves that, you know, if you want to affect real change, it's still going to be the people themselves. Not an outside agency. Not necessarily the government that's going to affect change, but it's going to have to come from those of us that are here.

John Malpede: So, if anyone wants to, Loyal and Tom will field some questions or listen to statements, disguises, questions, whatever…

Audience 1: Were the McSirley's VISTA Volunteers, 'cause that was later, right?

Kiffmeyer: They were there. I kind of left that out for the sake, you know, it's getting late and everybody's hot and tired and I see people doing this. The McShirleys were involved. The McSirleys were hired by – it was after the AV's left the counsel, I think – do you remember?

Loyal Jones: Yeah, it was, yeah.

Kiffmeyer: And they worked for the AV's about, oh, I would say a couple months. I can't remember the exact time frame. Alex McSirley wrote, Alex McSirley came from D.C., he was involved in some anti-poverty programs in D.C.

And Alex McSirley was pretty far left. And he wrote a paper called a New Political Union. I wish I would have brought it with me. It's pretty far left. Now, according to McSirley – I tried to talk to Al, but he refused to talk. I don't know why. I'm not trying to say he was trying to duck anything – I don't know why. From what I heard from other people, it was sort of like a point of discussion – let's push the agenda, you know, so far and see what happens – see what comes from it. But it's a discussion piece. Not an action piece – according to what the supporting evidence suggests. He's just trying to push a discussion and see how far it'll go. Well, it doesn't go very far. Milton Ogle and the rest of the AV's were saying, "You're going too far for us Al. You have to go away." So, he's discharged from the AV's. He goes back to Pike County. He ends up working for the Braiden's – Ann and Carl Braiden with the Southern Conference Education Fund. And so, he's actually in Pike County at the same time, so he's actually arrested with Malloy, which is another, kind of, trivial point, in a way. I'm not still not sure about how close that relationship between Jim Malloy, AV and Al McSirley – you know, how close they were. You know, they were arrested on the same… I've heard one story that they were arrested together, which suggests they were in the same house, which means they would've known each other fairly well, or, at least enough to know… Then I heard stories that they were arrested the same night, different places, they didn't really know each other. It's kind of funky. I mean, they had to have known each other, at through the… Joe was in Pike County when, I think when Alex McSirly was in Berea where the AV's were working I think, so they might not have crossed paths. But I find it hard to believe that they didn't each other to some extent. So, he's a lawyer in Chapel Hill now, I think. Anything else?

Jones: I – maybe you already did this – but, I'd like to say a word about Milton Ogle. Milton died just a couple of years ago. He directed the Appalachian Volunteers and, I think, he and his crew set up this whole Robert Kennedy tour. And I just, his name, really, hadn't been mentioned and I wanted to make sure that everybody understood how much Milton Ogle had… Later, he headed the Apple Red in West Virginia. He also worked for the Kennedys and for the New World Foundation. He worked on welfare reform and made a considerable contribution that way. Anthing else?

Audience 2: I wonder if it's be alright if I just did a quick poll of the people who are here? My name is Bill Arnone. I actually worked for Robert Kennedy in his New York office in '67, '68. It's been a phenomenal experience this week. I'd like to pick up on Loyal's last bit on if Robert Kennedy were here today what he would be doing. I would just like to ask people here, knowing what you know about Robert Kennedy the person, what we've seen about him, his views, the issues he was talking about in 1968 about committing to help people who were left behind ending the device of the war, if he were the presidential candidate in 2004, today, in eastern Kentucky – not what you personally would do, but what do you think? Would he carry eastern Kentucky based on the themes he was articulating back then? Just a show of hands – how many think he would carry

eastern Kentucky? How many think he would not carry eastern Kentucky? How many have no idea? OK – that was very revealing to my own…

Audience 3: I was very struck, in the video we saw before of Robert Kennedy's speech here and he said, "I promise the people of eastern Kentucky I'd go back in the United States Senate and do everything in power to help end poverty." That was really very powerful. And I wondered if – it seemed like we have, sort of, disconnected outside action and disconnected inside action. And, so, is there any good models of people like that – good, productive models of national allies and Appalachian workers that really can result in positive? 'Cause it seems like you need both in balance and leadership. 'Cause it gets out of whack if it's one or the other.

Jones: That raises a troubling question. I, you know, they were a lot of foundations that helped – the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and everything. But, I came to the conclusion that foundations are even more fickle than government, you know. That's an interesting question and I'm wracking my brain. I'm sure there were once some good programs and there were foundations that did support things over a long period. But in general, in the name of 'we want innovated programs' or, you know, 'we want to support people for a long time', there really has not been the consistent help from where the money comes from to grassroots groups, I'm afraid here. And that may include the churches as well. Why don't you say something about that?

Kiffmeyer: You're doing so well though. Loyal used to say to me all the time – I interviewed Loyal a lot – in fact, when I was, all those years ago I taught all sorts of this stuff – it's a perplexing question because, I think on some level, you're right. The two, if they work in concert, they have a lot better chance of working. But, you know, when you start talking about change and fundamental change, that becomes too contentious and frightening. Loyal used to always say, how did you put it? Maybe it was Nolton. Nolton had a more colorful way I can't say here about, you know, biting the hand that feeds you. That's what Loyal used to always tell me, you know. When the AV's started pushing the issues, you know, they started challenging…

Jones: I remember saying somewhere along there, "Government will not long finance assaults against itself."

Kiffmeyer: That's a very articulate way of saying, "Bite the hand that feeds you."

Jones: I mean, that's the sad truth.

Kiffmeyer: Yeah, yeah, we talked about that a number of times when we would talk about the AV's and what happened to them. When you get to that issue of change, and especially fundamental change… When the AV's started asking, yeah, I think it was the same question on a certain level, but they wanted a

different answer, you know, when they wanted help to, sort of, keep things going as it was, you know, all the help in the world – and not to minimize the impact of patching somebody's house that has holes that doesn't have any heat in January in eastern Kentucky. It's damn cold. So, I mean, that is significant. And we shouldn't minimize that. But when they starting asking another question, I think that's where the disconnect starts to happen because, you know, that's the whole point of the Green Amendment was, you know, to get those local governments to start squashing that kind of stuff right away, you know, before it got all the way up to the upper levels. So, it's a good question. I think you're right that that probably needs to happen, but we need to find a way to make it happen.

Audience 4: The question kind of related to the rural/urban experience and the migration period, but, uh, you know, in my perception, the, what happened in the south with the African Americans, like, began to generate 20 years before things generated here. And there was that period – and I think it was in the 60's or early 70's – no, 60's – when they started getting, like, big money from Ford Foundation, Rockefeller… And they were doing well. And then the FBI came in and almost destroyed them. And – and I think that was during some Democratic, uh, some Democrat was president at that time – but I thought, you know, can anything work in this country? But, are you familiar with that history of what they went through when the FBI came in and destroyed all their files and…?

Jones: No, I'm not sure, but I do know that J. Edgar Hoover had some pretty conservative ideas about race and these sorts of things and…but I don't know any…

Audience 4: 'Cause I remember it was a time when were all, you know, walking, and I saw this and I thought, if that is a success, how far would we get?

Jones: Yeah. This is Marie Cerrillo. Yeah?

Audience 5: Could you talk a little bit about current volunteer groups and current volunteers in eastern Kentucky, just some, like AmeriCorps or Community Action or volunteers or VISTAS in eastern Kentucky and whether the work they're doing now has…uh…is different than what it used to be – whether they've learned from their past experiences in eastern Kentucky?

Jones: What I know about AmeriCorps is mainly, and Habitat for Humanity – I talked with a lot of them involved – they tend to generally be imbedded, as it were, in a local organization, which, it can be both good and bad, I think, and work, like Habitat for Humanity or something or other like that. But I – I've not kept up with volunteers.

Kiffmeyer: Not too much. Ron, what've you got?

Audience 6: It's been a long time since I was a volunteer here and it's like, I don't know whether it's the same as when I was here fifteen years ago or not. I was with the Christian Appalachian Project fifteen years ago which was heavily embedded within Floyd County society. But the, the people like me who came from outside the region tended to be a lot more radical than the local people who ran the organization.

Audience 5: And maybe as a follow-up, have local politicians become a little more tolerant of volunteers coming from outside to work in their communities?

Jones: I imagine as long as, I imagine local organizations have probably made sure they keep an eye on and control pretty well what these volunteers do, but I don't know. I've not been kept up with it. I happen to believe in volunteerism and I happen to believe that two years of service for everybody would be good, whether, you know, I think it'd be good for people to commit at least that much time to their country.

Kiffmeyer: I was just kind of thinking about what you're asking and one of the things I left out about when VISTA comes down, when the first AV's looked like you and the VISTAS looked like me, which was a significant difference, you know. You're pretty clean cut, and whatnot, and I'm not, but that alone made a difference. I think, on a certain level, volunteers themselves are more aware and, I think…how far they can push the envelope. You know, I kind of keep myself – my political action and stuff kind of runs through my wife, who is just the sweetest human being in the world, you know? So I've got to do it that way. And also, I'm trying to think, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth – I think they were smarter than even Appalachians to Save the Land and the People, or the AV's or the VISTA's. They know – part of it – I think they're very well politically educated and I don't mean like, you know, passing your intro to government course. You know, they've been through these – a lot of them have been through these experiences and they know which road, which avenues to take and how far they can push "Why?" And they mobilize locally. I think that's been one of the big lessons. The AV's didn't quite want, you know, when they started pushing' the Vietnam issue, they annihilated the people with whom they were supposed to work, and once they did that it was over. And I think that Kentuckians for the Commonwealth – that's the whole point – Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Get, you know, us involved.

Jones: One different – Joe Zyco(sp?) is who headed the office here. Some of you remember him I think. I think he was from Pennsylvania. He was an outsider… he came down. But Berea College voted to give Kentuckians for the Commonwealth its annual service award and Joe would refuse to come. He sent Patty Lawless, who, you know…down. She was President of Kentuckians. She received it. She got the notice. I mean, he absolutely refused. And I think that was symbolic of how Kentuckians for the Commonwealth have been different. It

was always the elected officials from the communities that were up front and involved in whatever lobbying they did over in Frankfort.

Nell Fields: I might be able to say a little bit about – you mentioned the question a little bit about the fact that AmeriCorps and VISTA programs and how they might have changed a little bit in their work in eastern Kentucky because I worked with Save the Children's AmeriCorps program for several years – two years. But I was also VISTA for Save the Children for two years before that and as far as those programs go now, or, at least with Save the Children, from what I understand is the VISTA's worked towards certain goals that are protected by the organizations that get the grants from the federal government. And, in Save the Children's work it, of course, it was, their mission was to make positive lasting changes in the lives of children in eastern Kentucky. I'm gonna get emotional because this is very emotional to me, but ignore that and listen to what I say, but, um, anyway, in their work we recruited most of or volunteers locally. And it was mothers of these children. And I think that, you know, I just couldn't sit here without saying that, in that work, it was very, very successful because, if you really want to have a positive, lasting change in the life of a child, you have a positive, lasting change in the life of that mother. And that's what happened. When these women got training and they got opportunities and they got involved in their communities and they started to work in their schools it brought their children along with them. So, I guess that it really depends on what programs – and what the missions of these programs are – how successful the AmeriCorps and VISTA programs are in the communities in eastern Kentucky, or that's the way I feel.

Jones: I think selection and training is always a very important thing. I've been on Board at Hindman Settlement School and we had had Mennonite Volunteers for many years teaching and doing various things there. And I think that organization is the most successful I know of in the way they recruit and interview and make sure that the person is doing it for the people rather than for their own good because when you have helter-skelter volunteers – just anybody who wants to come – I think you always have a problem. It's something that they need some training and background and learning some techniques of dealing with local people, but also learning something about the local people.

Malpede: So, maybe we have time for one more question and then we'll wrap up.

Audience 7: I'd just like to comment a little bit about community action. I'm Mike Howell, I'm Executive Director of Big Sandy Community Action – it serves the five counties here of Pike, Martin, Magoffin, and Johnson. And I'd just like to say that community action has changed down through the years from the early days. We're still around. We just recently celebrated our 40th anniversary. We're very active and very vocal still. Maybe not as vocal and as radical, but I did once look like you when I first started. But, one of the things that I have seen

– and VISTA – I remember VISTA when I was still in grade school and community action when they were first getting established here in eastern Kentucky. And there was a lot of fighting amongst the groups. It seemed like a lot of folks coming in wanting to help all the poor people in eastern Kentucky and everybody had a lot of good ideas, but not a lot – there wasn't a whole lot of money. But instead of pooling their money together and trying to help and trying to eliminate poverty, we all went our separate ways back then. And we all tried to do our own little part. And that has changed down through the years, particularly the last few year, I think. I think, with the still limited resources that we have and everyone has, we're pulling together now. And we have the same common missions and the same common goal that we always had. But we are now working together. I think there was some resentment in the early days of outsiders. Most of the people in Kentucky, and there are 23 community action agencies in Kentucky now, and most of the people who work for 'em are local people. We employ a little over a hundred people and they're all local – not by choice, but that's just the way it happened. We're not against outsiders or anything like that. But what I'm – my point is we all work together now. We all work at the community college and Jean Rosenberg and her group and John and Apple Red and – we all pull together – the community colleges, vocational schools, all of the groups – Christian Appalachian Project, as well as community action agencies. We're all pulling together because we realize that we have the same mission, the same goals now. And if we're going to eliminate poverty, we can't wait much longer to do it, folks. We need to do it now.

Malpede: So, um, thanks very much to Loyal, to Tom, and to Ronnie Dee Blair, who had to run off to his rehearsal and to all of you for being here. One thing – when Tom was talking about the history of the AV's I was struck by – it brought to mind something that Peter Edelman said last night – who, and he was, he had to go to his fiftieth college reunion, but he had been Kennedy's advance man on this tour, so this was another kind of reunion for him and he was with us yesterday and the day before. And he, on the subject of volunteerism, he said, you know, which is great, but when you're volunteering for this and your volunteering for that and everybody's volunteering, volunteering, volunteering, you could ask, like, what is the connection between all this volunteerism and social policy? So, I think, um, the motivation, you know, this, we're revisiting the '68 tour and the kernel of the project of to put a historical mirror up to the present moment and that's why I'm wearing a bow-tie, for example, and, but my glasses are not big and thick because I didn't get a chance to get some big and thick ones. So, we have both moments present at the same moment and they're resonating off of one another. And these two moments give a very different picture of the possibilities of social policy, as well as volunteerism. So, I think, um, getting, you know, getting synapses to go off around these two moments is what we've been trying to do here. If you're in a carnival atmosphere tomorrow, come on over to Neon Days. We're gonna have, we've been collecting memorabilia all around the route, for months, earlier this year. Like, Becky DeRossi was here earlier when we did the memorabilia event here in the

courthouse and she shared her memories on videotape and stuff. We're gonna have a big display in City Hall of photos with little stories attached, and some videos. And we're also gonna have several conversations, one with the people from LKLP Head Start, the people who run the program and some of the teachers and, um, and parents, um, because that is, in certain ways, a program that was very, that's the most intact out of the spirit of the War on Poverty. It's still run with a governing counsel that includes the participation of the parents and, in fact, they've, through the years they've trained, parents get the training to become the bus drivers, the cooks, the teachers, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. So, um, they have an incredibly inspiring relationship to their involvement in Head Start. We wanted to provide a forum for them and also because it does really keep – that spirit of the War on Poverty exists there. And then, later in the afternoon, we're gonna have a conversation with people who've been involved in this project – the staff, the performers, and others. And, on the midway, you can get your picture taken with Carl Perkins or Kennedy – it's your choice – or both, I guess. So, uh, you can do all thus, plus everything else that's going on at Neon Days, so if you want to, we'd love to see you over there. Thanks so much.