

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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GEORGE INGRAM

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is December 10th, 2018 and we are fortunate to be meeting with George Ingram who probably has spent more time on foreign aid and foreign aid reform over a longer period of time than just about anyone I know. So we will get to that, but I want to start at the beginning. I know you were a foreign service brat for a while and I wonder if you could talk about your childhood, about your parents' background, and to what extent you think that affected your orientation towards an international affairs career.

CHILDHOOD IN A FOREIGN SERVICE FAMILY

INGRAM: There's no doubt that my childhood influenced me heavily in two ways. I was born in Tennessee. I spent most of my time from age two to 10 in Fairfax, Virginia, when my dad was in the State Department, and lived on a little farm there. That influenced my lifelong love of farming and rural areas. Then he joined the Foreign Service, switching from regular State to Foreign Service in '54. We then spent four years out of the country, first in Austria and then in Baghdad.

Q: What years were those?

INGRAM: Fifty four to '56, just at the end of the occupation of Austria. Then, in Iraq '56 to '58. We left by chance two weeks before the coup that deposed the royal family. There's no doubt that that experience of living overseas-- and I really enjoyed living overseas, and being a Foreign Service brat, unlike many people-- clearly influenced my interest in international affairs.

Q: Right. Did your father talk about his work around you or were you sort of picking up your own impressions?

INGRAM: More picking up on my own and exposure to people who would come through the house.

Q: And, you were able to meet with whoever came to visit.

INGRAM: People would come to dinner who were involved in the foreign service. They didn't hide me.

Q: Yeah. Just talk a little bit about your family. I know you have siblings. I'm sort of curious whether they had the same kind of reaction to having an overseas childhood.

INGRAM: Both my sisters have been interested in international travel. My older sister joined the Peace Corps and I have no doubt that was influenced by being raised overseas. She was married in Nepal and her husband became a Foreign Service officer with USAID, so she carried on the family tradition in a stronger way than I did. My younger sister has never lived overseas. She married someone with a domestic orientation but has always loved traveling internationally. Neither one of them have had the substantive interest in development and international affairs that I have. It's been more cultural interest.

Q: Right, right. So do you have vivid memories from your time in Austria, but more in Iraq? Obviously Iraq has been in the news for a long, long time, but it was a very different place in the mid '50s.

INGRAM: Right. Well, I have vivid memories when I was 11, 12 in Vienna, because for the first of those years it was still the occupation, and vivid memories of being frightened to death to go into the Soviet zone.

Q: So you were warned, don't--

INGRAM: Don't, don't cross that border line. And of having wonderful weekends out in the countryside, fishing up in the mountains and skiing and all the good things that come with Austria. The good food and the nice people.

Q: So there weren't the deprivations of the war years where they were rationing or--

INGRAM: Right. You saw the results of the war. We used to play in bombed out buildings. But no, food was plentiful. And it was a cheery place to live at that time.

Q: Were there escapees from the Soviet side?

INGRAM: Oh yeah. Our wonderful, wonderful cook was an escapee from Eastern Europe. She remained a close member of the family throughout her life, even though we were elsewhere around the world. Particularly my older sister stayed in touch with her, and my mother.

Q: And she must have talked about what it was like on the Soviet side.

INGRAM: She was very private. And we never found out what her background was. Every now and then she would sit down to the piano and play a beautiful piece. So, clearly an educated woman.

Q: But no one thought she was a Soviet spy.

INGRAM: Didn't occur to me. Baghdad was a much different environment. It was a good place for my father and me, but not good at all for my sisters and mother. I stabled a horse four blocks from my house and could ride out in the countryside, anywhere that I wanted to, mainly along the river. My sisters couldn't go outside the compound by themselves. It was a very restrictive society for women.

Q: And yet it had a reputation for being among the more progressive Arab states at that time. Did they have to wear headscarves?

INGRAM: No, they didn't wear headscarves. I didn't see that. But Western women did not go out by themselves. There was one incident when a couple of Western women went to a movie theater that resulted in a riot.

Q: So as a young boy, you had a lot of freedom.

INGRAM: A lot of freedom.

Q: So you probably have a fonder memory of Baghdad in those days than your sisters do, or your mom?

INGRAM: No doubt, than my sisters did. Well, my mother had a terrible memory of Baghdad because even though she grew up in the American South, she couldn't take the heat. She had to be evacuated both summers because of heat prostration.

Q: Was it humid heat or just intense?

INGRAM: No just dry heat. With every now and then a nice little dust storm that would seep around the doors and windows and cover everything in the house; you couldn't get away from it.

Q: Yeah. So you left there in '58. Right before the revolution and the end of the monarchy. There's one story that I've heard about Baghdad at that time. That during

world war II there were Polish architects that were posted there and they had an impact on the art and architecture of Baghdad.,

INGRAM: I guess I missed those buildings! When I lived in Baghdad, the tallest building was a two story building. Hard to call it architecture.

Q: Okay. Well it maybe it was monuments!

INGRAM: We spent a lot of weekends in Baghdad going out into the desert to archeological ruins back when you could climb around them, and dig, and bring artifacts home.

Q: Right. So they were Roman or Greek, they were, you name it? Fascinating time. Especially for a kid who could wander around the castles.

INGRAM: Everything. You could wander around Babylon and Ur and all these wonderful places that you read about in history books.

Q: Right. And can't visit now. So you left in '58 and did you come back to Washington?

INGRAM: Came back to Washington. My Dad was assigned to Washington. The assumption was he was going to pretty quickly go back overseas. So I went to boarding school so I could get an American education. He was going to go back overseas. But all during my high school years they stayed in Washington. Then after four years in Washington, he was assigned to Finland as DCM and was there for six years, through several lengthy transitions between ambassadors. He was a political officer. He was acting chief of mission a couple of times, for six months I think. The first ambassador he went to serve was expeditiously recalled. And then Lyndon Baines Johnson appointed Carl Rowan to be ambassador. At which point one of my father's family relatives in Tennessee wrote him and said, "George, I'm sure you're going to resign now and we'll help you find a job." Carl Rowan was one of my dad's favorite ambassadors that he worked for. They were both from Tennessee. So I think that was a great experience for him.

Q: Did you visit?

INGRAM: I visited. I would go there in the summer. One summer LBJ visited. Actually, to correct my prior statement, Kennedy would have appointed Carl Rowan and LBJ visited as vice president. The ambassador's daughter and I put on a dinner party for Lynda Bird who' was traveling with him. That was my exposure to the political elite.

Q: At that point you were at UNC (University of North Carolina)? Was that always your top choice? Did you think you wanted to go to a southern school or how did you make that decision?

EDUCATION AND EARLY ACTIVISM

INGRAM: Yes, UNC. Talking to friends as to what they considered the best school in the South. I wanted to stay in the South.

Q: Right. And at that point were you thinking you were going to be studying international affairs?

INGRAM: Political Science and International Affairs, which as I was in college morphed as much into a focus on International Economics and Foreign Policy.

Q: Because of the professors you had?

INGRAM: I don't recall a particular professor influencing me, but I took an economics course and that caught my interest.

Q: Yeah, sometimes that's what it takes. So, you graduated then in '66 and immediately went on to graduate school.

INGRAM: Yes, to Johns Hopkins SAIS (Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies).

Q: SAIS, and this was the time of the Vietnam War and there was a lot of concern about the draft.

INGRAM: You know what the nickname of Tennessee is? It's the volunteer state. And I claim I was the only Tennessean of that age trying to get a graduate degree, so the draft board thought that was just fine. My recollection is they weren't drafting people in Tennessee for the most part because people were volunteering.

Q: Wow. Okay. And your draft board was there. So you never had any question about being called up?

INGRAM: No. The draft board was in Nashville.

Q: So you went to SAIS, talk about that.

INGRAM: Well, I went to Bologna first. Which is the SAIS campus in Italy. It was a great year for me. I made the mistake of spending too much time on my studies and not enough time on the culture. I continued to study French because that was the language I had, and I needed to get a solid language behind me to graduate. So I spent too many evenings and weekends reading those tomes that they give you at SAIS and preparing for exams. But, had some wonderful professors there and an interesting cadre of students.

Q: And your focus was still international economics?

INGRAM: It was international economics. It was very much then the EU international relations and economics. The EU was very much about the economics.

Q: So the common market or was it the EU at that time?

INGRAM: It was the common market then. It had moved from the steel and coal association (European Coal and Steel Community) to the EU. I spent that summer working at a riding stable outside of Paris. Teaching, riding, cleaning stables, and trying to further learn French. At least I learned some colloquial French that summer. Then came back and did the second year in Washington.

Q: How would you compare the year in Bologna with the year in Washington, just in terms of professors, opportunities?

INGRAM: Much more diversity in Bologna, both of students and professors.

Q: But most of the students would come back to Washington--?

INGRAM: Half of them were there for a year and half were doing a 2-year program.

Q: Terminating in a master's?

INGRAM: I don't know what it terminated in. But rather than a two-year masters, some of them were there under a year program and there were many more Europeans and non-Americans than in Washington. There was this fabulous philosophy professor, Pierre Hassner who would take the train from Paris every two weeks and come in for two days. He would lecture for two hours at a time without ever opening a note. You'd sit there mesmerized by this guy.

Q: I guess now the professors who commute to Washington commute from New York, the same thing. So you came back, you clearly had economics courses with Isiah Frank and some of the other professors.

INGRAM: Actually, by the time I got back to Washington, I had most of the economic subjects that SAIS could offer. And so I took a reading course with Harald Malmgren, who then was a deputy special trade rep (U.S. Assistant Special Representative for Trade Negotiations). Every two weeks I'd go to his office and opine on what he had told me to read the prior two weeks.

Q: Oh. So that's sort of the British tutorial system.

INGRAM: Yeah, that's right. That was good. It was interesting.

Q: So, you graduated.

INGRAM: I graduated in 1968. That semester I applied for a PHD program at the University of Michigan and was accepted. I spent the summer working for the National Committee for an Effective Congress, a liberal organization in Washington supporting new candidates, new liberal Democrats running for Congress. I packed up my bags late August, drove to Ann Arbor to enroll. The next day I drove to Chicago for the 1968 Democratic convention to be there with Terry Sanford, who was a prospective vice presidential candidate. After three days there and Terry Sanford not being picked as vice president candidate, I returned to Ann Arbor to continue my academic program rather than doing something else and found that the professor who I'd gone to study with at Michigan had left two months earlier to go to UVA (University of Virginia).

Q: Oops. The work that summer, was that the first time that you had engaged with our political process?

INGRAM: I'd been an intern in the congress.

Q: Had you, when was that?

INGRAM: 1965. So I spent a summer in the congress, doing the very important work that interns do!

Q: But it didn't turn you off, clearly. The mid 60s were a hothouse of ideas and political activism. So it actually shouldn't be surprising that you got involved. But any thoughts on the Chicago Convention? Were you frightened?

INGRAM: Well, I showed up in Chicago, was trying to figure out where I was supposed to be, had a coat and tie on, and I was around Grant Park and suddenly I was tear gassed. For just walking around. I stumbled into a bar and went into the bathroom to clean up. As you would take the transportation to the convention center, there were all these, shall we say, Daley (Major Daley) henchmen out with signs yelling at you. So it was a little intense.

Q: Yeah. So you were there until the nomination process and then you got out of there. Okay. So there you are in Ann Arbor without the professor you were hoping to work with. So what did you do?

INGRAM: The answer is I spent that first week talking to two or three, maybe four, of the professors. Two of the younger ones told me that the only way I could graduate and get my PHD was to follow a quantitative program. I was interested in policy, not numbers. I found two professors that were quite content with me having a qualitative, substantive program. So I followed their advice and avoided the other two.

Q: What was your dissertation on?

INGRAM: It was expropriation of US property in Latin America. It was right at the beginning of a focus on and use of the term "the multinational corporation." Nobody in

the political science department knew anything about expropriation and multinational corporations. I found one guy in the business school who was willing to take me under his wing and be my mentor on the topic. Then by chance I was introduced to the president of a big New York business association think tank, the Conference Board. Like the Economist organization, it did a lot of business and economic oriented research and publication and convening. He opened their files to me because I was an poor academic, whereas usually you pay multi thousands of dollars to get their reports. if you're a company. That gave me some initial material and then I lived at home in Washington DC for a bit. I got a carrel in the Library of Congress and did a lot of research there..

Q: Oh yes. The carrels. We're down in the sub-basement. I remember those years. Did you finance your own graduate school?

INGRAM: A combination of self-finance and loans. The loans look pretty modest by today's terms.

Q: Tuitions were modest by today's terms as well--

INGRAM: That's right. At Michigan I had a teaching fellowship, so it was really a combination of the teaching fellowship and a modest loan.

Q: I think people today don't understand how it was possible to do what you did without stopping and earning a sizeable income in between - teaching or study assignments. So you came out with relatively modest loans and an interest in international economics and a passion I would guess for US, politics. When did you finish?

INGRAM: Well I was in Michigan '68 to '70. I took courses the first year, took my prelims, and then taught for a year. I was a teaching fellow, if you call that teaching. Then came to Washington to do the research. As I finished the research and was starting to write my dissertation, there was another presidential election and I worked with a close friend on Terry Sanford's presidential campaign. I did that for six months through the convention in Miami.

Q: Did that take you around the country or where you doing things from?

INGRAM: No, I was in Washington. I have always alleged that I work for Terry Sanford because after he was governor of North Carolina, he wrote a book called "Storm over the States" in which he said "every governor needs one person who does nothing but sit behind his desk with his feet up, thinking about the future." And I figured Terry Sanford as president would need two or three of those people!

Q: Did you actually get fairly close to him?

INGRAM: I was not as close to him as the friend with whom I worked.

Q: But you did interact.

INGRAM: Oh yeah.

Q: Things could have been very different if Sanford had made it. Alright. So that didn't happen but you still hadn't finished--.

INGRAM: He probably would have pulled us out of Vietnam rather quickly.

Q: Yeah, and so many other things would've followed from that. But you still had your dissertation undone, right?

INGRAM: I had to write my dissertation.

Q: And after the convention, you sort of buckled down and did that. In your parents' basement?

INGRAM: Actually, I was married then. I spent a year doing the research at my parents' house, then got married. My wife had a job, we bought a house. I worked for Terry Sanford, and then I spent six months writing the dissertation holed up in our house.

Q: So the degree was awarded in '72?

INGRAM: 1973.

Q: Sorry. On the dissertation. Do you remember any conflicts with any of your professors about it or were you in such a specialized field that they just said-do you thing?.

INGRAM: I do not recall any conflicts. The mistake I made, which I had to keep very quiet about, is as I finished writing it, I don't know how or why, but I sent it off to Praeger and they agreed to publish it before I defended it. So I had to go up to Michigan and not tell them "hey, they agreed to publish my dissertation, so it must be good." The smart thing I did without planning it this way, was I went up the day before the defense and I went by and saw each of the four professors who were serving on the defense panel. I don't recall the specifics, but basically each one of them raised one issue with the paper and I had some sort of partial explanation. Then when they got together the next day, they didn't raise those issues. I had already dealt with them. You know, it's one of those things that one of them could raise an issue and somebody else piled on. So, if I have any advice for people defending a paper, check in with the participants beforehand. My defense was pro forma and I got a book published. Sold at least 2,000 or 3,000 copies!

Q: Excellent. Lots of fan mail?

INGRAM: Lots of fan mail. I've been living off the royalties ever since.

Q: Back in Washington--.

WORK AT THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

INGRAM: I started looking for a job and a friend from SAIS put me in touch with the outgoing staff director of the Subcommittee on Foreign Economic Policy of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. They had something like 80 or 90 resumes. The reason that I got the job is because I was coming out of academics with a PHD in basically international political economy, the subject matter of the subcommittee, and it looked like I knew something about politics because I'd been an intern and I'd worked for Terry Sanford on a political campaign. So they figured, well, this guy knows how to take that academic knowledge and translate it into relevant policy terms. I'm not sure they were right about that, but I'm convinced that that's why I got that job.

Q: Interesting. And that was--.

INGRAM: 1973.

Q: Alright. So that was during the Nixon era, but the Democrats had the majority in Congress? Okay. So that was the house foreign affairs --.

INGRAM: Its Subcommittee on Foreign Economic Policy. The chairman, John Culver, six months after I went to work for him, announced for the Senate. He ran for the Senate and was elected. During that time we had one main piece of legislation that he was responsible for, the reauthorization of OPIC. I barely got his attention to shepherd it through the house and then through a conference committee. He was a very, very smart man who was a little difficult to work for.

Q: He had a reputation for being absolutely irascible.

INGRAM: So I was lucky to have been hired by him for a very interesting job and then for him to move on to the Senate and the staff director of the House Foreign Affairs Committee asking me to come work at the full committee.

Q: Culver didn't suggest you toodle over to the Senate side?

INGRAM: He did, but--.

Q: That wasn't going to happen. So you worked on the reauthorization of OPIC. What was some of the other legislation, other things that you worked on?

INGRAM: The other big thing that we worked on that year was Japanese buying up all the farmland of America. You might remember that. If you go back in the sixties, there was a book *Le Defi Americain* by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber about America taking over Europe economically. In the seventies, it was Japan overtaking America economically and buying up our farmland -- and we've got to stop this; this is terrible. And so, the subcommittee held hearings and we wrote legislation called the Foreign Investment Study Act, which required the government to study this awful thing that was

happening, issue reports and keep track of it. The legislation was sort of a way to sidetrack the populism fueled by a fear of the Japanese buying up real estate. It effectively defanged the issue in the congress.

Q: Do we still do reports on foreign agricultural investment?

INGRAM: Yes, but it's not just agriculture, now it's foreign investment more broadly. Yes, there have been, and I haven't followed this closely, but subsequent to that there was legislation giving the executive branch the authority to review foreign investments for national security reasons, such as taking over high tech companies and defense related companies. More recently there's been legislation that is a more robust version of that foreign investment study act.

Q: So it all started there, and before that there was no requirement. It was sort of a free for all. Well that's interesting. So moving from the subcommittee to the full committee, can you talk about that transition? And also, if you can just talk about what it was like being on the hill at that time.

INGRAM: The big change substantively for me going to the full committee was I was asked to be part of the team that worked on foreign assistance.

Q: Aha. So that's the first time that you became involved in foreign aid?

INGRAM: Right. So on the subcommittee I was working on the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, foreign investment in the US, and export controls. I continued on the full committee to work on the Export Administration Act and OPIC, but spent a lot more time on foreign aid and on the Foreign Assistance Act.

Q: Was that after new directions?

INGRAM: Yes, that was just after New Directions. New Directions was '72-73. So I came on right after that legislation had been enacted, worked with the people who had been the main authors of it like Jack Sullivan. It was a very collegial time in the Congress.

Q: Bipartisan?

INGRAM: Very bipartisan, particularly on economic issues. I worked as much with Republicans as I did Democrats. I began working in the Congress just a few years after the committee had moved from having a bipartisan staff. The Republicans, in about '70 insisted on having their own staff, and the subcommittee chairman insisted on having their own staff. So, until about '70, there was one unified staff for both Democrats and Republicans, but that bipartisanship continued for most of my 20 years on the Hill.

Q: Yep. Well, it's a bygone era. I don't know what it will take to get it back or maybe it never will come back.

INGRAM: Well the interesting thing is if you go below the radar, the political radar today, the last congress passed eight pieces of foreign aid legislation. Every one of them on a bipartisan basis. This congress has passed a handful foreign aid bills, targeted foreign aid bills, on a bipartisan basis-- such as the Build Act, successor to OPIC. Part of this I credit to 25 years of the US Global Leadership Coalition, the ONE Campaign, CARE, Save, InterAction, World Vision, each having one or more lobby days every year. The last 15 years for the ONE Campaign, but 25 for USGLC. There's been a heavy investment by multiple organizations of educating members of Congress of the importance of the US engagement in the world.

Q: I want to come to that later because it seems to me, one of the common themes in all of the things you mentioned, USGLC, MFAN, ONE Campaign is George Ingram. So, let's go back to the 1970s and the foreign aid legislation--.

INGRAM: We typically would do a two-year re-authorization of the Foreign Aid Bill. It would be a multi-hundred page bill which would be a combination of updating the foreign assistance act and various foreign policy statements that people wanted to make about this country and that country.

Q: Right. And so your job in taking this on was basically negotiating what goes in, what comes out, or how it stayed in the bill.

INGRAM: Right, our job was to organize hearings, figure out what witnesses to invite, what questions to propose to the members to ask, writing memos on the issues, drafting legislation jointly with the help of the legislative counsel, drafting amendments, and preparing the members of Congress to deliberate on this legislation. Then write a report explaining what it means in layman's language. And also putting into the report things that we couldn't get into the legislation that we wanted history on, sort of a second shot at the apple, and then negotiating with the Senate to reconcile the House and Senate bills.

Q: Right. What was the relationship with AID at the time? Did you have a fair amount of interaction? People would come up and talk about the legislation. Any issues that you recall? Because I know that AID has subsequently gone through a period where they really limited contact between AID administration and the hill.

INGRAM: We had a lot of contact with AID. In fact, AID was better at dealing with congressional staff and members on a frequent basis than the State Department was. That was largely because AID was totally dependent on the Congress for its budget. The State Department budget was mostly for personnel back then, which was supported mostly pro forma. It didn't have all the assistance programs it has today. So AID had to be better skilled at dealing with the congress. The nature of the relationship varied with the congressional staffer and some of them saw the relationship with AID and the executive branch as a partnership and collaborative work. Others saw it as a more contentious, competitive relationship. But it really depended on the individual congressional staffer's attitude and the attitude of the member they work for.

Q: Right. And not necessarily which administration was in power. Interesting. I know that among the people you worked with were Kelly Kammerer. Can you remember some of the other heads of legislative affairs that you had effective working relationships with?

INGRAM: There was a woman there with Brian Atwood who was very good. I've forgotten her name. People like Kelly and Bob Lester, we came to trust them as providing us their best judgment, not just the administration line.

Q: Right. And they serve both Republican and Democrat administrations.

INGRAM: That's right. And you know, I think that was very important to having a collaborative relationship. If you thought that the people you are dealing with were telling you the truth.

Q: Right. I think there are lots of lessons there, but just back on the foreign aid legislation that you worked on, you for the most part, had good relations with the administration, State Department, AID, were there others-Treasury?

INGRAM: Also OPIC, but not treasury because the banks were in the jurisdiction of the House banking committee. Margaret Goodman worked a lot with the Peace Corps and with USDA on food aid programs. So there were five agencies we dealt with the most. I would also deal with Commerce Department and the Defense Department on an export controls.

Q: Right. So thinking back to the 70s and 80s, what kind of lobbying were you subjected to? Were there the same organized interest groups that we have today or who were the most effective?

INGRAM: I arrived there just at the end of the period when the Korean embassy would deliver a case of a booze to the committee at Christmas, just as that type of lobbying stopped. It wasn't quite as obvious.

Q: But advocacy groups?

INGRAM: It was mainly individual NGOs rather than advocacy groups. You didn't have the proliferation of advocacy groups that you have today. It was more individual NGOs coming up to tell you about their field program and experience, or why are we should provide more money or authorization for child survival and programs like that.

Q: Right. What about universities were they also a significant outside force?

INGRAM: Not significant. I would hear from the University of California at Davis because of agriculture, because they had a cooperative arrangement with USAID, but it was less lobbying then delivering information. It didn't feel like a lobbying. It felt like telling me about the programs they were doing.

Q: I know there were instances where people would come and ask you to put their organization or their issue in your bill. How did you deal with that?

INGRAM: I never had an instance where somebody wanted me to put their organization in the bill. That would happen more in the appropriations committee than the authorizing committee. Some of the issues were more self-generated. The initiative we wrote on appropriate technology in the Foreign Assistance Act happened because Charlie Paolillo and I read *Small Is Beautiful* and organized briefings on the topic.

Q: Rather than having ATI come to you.

INGRAM: Right. Because ATI didn't exist then. And again, the renewable energy initiative we undertook was not something that someone on the outside brought to us and lobbied us to do renewable energy. So I never felt like I got lobbied that much on foreign assistance. I was lobbied on the Export Administration Act by companies that were affected by it. And I was lobbied by the administration on foreign aid, opposing or supporting this provision or that provision.

Q: And that's what they're supposed to do. The lobbying, testifying, and providing information. Over the period that we're talking about, people have the sense that the authorizers sort of lost ground to the appropriators. Can you talk a little bit about whether that's a fair characterization?

INGRAM: It is a fair characterization. I think a large part of it is that members of Congress were interested in international affairs in the '70s and '80s. The Congress became interested in human rights. Don Frazier and a few others really led the charge on that in the '70s on South Korea and other countries. So the foreign aid bill ended up moving from a few of hundred pages to multiple hundreds of pages. On the floor of the House there wouldn't be 10 or 20 amendments, there would be 100 amendments and the leadership of the congress would say, we can't take up that much time. You can't bring your bill to the floor because you're going to take too much time.

Q: So it died of interest.

INGRAM: It died of too much interest. That's right. And so, we would go long periods of time before we could pass legislation. Now what has happened in place of a biannual mega foreign assistance bill is the authorizing committees reporting more targeted legislation. The last mega foreign assistance bill to pass was '85. In 1989 the Congress passed the SEED Act (Support for Eastern European Democracy). In 1991 it passed the Freedom Support Act. Before that it passed the Caribbean Basin Initiative. In the 2000s it was PEPFAR and MCC. Now in a couple of those instances, like with MCC, it was enacted as part of an appropriations bill, but what you've seen the committees do is no longer for the last 25 years bring to the House and Senate floors comprehensive bills, but multiple targeted efforts.

Q: Right, that more or less fit together. I want to get into the effort that you and your colleagues made to rewrite the Foreign Assistance Act. Because I think probably a lot of people don't remember it.

INGRAM: Four of us worked on that.

Q: Can you talk about the effort - why and why then? I don't think anyone's tried since then to do a comprehensive--

INGRAM: Actually, there have been a few subsequent efforts. Howard Berman led the drafting of a rewrite of the Foreign Assistance Act in the early 2000s. The Clinton administration proposed one shortly after we did ours. So, the sequence is the following: in '88 Lee Hamilton, the ranking Democrat on the committee met with the Chairman Dante Fascell, and Lee Hamilton says, "Mr. Chairman, what are we going to do about the Foreign Assistance Act?" And at that point, the Foreign Assistance Act was some 600 pages, almost 30 years old, a lot of it was Cold War focused and out of date. The chairman says, "Lee, you're going to head up a task force to figure out what to do about it." So Lee Hamilton and the ranking Republican, Ben Gilman, headed up this small member task force, and I was designated as the lead staff person. Margaret Goodman worked on it, as did Richard Blue who was seconded from AID for a year and we had somebody from a GAO working with us. We did a yearlong review of foreign aid. We didn't hold hearings. because hearings can be confrontational, them and us. In hearings there are the grand policy makers sitting high up on the dais and these poor witnesses being bombarded with questions. So we didn't do hearings. We organized round table discussions and had the members and the witnesses at the same level around a big table. They were open to the public. We published the transcripts. Larry Knowles at CRS wrote a bunch of background papers for us. We invited written submissions from a host of people and published all of that, by academics and others, such as NGOs. What we ended up doing at the end of the day is turning our guns on the congress rather than the administration and said, "you know, we're not sure how to fix whatever is wrong in the administration, but we know what's wrong up here and it's earmarks. It's 33 objectives in the foreign assistance act. It's 75 priorities." So we published a little report and then Dante Fascell and Lee Hamilton said, "write the bill." So we spent a number of months writing a new foreign assistance act.

Q: This would be 1990, '91, right?

INGRAM: It was '89.. We drafted a new foreign assistance act and took it to the committee. The committee did not report it earmark free, as Dante Fascell and Lee Hamilton were the only two members who really bought in to that concept. We got it through the house, again with a bunch more of amendments and policy statements and earmarks, and the Senate never took it up.

Q: Okay. So how would you characterize what the House passed compared with what you had had before? Was it more focused in what foreign aid priorities should be? Or it was cleaner just because you got fewer earmarks?--.

INGRAM: It was messier, less clearly focused. What we drafted and took to the committee was maybe a 100 page bill, with four or five overarching objectives. From our point of view, it was rationally structured, things fit together. We eliminated a lot of the barnacles. If you look at section 620 of the Foreign Assistance Act, it went from a to z on subsections setting forth various restrictions on assistance, and we boiled them down to the few that really were politically important -- no aid to communist countries, no aid to countries that expropriate US property. I've forgotten if we kept that one or not. Maybe we kept that one just to keep my dissertation relevant! We put in some requirements on accountability such as undertaking more evaluation and stuff like that. Then when it got to committee, people piled on amendments, policy to this country and on that issue and priority to this program, and then on the House floor more such provisions were adopted.

Q: But it wasn't back to where it had been before you started.

INGRAM: By the time you got off the floor it was maybe a 200 page bill, not the 600 page act. So it was cleaner than what's in the law. One problem was the Bush administration never really understood or trusted what we were up to.

Q: Oh. So even though you had someone delegated from the AID, the administration didn't engage--

INGRAM: Politically they didn't engage. They did substantively; down the staff line they would engage with us on specific issues. But not at a political, high policy level. The Republicans on the committee never really bought into the effort. And we failed to get the Senate's attention. Then the Clinton administration tried the same thing. Undersecretary of State Cliff Wharton led a study his first year, and they proposed a new piece of legislation for foreign assistance that didn't get through the House or the Senate. Then Howard Berman, when he became chairman of the committee in 2008, I went into see him and said, "You know, you really should rewrite the Foreign Assistance Act." He said, "Okay." After that he gave me credit or the blame for launching the effort, I never was sure which was his sentiment! Diana Ohlbaum led a three year consultative process on drafting a new law, which was finally completed and introduced just about the time he was defeated for Congress. Gerry Connolly has picked up the effort. But there's never been any political momentum behind it.

Q: Right. So the last full foreign aid bill was '85.

INGRAM: Eighty-five. There is no need for a foreign aid bill every year, even every two years, but it does need to be periodically updated, and now what is badly needed is a new basic act, to clean up all the garbage and confusion and contradictory provisions that are in the law today.

Q: Right. Because once they're in, it's hard to get them out.

INGRAM: I don't think the Congress realizes that the Foreign Assistance Act allows the administration to do anything it wants. There's nothing the law doesn't authorize. So the administration can just pick and choose what it wants to do.

Q: And is it your impression that they do?

INGRAM: I don't think they pay much attention to it.

Q: Because my sense is with or without a new foreign assistance act, AID is pretty careful not to offend the hill.

INGRAM: They're very careful. They were very careful with the Freedom Support Act, which gave them "notwithstanding authority" to do anything they wanted to in that region. They were very judicious in using that authority because they knew if they used it wrong, it would be taken away.

Q: Right. So we'll get to that. Any thoughts on congressional role in foreign aid and in foreign affairs up to '94. Am I getting my dates wrong? I may be.

INGRAM: The congressional role in foreign aid is a mixed bag. At times it's very constructive. The New Directions saved the foreign aid budget. The Congress is very constructive when it provides a flexible authority. The provision we wrote on renewable energy in the '70s was ahead of its time and written in a way that didn't constrain the administration or force anything. If you look at the SEED Act, the congress took the administration's very tentative proposal for some food aid and a little technical assistance for Poland and Hungary and expanded it to a much more significant program. Now the Congress did it in a way that was convoluted and sort of a mishmash of stuff. But it was pretty flexible. And the Freedom Support Act was a well-designed program, with authority to do these 12 things among other things that may come up. So we set priorities without restricting it to those priorities.

Q: And gave some legislative help via things like personal services contracting and notwithstanding authority.

INGRAM: Right, exactly. So in those two instances, the congress was bolder than the administration.

Q: Did you work on those?

INGRAM: Yes. That's why I think they were good!

Q: Well, they were. I don't think the FSU and East European programs could have developed without that kind of support. And you know, just remembering at the time you needed to protect those programs from the rest of AID because otherwise there always tends to be resentment for anything new and shiny that comes along that's going to

undercut your ongoing programs or their funding. And so they needed to be protected from the traditional programs.

INGRAM: That's right. Well, further during that period, in the '80s all the tugging and pulling around Central America and aid to the Contras and to El Salvador, I think there was a constructive tension between the congress, the Democratic Congress and the Republican Administration, Reagan. The administration wanted to provide aid to any government and the Democratic Congress wanted to say no aid to governments that abuse human rights. They struck a good balance of advancing human rights by prohibiting aid to those governments if they keep just killing willy nilly. There was a constructive tension there that came out with a balanced policy that allowed the U.S. to support governments in fighting civil war but also advancing human rights.

Q: Which is an argument for divided government, right?

INGRAM: That's a credible conclusion. I think there are times in which the Congress has played a very constructive role. I think where it plays a less than positive role is when a member goes out and looks at foreign aid project and sees something that works and thinks that that's the silver bullet that's going to work all around the world. So they write a provision and you've got to provide \$100 million for micro enterprise, or something like that. Micro enterprise is great. But the way the Congress has written the legislation is very constraining. And, that's something that was pushed by an advocacy group that had a lot of influence on the Hill -- Results.

Q: Results played a huge role in child survival legislation as well. Can you think of times when Congress has really pushed AID in the wrong direction?

INGRAM: Has pushed it in the wrong direction...

Q: I mean you've mentioned specific initiatives that certainly forced AID to do more in a certain area than its programming would have suggested.

INGRAM: Yes, but what happens outside of legislation is also constraining and pushes AID in the wrong direction. When I was DA (in USAID) I had to go up to talk to this senator from Pennsylvania who wanted AID support for a well-meaning NGO in his state. It's things like that that happen, such as policy leaders forcing AID support for Christian groups in Syria and not other groups. So it's more pressure to do a specific thing that a rational bureaucrat would not authorize.

Q: Its constituency services more than anything and I think that continues. So, I want you to talk about the fall of the Soviet Union, the new legislation and how it was viewed from the hill and then, eventually what happens during the "Gingrich Revolution" And your next step.

INGRAM: The congressional attitude toward the fall of the Berlin Wall was heavily influenced by members of Congress with an ethnic background and who represented

ethnic neighborhoods such as in Chicago and Detroit. They saw this as a great opportunity and were much less cautious than the Bush administration. They wanted to jump on this and provide support. The good part of the story is we didn't know what the hell we were doing and we knew that.

Q: We had very little information on the ground

INGRAM: Right. So people, members and staff who wrote the legislation, recognized that they didn't know what they were doing and so they needed to write flexible legislation that would allow the administration to get in there on the ground and figure it out rather than having preconceived answer. We had one member of the House who wanted a democracy corps. He was insistent on it. So he wrote it in the bill as a permissive authority. That was one of the few targeted things in there, but it wasn't mandatory. So the lack of knowledge I think work to the advantage of allowing the administration to figure out how best to run the program.

Q: Of course the administration didn't have that much information itself.

INGRAM: That's right. AID basically had to get into the field to figure out what to do. These weren't programs that could be written in Washington. The legislation gave AID the authority to hire experts. These were non-career people who were hired for three years, five years, to bring in the technical expertise or regional expertise that the agency lacked. In fact, the Senate version of the SEED Act had a mishmash of things. The house bill was a little more straight forward. The conference agreement was a mix of the two. The with the Freedom Support Act authorization, we knew a little bit more what we were doing and it was better written, better structured. In the early evening of the day before we took the bill to the House floor, we were in our conference room in the Capitol trying to figure out how to deal with a number of Republican amendments, some of which were killer amendments. Such as no AID to a country that doesn't respect labor rights. Well what are labor rights in the former Soviet Union! Gingrich staff came in and said, "Gingrich has pulled all the Republican amendments."

Q: Do you know the backstory?

INGRAM: The backstory is that Gephardt and Gingrich, the month before, took a trip to Russia and Gingrich got educated on the potential to help the transition process.

Q: Okay. So that's sort of a happy codel story.

INGRAM: A very happy codel story. And that's like '91. I worked on the Hill for 21 years, and it was 20 bipartisan years. The last year that broke down. It broke down with the Contract for America and Gingrich leading a scorched earth policy towards Democrats. That was the beginning of the demise of bipartisanship on the big politically sensitive issues that Republican leaders like Bob Michael had led their party on.

Q: Right. And it's been downhill since then. Just back on the SEED and the other legislation, one of the things it introduced was a coordinator in state and it's the first time I think that AID a regional overlord in State. So you can imagine how AID felt, but how did you feel about that additional oversight to the AID program?

INGRAM: The origin of that is in the SEED Act. The legislation that the administration proposed, Bush administration, was based on the concept that there are prohibitions in the law against aid to communist countries and the congress wouldn't support aid to communist countries, so we're going to send up a bill that provides some food relief. They'll go along with that, and we'll use some Labor Department money to work on labor unions and rights and some Commerce Department money to work on business centers to promote private enterprise and some EPA money to work on these awful polluting factories. That's how we will help with the transition. So the committee decides to do something more robust, but doesn't want to totally diss the administration. So they go along with the structure and in committee somebody says, who is going to coordinate this? Who's the coordinator? It must be State.

Q: It wasn't going to be AID.

INGRAM: It wasn't going to be AID. AID would not be able to coordinate the Commerce Department. So the provision was written for a policy coordinator in State, both in the Seed Act and in the Freedom Support Act. What happened is that the coordinator, which was designed as a policy coordinator, became a program coordinator and a program second guesser as the office got more staff that needed something to do. The record of the coordinator is both positive and negative depending on the nature of the coordinator. Bill Taylor was a very constructive and collaborative coordinator. But even under him, it got a little too much into second guessing AID. The Congress liked the coordinator because they could go to one office to find out what all the agencies were doing. The coordinator published an annual report that provided a coherent look at the program. So, that was the beginning of the loss of AID's authority.

Q: Right. I think that's right. It's interesting that you said initially the administration's idea was they'd cobble together money from different parts of the government because in fact what happened was the funding, the international affairs funding went out to these other departments that never had money.

INGRAM: That happened in the appropriations committee. When the respective appropriation subcommittees took up the administration's request, the Labor subcommittee said, we're not given labor money to go to Poland. We're not going to give EPA money to go to Hungary. We're not going to give USDA money. And so it was left to the foreign ops subcommittee to fund the entire program. So the whole concept failed in the first year.

Q: So foreign ops funded it, but that's when all of these agencies that didn't have much role in foreign affairs in the past became much more engaged and they liked being able to do these things. And the genie was out of the bottle at that point.

Alright, resuming the conversation with George Ingram. I think we were talking about the way the Freedom Support Act and other legislation around the former Soviet Union developed, and some of the changes that affected USAID (United States Agency for International Development). Do you recall anyone basically arguing that we shouldn't be doing anything for Russia, or the former Soviet Union, or for the East Europeans?

INGRAM: I do not.

Q: So everybody agreed to jump on it?

INGRAM: I should say a big majority said to jump on it.

Q: Yeah, right. Did people see it as a long-term investment?

INGRAM: No. It was a five-year transition, and then we would be done.

Q: Right. And then we're out?

INGRAM: Again, the majority opinion, not everybody, saw a quick transition and no long-term aid. .

Q: Right.

INGRAM: The general opinion was that this was a five or seven-year transition and we don't need to do evaluations because we're not going to be there very long. We're going to help them get their economy back, understand how you do elections, and these are smart people, they're well-educated, we don't have to work with education. They have good medical systems; nobody understood that the doctors were not the same as western doctors.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: And nobody understood that these people had been educated in a rote education process. So there wasn't a lot of creative thinking in their education system.

Q: Right. And no one doubted that when given the opportunity for a free market or elections that people would just flock to it and that good things would happen.

INGRAM: Basically that is correct, although there was concern. A core reason that the U.S. government pushed privatization so fast and so hard was the concept that we've got to get these economic tools out of the hands of government so that they can't revert to communism.

Q: Hmmm. They never thought about oligarchs.

INGRAM: Exactly.

Q: Interesting. Well, lots of lessons there, and I hope as we go on that you'll reflect back on that. But before we move to your post congress career, do you have any general thoughts about how USAID can be effective in dealing with congress, recognizing that the congresses we have now are very different from your time? But are there things that AID (Agency for International Development) can do to help itself and explain itself, or things that it should avoid?

INGRAM: I think those in charge of AID congressional relations have been too controlling and too restrictive on its staff. That's ebbed and flowed. But overall, they have not given staff the freedom to engage with the congress which is what congressional staff wants. The congress doesn't always want to just hear from the administrator and the AAs (assistant administrators). They particularly want to hear from the field staff. They want to hear from the technicians who know the work.

Q: Right. And it's not a "gotcha" thing?

INGRAM: It's not a "gotcha" thing, that's right. And the more information you can give the congress, the better off the agency is. And there will be a few people who want to play "gotcha."

Q: Right.

INGRAM: The more and quicker response you can give to the congress, the more understanding you're going to get from the congress. Congressional relations needs to be headed by somebody who understands development and politics. The ideal thing would be somebody who has spent five years working in the congress and then five years working at AID.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: Because the congress doesn't want to hear just from a person with an elevated title. They want to be talked to by somebody who knows what they're talking about.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: So the congressional relations operation needs to be headed up by somebody who understands the programs and the policies, but also understands the political process, and is comfortable with releasing his own experts go up to the congress and to report back -- and to keep a good information flow within AID so that the congressional relations office knows what's going on, knows who is going up there, knows who's interested in what. You know, congressional affairs at USAID needs to understand that USAID mission directors are very savvy people who deal with politics in the countries they're in all the time so they can handle dealing with the congress..

Q: Right. But you found that they're not allowed to go up to the Hill, or they're not encouraged to?

INGRAM: They're not encouraged to go up, and sometimes AID staff is not allowed to go up. "We're not ready to brief them on that yet." Well, by the time they're ready to brief them, and they engage in a consultation, the decision has been made, so it's not a real consultation and congressional staff resent that.

Q: Yeah.

INGRAM: MCC (Millennium Challenge Corporation) has gotten so much support by being consultative. AID today, the way Jim Richardson is running the transformation process, has been very consultative with the development community.

Q: Uh-huh.

INGRAM: Are they doing the same thing with the congress? I hope they are.

Q: Yeah.

INGRAM: Jim claims he's been up to the Hill 60 times. Now, did he go up there before the decisions were made or after? I don't know. You have got to go up there before the decisions are made and let the congress and the congressional senior staff feel that they have some ownership. That feeling of ownership is what gets you support.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: And feeling of ownership can be no more than having been heard.

Q: Right. Which takes a level of trust and on-going communication.

INGRAM: Exactly. And takes some time.

Q: Right. But I've often thought that one of the values in having long-term staff at headquarters is you can develop friendships, or at least good working relations. If you have staff changing every two years it's often very hard to establish that rapport.

INGRAM: That's right.

Q: Well, I think that's right. Any thoughts on congress and the way it functioned when it was functioning well, in your opinion? We talked about the bipartisanship for 20 of the 21 years and maybe that's the lesson.

INGRAM: Yeah. I don't think I have further thoughts.

Q: Alright. So we talked a little bit about the Gingrich Revolution and the changes that were coming. Can you talk a little bit about your transition from the hill? I know you had many offers.

CITIZENS DEMOCRACY CORPS

INGRAM: I wouldn't say I had many offers.

Q: Well, I think you did. But you had many options anyway. What caused you to take a job with USAID?

INGRAM: Well, first of all I took a job with the Citizens Democracy Corps. On January 1 of '95 I was out of a job because the Republicans took over the House. I spent six weeks having an enjoyable, interesting time moving around Washington talking to people about what I might do. I had spent the last four years heavily focused on the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I received an offer as the vice-president of the Citizens Democracy Corps, which was using U.S. volunteer businessmen to help support and develop new entrepreneurs in the former Soviet Union. That sounded interesting. So I did that for three years.

Q: Okay, I missed that. Okay. And you traveled to the former Soviet Union?

INGRAM: Yes

Q: And did you find that US businesses were receptive to the idea?

INGRAM: Oh yeah, very much so.

Q: It was funded by AID?

INGRAM: It was an initiative of the State Department. I think it was Eagleburger, maybe somebody else, who went out to the corporate sector and said, "You've got to set this up." So some corporate CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) created the CDC with contributions of a few million dollars. After a couple of years it began living on AID funding.

Q: Uh-huh.

INGRAM: It found newly formed businesses that wanted help and sent a volunteer out for a month or two months.

Q: And how did it differ from the International Executive Service corps?

INGRAM: They're not retired. The International Service Corps (IESC) is comprised of retired business people. The CDC volunteers are non-retired.

Q: Okay.

INGRAM: And I did that for three years.

Q: Were you optimistic? Did you find there were entrepreneurial opportunities?

DAA FOR EUROPE AND EURASIA

INGRAM: Entrepreneurial in spirit. Yeah, no doubt about it. I spent six or seven years in the '90s focused on the former Soviet Union, and then AID asked me to serve as the DAA (deputy assistant administrator) in E&E (Europe & Eurasia) Bureau during the second Clinton term.

Q: Right. So having dealt with AID across the table for 24 years, what were your initial impressions when you became a DAA?

INGRAM: I think my first impression was how little I knew and how experienced and knowledgeable the people around me were, that I really needed to spend time listening to them and learning.

Q: So not just about how AID works but some of the substance of the development program?

INGRAM: Right. My first week on the job I was faced with having to fire a staffer, which my senior staff had set up to happen. And I had to make the decision to deny the big car that one of our mission directors wanted, which was going to provide him a car bigger than the ambassador's. That stopped at my desk and was a no brainer. You want a car bigger than the ambassador's? Forget that. That guy never liked me after that.

Q: Right. And did he want a bigger car just because he could?

INGRAM: Who knows?

Q: But I know you didn't get just the administrative or personnel tasks.

INGRAM: Well, I mainly didn't do the administrative or personnel things, because there was another DAA who knew AID inside out, so I really didn't deal with that stuff. I dealt much more with the programs.

Q: Right. Which is the more fun stuff. But remind me of the names at the time. Was Tom Dine still there?

INGRAM: No. Don Pressley was acting (AA). Barbara Turner had recently left as one of the DAAs. And a guy who had been mission director in Romania was the other DAA with me.

Q: Not Carlo Pascual?

INGRAM: No. Carlos had left by then. I cannot remember the name of the other DAA with me and at the end of my time he was succeeded by Linda Morse.

Q: Okay, so there had been some transition. Certainly Don Pressley knew how things worked and could be a guide for you.

INGRAM: Paige Alexander was our special assistant and she had been in the agency five years and helped ease me into my job.

Q: So that was a difficult time in Russia.

INGRAM: I focused on the former Soviet Union. The other DAA handled Eastern Europe.

Q: Yes, I remember that we still didn't know very much, or understand the depths of the economic collapse. But you must have seen it when you went out to visit the mission and visit the programs. Did you feel our programs were appropriately targeted? Did you ever come away thinking, "We shouldn't be doing x, we really should be doing y?"

INGRAM: Yes, I felt like we were doing the right thing. An interesting case study of where I was wrong was that we had spent three or four years providing tax advice to the Duma, with nothing to show for it. Okay, we spent 25 million dollars over three or four years. Nothing to show for it. I was ready to pull the plug on the program. The next year the Duma passed their tax bill better than anything we ever passed.

Q: Is that right? So they were taking it in?

INGRAM: Yes. So it showed you that you have to have patience. And you've got to have confidence. You've got to take risks. Maybe that 25 million dollars won't pay off. But if it does pay off, it's a big payoff.

Q: Right. Where would you say that some of the big payoffs were in what we did in the late '90s?

INGRAM: Well, the privatization programs were a big mixed payoff, there's no doubt about that. You can argue until the end of this century the pros and cons of that, but the payoff was big.

Q: Because it got the economy ostensibly out of the hands of the government?

INGRAM: Right. And the housing privatization was a big payoff.

Q: The program Ray Struyk ran?

INGRAM: Yes. I think less significant was the agriculture privatization. Because what happened in so many countries is that you got your certificate for that acreage but you couldn't sell it. You couldn't exit the cooperative arrangement.

Q: Why was that? Was that our restriction?

INGRAM: No, that wasn't ours. That was the local government rule. So what could have been a huge payoff was delayed, and in some countries it is still delayed today.

Q: So just say a little bit more. The people then had title to the land, but they couldn't sell it.

INGRAM: They had title to the land, but they didn't have the full incentive to invest in it, they couldn't use it as collateral, because it couldn't be sold. They couldn't sell it and move to the city. So you couldn't have the three farmers in this cooperative who really wanted to be farmers buy up enough land to be efficient and make the investments. And the people who were fed up with farming couldn't move to the cities.

Q: Right. And the local government insisted on that. Is that a holdover from communist times?

INGRAM: Yes. I think the work we did building up civil society through multiple different types of organizations was significant.

Q: Right. Because at the beginning there were mainly environmental organizations and few enough of those.

INGRAM: Indigenous ones, yes, that's right. The work we did with small business was significant. We put a lot of support and effort into small business in many different ways. And I think that had a payoff that was good.

Q: Now you were there when Putin was appointed, right?

INGRAM: He was the mayor of St. Petersburg.

Q: I thought he came in before 2000, but maybe not.

INGRAM: Just before my time at USAID ended.

Q: Do you recall having to worry about political machinations within Russia?

INGRAM: No, not so much. That was the State Department's job to worry about that.

Q: Well, let me ask you this. What were the relations between AID and State at that time?

INGRAM: They were good then because Bill Taylor was the coordinator. He and I had a very constructive relationship. I had good relationships with all of the ambassadors I dealt with, several who became friends and who I still see. So I felt it was a positive relationship. On balance the ambassadors were quite supportive of USAID. You ran into a few minor problems, like the ambassador in Armenia who was pushing us to provide computers to the secondary schools. A great idea, but no concept that they might not have the internet or who would maintain the computers and do the training.

Q: Or the electricity.

INGRAM: Or the electricity. They didn't have anybody who could fix the computers when they broke down. So there was not a lot of deep thought going into this. You ran into that.

Q: Right. And your job was to gently persuade them that it wasn't the timing?

INGRAM: That's right.

Q: Do you feel that the AID rank and file accepted you? Did you develop good working relations with them?

INGRAM: Yes. I felt they accepted me. They either accepted me or were good at managing up.

Q: Yeah, well, okay. Often it's difficult for political appointees to establish their bona fides with career staff, but that didn't seem to be an issue.

INGRAM: Right. I didn't feel it was an issue with me. I think I'm a pretty good listener and I think people value that. And I didn't come in with a big agenda that I wanted things changed. I was there really to support the staff.

Q: Right. Did you get sent to the hill a fair amount because of your prior connections?

INGRAM: Not as much as I would have expected. In fact, I spent more time on the hill on my own initiative than being sent up there.

Q: Right, interesting. So maybe my last question on this period is, is there anything you wish that the U.S. had done for Russia that either you didn't think of at the time, or that you couldn't sell, that might have made a difference?

INGRAM: Yes, absolutely. I think we should have been involved in the education systems -- in introducing critical thinking, trying to influence the curriculum, and particularly the training of teachers. We were very wrong in thinking that they had advanced education systems that worked.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: In retrospect, I think I would have doubled down on civil society. We did a fair amount; I think we should have done a lot more. An important part of civil society is small and medium sized business. I think privatization going awry to the oligarchs actually was not so much a problem of the design, as the Russian government only let us implement half the design. They didn't move on the regulatory and commercial systems that were necessary.

Q: To make sure that it didn't fall through?

INGRAM: So the design was pretty good. But the implementation was faulty.

Q: Right. But then what would the Russian government let you do? There were areas that were just off the table?

INGRAM: Off limits, yes.

Q: I suspect education would have been too.

INGRAM: I have no idea. I know that AID has run into education curriculum being off the table in other countries. My favorite example is Egypt, a country you know well. They wouldn't let us deal with the curriculum, but they let us train the teachers. What do you do when you train the teachers?

Q: Right.

INGRAM: You teach them to let the students ask questions.

LAUNCHING THE US GLOBAL LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN

Q: Right. Yeah. So you have alluded to this, but you had already been working on the side on building coalitions in support of the international affairs budget. And I'm basically going to move to the transition after the Clinton administration. Over the last 20 years I don't know anyone who has been more involved in foreign aid reform and advocacy on behalf of the entire 150 Account than you, and working to bring new voices and new power to the table. So I want to spend a lot of time on this, and I think that will probably come into our next session. But can you just talk about the transition, and what you had been thinking that brought you to what you have been doing in your post-AID career?

INGRAM: Well, I would like to suggest that this is the result of deep strategic thinking!

Q: Well, I'm sure it was.

INGRAM: I'm sure it was not. When I left the congress on January 1, not Gingrich, but some of his lieutenants were attacking foreign aid. So a handful of us, six or eight of us,

over a couple of lunches (no martinis!) in January agreed we would share intelligence and do a little educational work with the congress.

Q: And that was in?

INGRAM: January, '95.

Q: The bunch of you were all on the hill?

INGRAM: I was the only one who had just come off the hill. The others were Vicky Markell at PSI, Jeff Coleman with AIPAC, Ted Weihe with the cooperatives and credit unions. And several others.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: Then about month three, somebody, a foundation or the head of a foundation, gave us a contribution of \$60,000 or \$80,000. Just out of the blue.

Q: You weren't an entity.

INGRAM: We were nothing. We scratched our heads as to what to do with this. We then interviewed three people to manage this amorphous alliance.

Q: With the vague idea to promote U.S. engagement.

INGRAM: It started out to educate the congress on the importance of foreign aid. But we quickly came to the conclusion that foreign aid was not a way to approach Republicans. It was U.S. engagement, the roles of both State and AID. the bigger issue was the International Affairs budget account. We interviewed three people. One of them was the former general counsel at AID who went to jail for a while. Our choice was a young woman who had just left AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) to set up her consulting firm, Liz Schroyer. We hired her a quarter or a third of her time. At that point we had made three fundamental strategic decisions. One, the issue was funding the entire international affairs budget account, not just foreign aid. Second, it has to be bipartisan. Third, we needed the business community if we're going to talk to Republicans.

Q: Right. Now this was still in the 1990s.

INGRAM: 1995.

Q: You had to create an entity to receive the money, or did one of your organizations provide the home for the initiative?

INGRAM: Interaction handled the grant.

Q: They gave you a home?

INGRAM: No, they didn't give us a home, but the money flowed through Interaction.

Q: Okay.

INGRAM: Then we set up a 501(c)4, because we were going to lobby.

Q: And what was it called at the time?

INGRAM: It was called the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign. There were long debates. I wanted U.S. Global Engagement. Other people said, "No, the Republicans won't go along with 'engagement.'"

Q: You have to have 'leadership' in there?

INGRAM: It's got to be U.S. Leadership. So I lost that one. They were probably right.

Q: Well, clearly it has legs. I'm going to stop here because I know you have a phone call. We'll pick up there and the amazing history of the US Global Leadership Campaign.

When we left off you were alluding to what I see as a parallel trend for your entire career, although it might have been actually been the main trajectory: foreign aid reform. And you were saying that after 1995, you and a number of people started worrying about how to educate the American public about the importance of investing and supporting international engagement.

INGRAM: The congress, not the public.

Q: Okay, it started with the congress. And you mentioned organizations that were involved, including InterAction. I wonder if you could just start with some names? Because these are names that continue to be important in the development community today.

INGRAM: InterAction has been around longer than other organizations. Probably 50 years. And it's really a business association of the development NGOs. It has almost 200 members today. But they never were that robust when I was on the hill on lobbying for the international affairs budget account. So the first organization that really did that was the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC) which was founded in 1995.

Q: And you were a major mover in that.

INGRAM: I was one of the founders and the first president and the chairman for 10 or 15 years.

Q: Who were some of the other founders, or the people that you worked with to get this up and running?

INGRAM: Ted Wiehe. Carolyn Reynolds from InterAction. Ted Wiehe was with the cooperatives. There was a woman with the population groups and I don't remember her name right now. And a couple of others. There were six or eight of us.

Q: Okay.

INGRAM: And by the end of the first year we recruited a couple of businesses to join us, on the grounds that they had a direct interest in the Export-Import Bank, in OPIC (Overseas Private Investment Corporation), and in international commercial services. The interesting thing is that changed by the early 2000s. We had a meeting at OMB (Office of Management and Budget) in which we said, "Oh, sorry, our business colleagues can't come with us but they really support this because they believe in the State Department and in our AID programs, they use our embassies overseas for market access. Bill Lane will tell you that if you don't take care of HIV/AIDS in Africa, Caterpillar is not going to have a market." And OMB responds, "Oh, you're fooling us. That's not true. Bring them in here, we want to hear from them." So we did, and it was a real shift for the business community from being only interested in the international affairs budget account for those two or three agencies that they really benefit from, to support the U.S. diplomatic and development presence around the world, and how that promotes stability, and market access for them, and positive economic business environments.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: So there was a real shift in the business community, and it led to a lot more of them coming on board.

Q: But it also indicated a shift at OMB. And this was probably at the end of the Clinton administration?

INGRAM: No, the beginning of Bush. OMB came to understand there were businesses supporters and a bigger constituency for the development and diplomacy than they realized.

Q: Right. That they probably threw up much less resistance to the budget.

INGRAM: Correct. Our original focus was the congress. But periodically we would focus on the executive branch. Under Clinton, we realized that each government agency -- Treasury, State, AID, Commerce, etc. -- were up on the Hill defending their little piece of the international development pie. So we went to the NSC (National Security Council) and said, "You guys are dysfunctional on the Hill. You need to bring the agencies together to argue for the entire pie." Periodically we would do things like explaining to OMB that there's a constituency, explaining to the State Department that there's a constituency. And pointing out ways in which they could defend the budget better.

Q: So were you able to do this while you were still working at USAID?

INGRAM: No. I was Vice President of the Citizens Democracy Corps when was president of USGLC for three years. I then took a break from USGLC during my three or four years at AID, and then I came back and I was president for another eight or 10 years.

Q: Right. So were there any other organizations that were trying to take this broader look at the 150 Account?

INGRAM: There weren't any other organizations. No. And there still is not today an organization that looks at the entire account. What you had in the mid-2000s was the creation of DATA that became the ONE Campaign. ONE has been very significant in building up support on the Hill, but they pick off specific issues. Debt in Africa, HIV/AIDS, development finance today. But the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition has never tried to educate the American people. It's always sought to mobilize grass tops, community leaders, to influence policy makers.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: Whereas the One Campaign mobilizes hundreds of thousands of Americans to send emails to members of Congress.

Q: To their representatives.

INGRAM: That's right. And again, following the USGLC, some of the grassroots NGOs now mobilize their constituency. CARE, SAVE, World Vision. They each have a congressional lobby day that brings their members from across the country. InterAction is more active today in lobbying. So USGLC starting 25 years ago, but all these other organizations starting 15 years ago have added their voices. Members of congress and staff hear a good bit about the international affairs budget account or at least pieces of it.

Q: Right. Now do you remember there was a campaign that pre-dated USGLC that was called Just One Percent, or Just One Half of One Percent? It was basically to draw attention to the fact that the international affairs budget is so small in the scheme of things. Was that RESULTS?

INGRAM: No, actually, it was USGLC that started Just One Percent. That was one of our early slogans. There may have been another one that I'm not aware of.

Q: That's really interesting, and I want to follow that up.

INGRAM: We distributed plastic globes around the Hill, with one penny in it. It said, "Just One Percent."

Q: Right. And I remember that there were buttons that people wore.

INGRAM: That's right.

ACADEMY FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Q: Okay. So let's come back to that. But when you left AID in 2001, did you go immediately to AED (Academy for Educational Development)?

INGRAM: I went to AED.

Q: Okay, so talk a little bit about what you were asked to do there, and then I am going to ask you about the demise of AED.

INGRAM: I was asked to organize, stand up and manage the Basic Education Coalition.

Q: Which had just been puttering along?

INGRAM: No, which had been conceptually agreed to. The heads of 18 development organizations had agreed with Hewlett. Hewlett said, "We will fund this entity if you agree to work together to advocate for basic education in foreign aid programs." And the CEOs agreed to set it up, and they asked me to stand it up.

Q: Okay. And talk a little bit about the issues with education or basic education at the time.

INGRAM: I think the interesting thing was there had been a prior effort on education in 1990. It had been focused on both basic and higher education. AID had been a member of the effort. It lacked dedicated funding and nobody was really in control, and there were tensions between higher education and basic education groups. And I'm told it just sort of faded away.

Q: Yeah, but the idea was to increase support for education funding, because that was an area that generally got the short end of the stick.

INGRAM: Education funding had been robust in earlier times, but by the '90s wasn't. To some extent the motivation for the basic education coalition was the MDGs (Multilateral Development Goals) and the commitment to education, and the realization that the commitment would not be met if civil society didn't get mobilized in this country.

Q: Right. And Hewlett's interest?

INGRAM: That's interesting. Hewlett's interest came through their population program. Via a conversation between the population officer at Hewlett and a senior education officer at AED, the population expert became convinced that Hewlett would not accomplish its goals for population unless there was an educated populace, unless girls

were educated. Unless it was a broader education. So they saw the tie between their population goals and education. So the Basic Education Coalition was funded out of the population program at Hewlett.

Q: Hmm. Interesting. And the goals of the Basic Education Coalition?

INGRAM: It was basically to increase AID funding.

Q: So the metric was funds.

INGRAM: To increase funding.

Q: Okay. Can you talk a little bit about how you accomplished that?

INGRAM: We accomplished it in two ways. None of which I, or the coalition, I would argue, really get credit for. One is pictures and stories in the media of Afghan girls not being allowed to go to school. And why is that significant? It is significant because the way you reach policy makers is first through their heart. Then if you have the rationale to back it up, they'll listen to you. But they've got 18 or more other priorities they are focused on. But if you can touch their heartstrings then they'll pay attention to what you're advocating. And that's what those stories did. That's what the Taliban in Afghanistan did for basic education that country. And secondly, in some ways we were just the field staff for Nita Lowey.

Q: Okay, Congresswoman Nita Lowey?

INGRAM: Nita Lowey, the ranking democrat on the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee, had a long commitment to education. She had been trying to advance it. But even somebody in a significant position like she was can't do it by herself. So what we did was to educate other members of congress to see the significance of education and to support her. Once she saw that she had support, she could advance the goal.

Q: Right. And she was in a significant position to do that.

INGRAM: That's right. She was the ranking Democrat on the relevant appropriations subcommittee.

Q: So who objected to the basic education?

INGRAM: You know, it never was an issue of people objecting, it was an issue of people having other priorities. If you are going to give more money to education there's going to be less money for health, or democracy, or water, or whatever. So nobody thought education was bad, but basic education funding succeeded because the basic education community was mobilized and, for example, higher education wasn't.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: Which is ironic because higher education has a higher education institution in every congressional district in the country. I mean, there is a natural constituency.

Q: Right. But the advocates for basic education, these were mainly NGOs?

INGRAM: Mainly NGOs. A couple contractors, but mainly NGOs. Mostly implementing NGOs and a couple of advocacy groups -- Women's Edge and Bread for the World.

Q: Right. And your metric for success was funding, but I assume they also had some education indicators that they were looking at.

INGRAM: I wouldn't say we had education indicators, we had an education rationale, and the rationale we used was not that education is good, but that education is the foundation for other things that are central to development. It's the foundation for effective economic development. It's the foundation of good governance. It's the foundation of health. If women can't read, if they can't understand, they can't provide health care to their children. Educated girls marry later and have few babies. So the rationale we used was not that education is inherently good, which of course we all believe, but that it will promote the rest of the development agenda.

Q: How did you get the 18-odd NGOs to cooperate? Because I do remember at the beginning there was a little bit of one-upmanship as to who would be first among equals.

INGRAM: Two things on that. There was some resentment and jealousy that AED was leading this. Now, as it happened, Steve Moseley put the coalition together, and agreed to house it. And nobody else stepped up and said, "I'll house it." So in some ways he became the leader by default. And he was pretty squeaky clean in making sure that this wasn't going to operate to the benefit of AED. In fact it probably did because AED was seen as the leader.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: The difficult part was that I spent about four or five months meeting periodically with the education staff of these 18 organizations and never could bring them together around a common agenda on what we should do and how we should function. Fortunately, one day I called the senior statesmen in several of these organizations -- Bob Chase at World Learning, Don Cohen at PLAN, and Bill Reese at International Youth Foundation (IYF). I said, "We're going to have a meeting in the next month. I'm going to ask Liz Schroyer to facilitate it, and you all are going to come and push us to agreement and consensus." Liz and these senior statesmen help move the group to decisions.

Q: You had already worked with them on other things so they trusted you?

INGRAM: Yeah. I had known them through other venues. That moved us beyond the education staff wanting to spend all their time arguing the details of what education policy we should be pursuing, and to organizing to be an advocacy operation.

Q: Uh-huh. And after that it was smooth sailing?

INGRAM: Smooth sailing.

Q: So just talk briefly about what did happen to the education budget, both during the time you were at AED, and then afterwards.

INGRAM: The education budget went from 80 or 100 million dollars in 2000, to 800 million by 2008.

Q: And that was the high-water mark?

INGRAM: The high-water mark.

Q: Well, nothing succeeds like success, right? Although you may have had detractors in other organizations. Did you go out and visit some of the projects that were enhanced by this additional money?

INGRAM: I did not because all of our member organizations were doing that. So that was not value added for me. What we did do was I went out once to take some members of congress to Africa to visit projects.

Q: And these were key members whose support you needed?

INGRAM: Not necessarily key, but members sitting on relevant committees. One of them was Mark Green, and another Senator Johnny Isakson, who at that time was a congressman.

Q: Yes, we'll talk about that.

INGRAM: And these handful of members we took became real advocates for education. They saw what was going on in the field and were impressed.

Q: Right. I know funding hasn't stayed at that level. What caused the budget to go back down again? And is the Basic Education Coalition still functioning?

INGRAM: Yes, the Basic Education Coalition is still functioning. Not with Hewlett money. Hewlett money stood it up and supported it for a long time. The budget is still not at quite as robust a level as it was before. There is so much pressure on the budget.. The agency has not been happy with that line item. There is a pretty large pipeline of funding in basic education. Missions feel there are other more pressing demands in many countries. But that's not the type of thing that necessarily influences the congress. I think

it's probably more just competing demands, and especially the growth of the health budget and HIV/AIDS funding.

Q: Right. So in terms of legislation, was it set up as an earmark, or a "try your best" to hit this level? What did the legislation look like?

INGRAM: What it looked like in the appropriations bill, which is where it occurred, not in authorizing language, was a line item. It's a strange animal. It was that the agency needs fund basic education at a certain dollar level. Some was in DA (development assistance) and the bigger portion was ESF (Economic Support Funds).

Q: With ESF, you were restricted in the countries that you could work in, presumably.

INGRAM: Under the original concept of ESF, yes. Not the way it's been abused in the last 10 years. In the last 10 or 12 years there has been very little distinction between the countries that receive DA and ESF. So in fact, it doesn't restrict you.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: It should, but it doesn't.

Q: So if it's a line item in the appropriations, the agency is required to comply.

INGRAM: They have to do it.

Q: And that's a great way of protecting a program. Was it at that time that the focus shifted to early reading, or did that come later?

INGRAM: That came later. That came under Obama.

Q: Okay, so the definition of basic education was fairly broad?

INGRAM: It was very broad. And the agency's strategy was pretty broad. The later focus on early reading was because people wanted a hard, clear metric.

Q: Uh-huh. Not just funding levels.

INGRAM: That's right.

Q: Okay. So that was the focus of your work at AED.

INGRAM: That was the focus of my work at AED for three or four years. And then I was asked to stand up the Education Policy and Data Center (EPDC). That was a little think tank, research operation within AED that was mainly designed to serve the outside community.

Q: And describe EPDC a little bit.

INGRAM: It was a small staff with a very talented education demography expert, Babette Wills, and four junior staff data crunchers. We collected all of the data from around the world that we could on basic education, both administrative data and household survey data. We put it in a common database where all of the data would work together and then produced country profiles and policy papers on education intended to service education ministries and other such folks in developing countries.

Q: Right. And was the funding from AID?

INGRAM: The funding was from AID.

Q: And did foreign governments actually access the information or request help, or was it mainly scholars who work on education issues? Or policy makers?

INGRAM: Our interactions mainly were with ministry officials. Everything we did was online, so who actually used it more than others, we have no idea. Infrequently, staff would go out and work in a country for a couple of weeks with ministry officials. We also worked with and did education projections for UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). Babette Wills became a real expert in education projections. She, for a number of years, ran the projections for the annual UNESCO report on education.

Q: Yeah, fascinating. I find myself wondering, "Why did it take so long for the development community to realize that this needed to be pulled together?" I know you dealt with lousy data. Or fanciful data.

INGRAM: Basically it was one person at AID who said, "We need better data." This would have been in the early 2000s, before the data revolution of the last 10 years.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: So this cowboy...

Q: Name?

INGRAM: Greg Loos, who was not a well-loved person in AID because he was somewhat awkward and pushy, and suffered no fools. But he saw the value of data and he really pushed it and got it set up and running and advocated for it within the agency.

Q: I know one of the things that the EPDC center did was to translate very complex information into charts and graphs that could be used with policy makers.

INGRAM: Right. What I would call "pictures". Everybody always bemoaned the fact that we didn't have good data. So how can you produce accurate pictures without good

data? What I learned was, well, you may have bad data, but if you can produce a chart that a policy maker can instantly understand about the benefit of girls' education, or something, you've got their attention. And then they will support you to get better data.

Q: Right. So that's lesson number 2. Lesson number 1 is you start with the heart, get their attention, and then move on. Lesson number 2 is that a picture is worth a thousand words. And that's another way to get their attention.

INGRAM: That's right.

Q: Is EPDC still going?

INGRAM: It's still functioning.

Q: Not in AED? Where is it?

INGRAM: It's at FHI 360, into which AED was merged.

Q: Okay. So you did that for two or three years?

INGRAM: For five years.

Q: So you were at AED for a total of how long?

INGRAM: For 10 years.

Q: Ten years. Great. That was a behemoth organization. I think there were years when it was USAID's largest non-profit "vendor," which is AID's term of art for organizations that it supported. So AED was much bigger than anyplace else you had ever worked. Did it feel like it was?

INGRAM: Well, it wasn't bigger than AID.

Q: Well, that's true.

INGRAM: And it wasn't bigger than the congress. But in each one of these cases, I worked for a small unit within the congress. I worked in a modest unit in AID, and I ran my own little show at AED, and didn't have much contact with the rest of the organization. So I never felt like I was in the midst of a big behemoth. Also most of my relationships were outside of AED.

Q: Right. And thinking back on AED, do you think that's the way most people functioned there? They had their own program?

INGRAM: I think that's the way most people function who run specific programs. Now, the education people at AED ran a pretty big program. And the people who worked in the

central office, for example the people who were in charge of finance, the people in charge of development and fundraising, they probably felt like they were sitting on top of a big organization.

Q: Right. But yours was a small, discrete program, and you pretty much had complete control, to the extent that being a contractor for AID has some autonomy. So I'm leading up to the demise of AED.

INGRAM: Okay

Q: Right. Well, a lot of people don't remember AED, but it really was a powerhouse in the area of education, health, and nutrition.

INGRAM: The last year I was at AED I was asked to become senior vice-president for public policy, because of all the work I was doing with USGLC and aid reform.

Q: And you had been doing that in parallel?

INGRAM: Yes, in parallel. And with the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN).

Q: Which we'll come back to.

INGRAM: Steve Moseley, the president, said, "You know, you really should focus on all that stuff full time." That's a slight exaggeration, but that was part of it. So I was kicked upstairs to be in a more strategic position for AED. Then one night, after I was in that position for about a year, I got a call at home from the chairman of the board to ask if I would serve as president of the agency, because they just asked Steve Moseley to step down. Several days later I agreed to do it on an interim basis. Which is, I think, what they had in mind.

Q: Okay.

INGRAM: And you want to know what the origin of all that was?

Q: Yes. Whatever you are willing to share.

INGRAM: Whatever I know I will share. I don't think I ever knew the full story, even though I was sitting on top of the organization for four months, and dealing with all the lawyers and AID and whatnot. The basic story is that AED, which was a 500-million-dollar organization, was doing a project in Pakistan. The country was devastated by floods, and AID wanted to get relief money there quickly, and they asked AED to convert a program it was doing into procuring commodities. To provide relief supplies. Something AED had never done. AED had always been focused on service delivery, not commodity delivery.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: There ended up being some misuse of funds on the ground in Pakistan by local staff. AED found out about it and told the AID project manager and I think the inspector general about it, and then went about trying to deal with it in its very methodical, slow manner. AED wanted to figure out who was really at fault in a way that didn't besmirch good people. The inspector general basically said, "You guys are moving too slow." It looked to them like AID was not taking it seriously.

Q: And how much misappropriation was there? Are you talking millions and millions?

INGRAM: No. You're talking about a 5 million dollar project in which there was penny ante stuff. So no, it was falsifying vouchers for small purchases. It was a couple of people.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: But anyway, it looked like AED wasn't taking this seriously. So this got thrown up to the procurement officer at AID, which a year before had been skewered on the Hill by the House Government Operations Committee for not using disbarment and suspension as a serious tools in managing its contractors and grantees. This is what I was told.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: So, AED became an example. There ended up being some pretty tough conversations between the procurement officer in AID procurement and Steve Moseley, the president and his colleagues managing this, and the board finally got alerted and came to realize that AED was under threat of being suspended from dealing with USAID.

Q: And that was its major source of funding.

INGRAM: Right. So the board got mobilized, and they asked Steve, who had been president for 23 years, to step down. I think they thought, because I was a known commodity with AID and in the community and had a clean reputation, that putting me in charge would make it look like AED was doing the right thing. The first thing I did was go down to AID to meet with this person in procurement and do a mea culpa and say, "We're going to clean this up." We hired lawyers specialized in accountability for organizations, and over a period of six weeks to two months, dramatically changed the accountability and financial procedures at AED. We provided all that documentation to the procurement officer and it didn't make any difference. There was no, "Yeah, you're doing the right thing, let's lift the suspension." That led to a cash shortfall for AED and real financial trouble. It was clear that AID was not going to lift that suspension no matter what we did and just wanted a skin on the wall.

Q: And was there pressure put on AID to reconsider?

INGRAM: Not that I know of.

Q: So all you had was the memory of congress saying, "You're not hard assed enough."

INGRAM: Right. Then after three/four months of this, it was clear where things were going, that AED was going to have to be sold, or merged, or whatnot, and that there had to be some real triage. The guy sitting next in line to me had been working in AED for 20 years, and knew it inside and out. I convinced the board that he was a much better person to do this triage than I was. Ironically, at the same time this was going on, one of the big engineering firms had a similar situation to AED's in which two of their officers were criminally charged and went to jail.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: And they never got suspended because they had the right lawyers.

Q: And so was it a question of the lawyers, or was it just that the procurement officer decided to make AED the example?

INGRAM: Who knows -- likely both?

Q: Yeah. But just for people who don't know, and more and more people over the years are not going to know, AED actually went out of business and much of its portfolio was transferred.

INGRAM: It was taken over by FHI 360, with about 80% of its portfolio intact.

Q: And the staff went with the projects?

INGRAM: The staff went with the projects, yes. I think, to me, my observation is the fundamental problem was you had people at AED and at AID who had never been involved in a large organization being slapped with a suspension and AED had never had an IG (inspector general) situation like this and didn't know how to manage it. The folks at AID didn't understand the threat that they were creating for AED.

Q: I know the whole cash flow thing was sort of a surprise.

INGRAM: Right. I think there was a lack of experience on both sides.

Q: Uh-huh. But the net result was one of the largest vendors disappeared.

INGRAM: One of the largest vendors disappeared, at a time when AID leadership was trying to move funding away from large vendors to smaller ones, and the result was to create an even larger vendor in FHI 360, which is a billion dollar operation today.

Q: Right. So any lessons you would draw from that experience?

INGRAM: The lessons you draw from that experience are that financial accountability is very important and you've got to have good systems in place. If somebody asked you to do something you're not experienced with doing, think about it real hard and see if you have the capacity to do it.

Q: Could AED have said no?

INGRAM: I don't know. Maybe they would have shut down that project. Who knows? But you know the way AID works, maybe we would have pissed off that officer in Pakistan and lost that five million dollar project, but some AID guy in Senegal wouldn't have known anything about it. So, it wouldn't have affected AED's reputation with AID writ large.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: Auditors don't really know what's going on in organization like AED.

Q: You mean the auditors who come in to do annual audits?

INGRAM: The annual audit that AED did every year. We went to them and they had no idea what the cash flow was at AED. I became very skeptical about the value of audits. They are superficial; they look at five percent of your billing and whatnot. They really have no fix on the overall picture. When we went to them, they couldn't tell us, "You've got this much in the bank, and you need this much next month." Auditing is a superficial process.

Q: Of course, with an organization that size, with so many moving parts, it's probably particularly difficult.

INGRAM: I think in this case, knowing after the fact what was going on in the procurement officer's mind, I assumed that she was a straight shooter, and that if we undertook what had to be done that would be honored and respected. In retrospect, I should have gone political.

Q: Yeah. You never went to the Hill.

INGRAM: I never went to the Hill. I never went to the higher-ups at AID who I knew. That was a mistake. I should have gone political. And I'm not one who likes going political. But I should have done it in that instance.

Q: That's a really interesting point.

MFAN (MODERNIZING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE NETWORK)

Q: The whole time you were at AED, including this very tumultuous end, you were also working with USGLC and sometime during that period MFAN (Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network) began. Talk a little bit about the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network.

INGRAM: Hewlett, beginning early-mid 2000s, was funding bits and pieces of aid reform work around Washington. They got the notion, “If we could bring these groups together and they could speak with one voice, it would be more powerful.” So, like the way they set up the Basic Education Coalition, they said, “If you guys come together, we’ll fund you.” And in some ways they really maybe even a little strong armed Gayle Smith at CAP (the Center for American Progress) and Steve Radelet at CGD (Center for Global Development) and asked them to set this up. Sixteen of us met over a weekend at the Wye plantation to see if we could agree to a common agenda to engage in joint advocacy and policy development.

Q: Right. And was it advocacy again for funding?

INGRAM: No, funding was not central to the MFAN agenda. It was about the effectiveness of assistance. It was about policy and how you run programs. It was, “Okay, the funding is there, let’s make sure it’s well used.” That’s what it was about. And at that point I had been independently, not with Hewlett support, but I had been independently working on aid reform.

Q: With someone else, or just on your own?

INGRAM: Well, actually, Bob Chase, Bill Reese, Tom Fox, and I, would about three times a year get together for lunch. At a couple of those lunches we started talking about aid reform and got the idea of taking our ideas to one of the think tanks. Bill Reese and I put together a two page concept paper and he took it to somebody at CSIS (the Center for Strategic and International Studies). No, he took it to the Council on Foreign Relations. I took it to Lael Brainard at Brookings and to Patrick Cronin at CSIS. The latter two agreed to do a joint study.

Q: Brookings and CSIS?

INGRAM: Yes. They took it on, and Lael published a compendium book *Security By Other Means*.

Q: This was 2004 or 2005?

INGRAM: Yeah, that’s about right. Probably 2006/7. So that’s how I got involved. Lael put together a “commission.” A few of us would come together to opine and review the chapters that were written by other people.

Q: So its home, so to speak, was Brookings?

INGRAM: The home of that report was Brookings, with Lael Brainard.

Q: But MFAN came later, right?

INGRAM: MFAN came later. At that Wye plantation meeting, we all agreed to a pretty ambitious agenda, including an independent department of development and a rewrite of the Foreign Assistance Act. Hewlett agreed to fund what we named the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Group. With Gayle and Steve as co-chairs, we hired a staff that was headquartered at GPG (the Glover Park Group), with the funding coming through Bread for the World. So MFAN has never been an independent, separate organization. It's not a 501(c)(3). We've always had a financial fiduciary through an established organization. First it was Bread for the World, and now it's the New Venture Fund. That's the business of the New Venture Fund: it is the fiduciary agent for some 400 hundred small organizations like ours.

Q: Is that right? Wasn't that set up by Gates?

INGRAM: It may have been. It's part of Arabella, of which you know. It's a subsidiary of Arabella.

Q: I think the funding for the New Venture Fund did come from Gates. So was there a reason that you didn't want MFAN to be its own entity?

INGRAM: Yes. This was only going to be take two or three years.

Q: You'd have it all sorted?

INGRAM: All sorted out. Reform would be done and we could move on.

Q: Okay. I know how that goes.

INGRAM: Remember that from the former Soviet Union?

Q: Yeah, that's right. So was there agreement on what kind of reforms were needed?

INGRAM: Yes. We started by recommending a robust and independent USAID at the cabinet level. Also, a rewrite of the Foreign Assistance Act, a global development strategy, and stronger accountability.

Q: Right. And from that it has narrowed a bit in its scope.

INGRAM: MFAN has narrowed its scope very much since then. On day two or three we got nowhere on an independent department. Howard Berman picked up on rewriting the Foreign Assistance Act and tried that.

Q: Were you responsible for getting his attention on the rewrite?

INGRAM: You could say that, and he has said as much. The Obama administration didn't write a global development strategy, but they write a presidential determination on development, which was the first comprehensive policy statement and guidance on development. So that's sort of half-way to our strategy.

Q: Right. Agency wide, or government wide?

INGRAM: Government wide. Within the first couple of years, we transitioned from a robust, ideal agenda, to be much more pragmatic on what it is we can accomplish and what we can do. The agenda became focused on advancing local ownership and accountability and evaluation transparency. Those have become the bedrock of MFAN. We have loaned our name and support to food aid reform, because that's so important for effectiveness. But other organizations really have the expertise and lead on that and it was a waste of our time to pretend to take the lead. But we do add our voice to it.

Q: But MFAN has an advocacy focus, right? It's not a policy think tank.

INGRAM: It's a combination. It's interesting, particularly the last three or four years. When Trump got elected, like every other similar organization in town, in the first six weeks we had an emergency board meeting. What the hell are we going to do? Within three months, with the existential threat to AID, we said, "We've got to put an alternative out there." So we developed our own alternative, like a think tank would do. We put out a list of principles that should guide any reorganization. We put out a reorganization plan that returned to our more radical origins.

Q: Yes.

INGRAM: That led to four other plans being put out. Then we led those groups to come together behind a consensus. So in all of that process, it was policy development and advocacy, in order to provide the administration and the congress alternatives to folding AID into the State Department.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: And we've consistently focused on local ownership - remember when they came out with the metric that 30% of our funding is to go to local NGOs - our reaction was, "Well, that's a pretty crude, arbitrary metric." We spent three or four months brainstorming among our membership on what qualitative metrics might be. We shared those as they were being developed with people at AID. We published those, and finally our partners at AID threw up their hands and said, "We're going to work from what you guys did." That's happened three or four times, where MFAN has become a policy development entity that then advocates for that policy.

Q: Policy and advocacy. In a way that the PPL (the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning) can't.

INGRAM: That's right. And we've done that with Mark Green's reorganization.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: We put out recommendations, and we've done that with AID's Journey to Self-Reliance.

Q: And I want to come to those. But MFAN is a coalition of lots of different organizations, but coalitions don't write policy. So is it the staff that is driving it?

INGRAM: It varies. It's a coalition of organizations and people. Some of the members are there in their own right as former government officials. The answer is, the policy gets written by all of the above. Sometimes an issue will come up in our working group. We have a working group that meets every two weeks and is really our think tank. We bring people in from AID and elsewhere to discuss issues. Then we'll decide to take on an issue, or not, and we'll talk about it within that group. One or several of our members, or the MFAN staff, will then write up a policy brief. For example, in one instance, it was a Save the Children staffer who wrote up the position and was really the point person.

Q: But it comes out as an MFAN statement, not a Save the Children statement.

INGRAM: That's right. In the case of the existential threat to AID, I was the one who really insisted that we needed to put up an alternative plan, so I drafted the first plan. Then it was vetted among interested parties within MFAN over four meetings over five weeks. At the end of which, we came to the conclusion, "Well, it's going to take us another four months to get this vetted throughout MFAN, and so we agreed that just the co-chairs are just going to issue it." So the co-chairs issued the plan rather than MFAN.

Q: And you didn't get any pushback from the members?

INGRAM: No. Well, a little, after the fact. We have found ways to be pretty agile and to use the talent within the membership. But the staff is very important at honing and fine-tuning what we do.

Q: And how large is the staff now?

INGRAM: It's four.

Q: So you're getting a lot of work out of four very talented people! And USGLC has been continuing, and you are still involved with them. And MFAN, right? And now you are at Brookings. And I'm wondering to what extent those roles come together. Or are these separate streams?

INGRAM: No. I can't separate them. I also chair the board of Friends of Publish What you Fund. That's a transparency organization. MFAN believes in transparency. USGLC,

which is about the budget, is a member of MFAN. USGLC is a broad-based organization that operates at the 15,000 foot level. Whereas MFAN is at the 5000 foot level. MFAN puts together its robust AID reform agenda and USGLC doesn't endorse it, but it uses it. USGLC has found, like MFAN, that a reform agenda opens the door to a conversation with congressional members and staff. When USGLC goes out on the road to the states, people want to talk about "Why should we be giving all this money away when it's just wasted?" They've got the reform agenda to talk from. They've got the ownership and transparency initiatives and the reforms have already been made. So what do I do here at Brookings? I work some on other issues, but part of my work at Brookings is on aid reform and aid effectiveness. When I have my USGLC hat on, I don't go into quite so much detail on the reform agenda. But it all meshes together and reinforces each other.

RECENT POLICY CHANGES AT USAID

Q: It does. And maybe that's the common theme that's gone throughout your decades-long career. I wonder if you're willing to talk about your long-term engagement with Mark Green and the education of Mark Green over the years which clearly has helped him in his current role. I think you first encountered him when you went on a co-del (congressional delegation) with him to look at education projects, is that correct?

INGRAM: Right.

Q: And then did he join the USGLC?

INGRAM: His trip to Africa to look at education occurred just before the establishment of the Basic Education Coalition. But I got to know him quickly because he was one of our champions, and I went to him to recommend people to do a second trip. He was one of the members we went to ask, "Okay, what other members should we take to Africa?" I would work with him and his staff at budget time, at the appropriations time. So I got to know him a little bit then. He and his wife, out of college, lived in Africa teaching in a school.

Q: So he was already interested in Africa.

INGRAM: That's right. He spent a year in Africa teaching at a school with his wife. He became a lawyer and got elected to congress. After four terms he ran for governor of Wisconsin and lost. He was appointed as ambassador to Tanzania by Bush. He came back and came to work for USGLC as a senior staffer for a couple of years. Then he went on to lead Malaria No More.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: And then IGD.

Q: IGD?

INGRAM: The Initiative for Global Development. And then he became the head of the IRI, the International Republican Institute. So here's a guy who gets appointed to lead AID and he has the best background of anybody ever appointed. He was a diplomat, he was a member of congress, he was a developmentalist, he had it all.

Q: And he knew some of the major organizations.

INGRAM: Right. He knew the organizations, he knew the community, he knew the congress -- hard to beat.

Q: Sort of a no brainer.

INGRAM: Yeah. And he's a Republican internationalist.

Q: So the reform that he is introducing are probably ideas that have been gelling for quite some time. Is it going to go through?

INGRAM: I think so. I give him a lot of credit for putting in charge of the reform process one of his two senior political appointees, Jim Richardson, who has run this in a very open, collaborative fashion with career USAID staff. And they have consulted on the outside. They claim they've read everything that we've written. They've taken ideas inside the building, and outside, and I think put together a very rational plan. If anything, they have outdone those of us who have been sitting on the outside opining. They have taken those ideas and made them better.

Q: So how will AID look different if this goes through? Or how will it function differently?

INGRAM: How will it function differently? You will have consolidation and some greater coherence among important functions. You'll have budget and policy together for the first time since Alex Shakow was the head of PPC (Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination)

Q: Right.

INGRAM: And you will have this conglomeration of humanitarian/resilience/fragility work. So that maybe you can move more seamlessly from humanitarian to development.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: They will tell you that this organizational chart is only 20% of what they are trying to do. Equally, if not more important, is the procurement process reform. Now basically what they've done, and this is my interpretation, is looked at the procurement process and said, "Hmm, there's really not anything new out there. How do we make the current procurement process work better?"

Q: Yeah.

INGRAM: “How can we operate more as a partner? How can we be more agile, more adaptive? And how can we move decision making to the field?” They have an intent to move decision making to the field. We haven’t seen how that’s going to happen.

Q: Or even what it means.

INGRAM: That’s right, or what it means. There is a direction they haven’t gone in, I haven’t really had this conversation with them and you can respond to this better than anybody because you know the inside better than I do. There are certain things AID does that are just routine. This is true in a lot of humanitarian work. You know you have to procure so many tents, and food, and whatnot, and there are set processes for doing that. Same with some of the health services that we provide, they’ve just established ways to do that. In other areas, and particularly in fragile situations, we are involved with problems in civil society, in governance, that we don’t really have the answers or a set way to do. And rather than write prescriptive RFPs (request for proposals) and RFAs (request for applications), they need to have one page, “We’ve got to take that hill over there, you tell us how to take it. And we’ve got this much budget.” Let the bidders be more creative, and then hold them accountable for what they are proposing to do. They are talking about that in a very modest way.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: There are other areas where there are organizations that are out there doing very good things. This is what, in my recollection, AID did 40 years ago. They’re out there doing something and AID says, “Here’s some more money to go do it in these three additional locations.”

Q: That was the nature of grants.

INGRAM: Exactly. I think AID could be more efficient in its management if it realized that there are certain areas where it can just give grants. AID does not have to manage those projects.

Q: Right. So it comes back to the accountability issue and do you have accountability systems that would give congress, or the auditors, or whomever, confidence.

INGRAM: It also comes back to the culture in AID. Does it all have to be invented here?

Q: Right. That’s true. Absolutely that’s true. So you need a new cadre of staff too or at least different training.

INGRAM: Well, in some ways they’re talking about that. Like every administration ever since I’ve been around, they want to do more with the private sector. For me that goes

back all the way back to when Reagan got elected, his administration said it was going to do more with the private sector in foreign aid.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: When I looked at it back then, I found out AID was already working with the private sector.

Q: Right, exactly, thank you very much.

INGRAM: So, once more AID leaders are talking about having to have more private sector savvy staff.

Q: Right. We can wrap up, but do you have any thoughts on the MCC – USAID relationship, and also the evolving State – AID relationship, especially these days when State Department is basically on the ropes?

INGRAM: Do you have another couple of hours?

Q: Well, I have all the time in the world.

INGRAM: I'm kidding. I don't have a lot of thought on the MCC – AID relationship. It's a lot better than it was when the MCC was first set up and the new CEO of the MCC would go into meetings saying "The MCC was established because AID has failed!" I think the organizations work together better. I think there's not yet a strategic relationship of, "Here's what AID could do that would set up a country to be an MCC candidate." Or there's not the strategic relationship so when the compact is over, "Here's what needs to be finished."

Q: Okay, the handoff.

INGRAM: There's not that handoff that there could be. What I have spent a lot of time recently on is the AID – OPIC, the new IDFC (U.S. International Development Finance Corporation) relationship.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: That could be a much more robust relationship than what AID's relationship with MCC has been. The DCA (the Development Credit Authority) is going to be moved over.

Q: To OPIC?

INGRAM: To OPIC, to the new IDFC. That has become a pretty significant program for USAID in the last four or five years. Hundreds of millions of dollars a year in loan credits. In the field staff for that program is in the AID missions. How is that going to

function when it goes over to this new entity and it suddenly is separate from AID and AID missions?

Q: Right. Because you still need field staff.

INGRAM: You still need field staff to generate and oversee the projects. Thanks to the congress and the work that a lot of us did, the IDFC has an even stronger development mandate than OPIC did. It's going to have a chief development officer which the administration might "dual hat" between AID and the IDFC. There's talk about how you get these organizations to collaborate more. In Power Africa, you saw some collaboration. You saw AID providing technical assistance to governments for the enabling environment and private companies coming in to make investments, and OPIC supporting that. And then AID providing some technical assistance to make it work. So there's a real model from Power Africa about how the two agencies need each other and can support each other.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: There are other programs, particularly in agriculture where you have a similar public/private engagement.

Q: Right.

INGRAM: The new entity is going to have the authority, and theoretically a pot of money, to provide technical assistance. OPIC never provided technical assistance.

Q: Right, they don't have the staff to do that.

INGRAM: They don't have the staff, and they don't know how to do technical assistance.

Q: It sounds like shades of MCC. Or could be.

INGRAM: It could be, depending on the attitudes of the chief. I mean, the MCC came in and said, "We're here because AID failed."

Q: Right.

INGRAM: We don't seem to have that attitude this time around, but the IDFC is going to need the AID expertise on how to do technical assistance. On how you run the guarantee programs of DCA. AID can have more robust, relevant programs by bringing in private investors and having OPIC engagement. So this is really a critical element that is going to be worked out over the next six or nine months.

Q: Right. And you sense a fair amount of goodwill to sort it?

INGRAM: I see both goodwill and normal bureaucratic, “Protect my own, and those guys are trying to take something from me.” So I see both.

Q: Yeah.

INGRAM: As far as AID and the State Department, the State Department plays a very important role at the policy and diplomatic role. If we ever could convince people at the State Department that they don’t know assistance programming and project management, it would be a much more constructive relationship.

Q: I think that’s right. I think with State Department’s staffing so depleted it’s less and less able to try to move into the programming area.

INGRAM: But the F Bureau (The Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources) is still exercising oversight. We met with four mission directors when they were in town six weeks ago. Mark Green says he wants to move decision making to the field, but they’re saying, “We send things to Washington and it sits at AID for a few weeks, it sits at F for a few weeks. And we’re there twiddling our thumbs because we can’t get our decision endorsed.” And basically what it is, is endorsing a decision already made. It’s not like they’re adding value to the program.

Q: But it sounds like even if the F Bureau was removed from the process, your mission directors are still going to be upset that decisions get stuck in AID Washington.

INGRAM: Right. But that’s a process that AID could fix.

Q: Right. A remarkable career, and you’re not done yet.

INGRAM: Let’s hope I am.

Q: Well, do you have another organization or coalition up your sleeve?

INGRAM: No. No way.

Q: Okay. Do you think about how you hand the baton to someone else? Obviously so much of this has depended on your interests and energy and skills to bring people together, people who trust you and your unique knowledge. Where would we look in 10 years for someone who is doing what you’re doing?

INGRAM: The next generation. They’re out there and engaged and smart.

Q: They are out there?

INGRAM: Oh yeah. None of us are indispensable. There some people in the next generation that piss me off because they’re smarter and have better ideas than I do -- only kidding about the anger, because in fact it gives me hope for the future.

Q: Where are they?

INGRAM: They're in NGOs. They're in the government, in AID. I don't see them so much in think tanks. You don't find that many activists in think tanks. But they are in the NGOs. They're in the private sector. They're in the corporations. This work I've done on AID's public/private partnerships, I've come into contact with some of the corporations that do PPPs (Public Private Partnership) with AID, and they have these young, mid-level staffers who are development experts.

Q: Yeah.

INGRAM: Some of those people from the private sector like Tessie San Martin, who moved from the private sector to Plan (Plan International) to be the head, and Carolyn Miles moved from the private sector to eventually become head of Save the Children. Ann Mei Chang who came out of Silicone Valley. There are people out there in the private sector who get some really good experience and then say, "I want to do something that's more valuable." So there are people around.

Q: And you are fairly optimistic?

INGRAM: I'm fairly optimistic, yes.

Q: That's great. Thank you.

End of interview