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This is an interview with Hamilton Horton, North Carolina State Senator representing Forsyth County, conducted in Winston Salem, North Carolina on December 18, 1973 by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries.

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W.D.V.: Can we start with the role of organized religion in North Carolina?

Horton: Yes.

W.D.V.: A lot of people attribute the victory over liquor by the drink to the strength of organized Protestant evangelical groups.

Can you comment on the role of these groups in North Carolina politics?

Horton: Yes. As today, you know, precise involvement in politics favoring, you know, particular people... I don't think they do much of that. It'd be unwise if they would have tried. But the kind of churches we have have a great deal to do with the kind of attitudes we have and the kind of people. And this is historic. Back in the time of the revolution, practically every Anglican priest jumped and ran with the king and his people. So at the end of the revolution, we only had a handful of Anglican priests. So it was into this vacuum that your Baptists and your Methodists moved in great force. So we really have never had, since the revolution, the presence of the Episcopal tradition, so to speak, in large numbers. Now, it's had influence out of proportion of its numbers. But the vast bulk of our people, by default, have been Baptists, Methodists, a number of Holies. In any event, the more unstructured kinds of Protestant churches. And almost

invariably these were churches that were out of the mainstream of

Christian. They would oppose card playing, dancing, liquor, anything that seemed the slightest bit fun. And this has it.

Now, attitudes toward liquor come from the fact that most of our people are brought up from this sort of church background. Now, you probably also... it has something to do with this sort of... maybe...

I don't think we're more pious than anybody else, I'm sure of that.

But there are some very definite church constraints. You know, you're supposed to go to church, you're supposed to go to Sunday School on Sunday in this state. It's expected of you. It is socially... almost required. You don't find this many other places. And the strength of it, of the Protestant tradition - by this I mean the Methodists and Baptists, you know. People who came from the New Awakening. John Wesley and that sort - would be around the piedmont. And the mountains. Presbyterians, settlement, Cumberland County, a lot of them. You've got Lutherans in Rowan County on up into here. Of course, Moravians here. Except for these little enclaves, it's essentially , old fashioned, Bible Belt.

J.B.: How does it affect contemporary statewide candidacies? What does a candidate have to take? How does he have to deal with this? Does he deal with the leaders of the churches, or does he deal with the ?

Horton: You know, I don't know. I can't imagine, you know, trying to get a church endorsement. It may be done, but I've never heard of it.

J.B.: They get Billy Graham endorsements, though.

Horton: I never have.

J.B.: Well, I don't mean you. But personally... but, I mean, candidates.

Skipper Bowles. I'm sure Jesse Helms becomes linked, all of which is toward elections. Does that have the effect of an endorsement? Isn't that how it's perceived?

Horton: I just don't know about that. Of course, that's something really beyond my ken. Now, they will get definitely involved in your liquor issue. But it's very hard to get them involved in some of these other issues like abortion or capital punishment, things that you would think really spoke more to religion. Some of...it's a one issue church. Liquor.

J.B.: ?

Horton: Yeah.

Waitress: Here's your dinner.

Horton: Thank you. This little bunch run by... oh, what's the name of... what's the fellow's name in Raleigh, who opposed liquor by the drink? He ran that thing? Lobbyist?

W.D.V.: Privet?

Horton: Yeah. Cory Privet. His bunch endorsed for the General Assembly in Brunswick County a guy who, as I understand it, was a pretty thorough-going lush, and the fellow running in Kinston was a member of the vestry of the local Episcopal church. But Cory's bunch pushed the lush because he said he was going to vote against liquor by the drink. And that character you get.

W.D.V.: Jack went to a conference in Atlanta two weekends ago.

Southern Republican Conference. Maybe he could better articulate this



than I, but he came out with a feeling that essentially what you're looking at when you look at the Republican party in the southern states are certain coalitions that reach out for the, maybe, moderate blocs to help them win elections. Holshouser, on the other hand, sees it differently. He sees the Republican party in this state essentially being a moderate kind of a party which pulls in the conservative bloc to win the elections. Could you comment on the way you see the North Carolina Republican party as compared to the other....?

Horton: Well, the truth is both, but I would guess that probably we are more conservative than the Democratic block. Certainly the...

our party is more conservative than the Democratic party . There may be sections of the party that are different in the different areas of the state. And I think that Jim Holshouser would probably fall into a more liberal wing of the Republican party, but, you know, compared to Democrats, that's a conservative.

J.B.: What does conservative mean to you? In political terms in North Carolina?

Horton: Well, not just in North Carolina, if you don't mind, Jack. I would... I define conservatism as sort of a concern for the continuity of institutions, civilization. A habit of mine that puts the burden of proof on the person who espouses something new, something different. Who makes a presumption in favor of the way things are, until that person tears up... Now, conservatives can take, you know, the same issue, and be on both sides. Different people, conscientiously. There's no system of conservative thought that I know of. It's mainly a North Carolina...



J.B.: You're speaking of conservatives and liberals looking at the same issue, coming to the same conclusion, but by different routes.

Horton: That's right.

J.B.: But it's basically true.

W.D.V.: But don't you run into a paradox doing that? Conservatives today at both the national and state level are essentially serving what the liberals built, in terms of government, programs. Do you understand what I'm getting at?

Horton: Well, I'm trying to think of a program that you might apply that to. Social Security, perhaps. I think that's unnecessarily putting a program emphasis on it. The conservative is just as concerned as anybody that no one go hungry or sick. I think he would prefer that it be handled on a local, more traditional organization. But you would favor the end result that no one go hungry. I don't think he would necessarily espouse social security, for example. No. But once he's got it, I think you'll try to make it work better. We differ a little bit from the English Conservative party. They just maintain that they're better managers, I gather. Not much doctrine up there, is it? I don't think so.

J.B.: In V. O. Key's book, he's said that North Carolina was a more progressive state. It stood out from the rest of the South in treatment and race relations, providing services, and so forth. Twenty-five years later, North Carolina's relative position on such indicators as per capita income, doctor to population ratio, other indices, related indices, has not changed. One, do you think Key was wrong, and, if not, has North Carolina changed?

Horton: Well, I've always had the feeling, Jack, that we were done more harm than good by being called the most progressive southern state, now, because we've been trading on that for too damn long. We pat ourselves on the back, we like to think of Chapel Hill as the Athens of the South, you know. You've heard these phrases. And we use it as an excuse for going along the same way. Meanwhile, South Carolina, which I think in many ways is more progressive than we, has far surpassed us in industry acquisition. Virginia and a number of others. I don't think our leadership has been especially imaginative or strong, in trying to address our problems. You can just keep saying over and over again "We're a progressive southern state" and then don't do anything progressive. We're just now getting to the point where we're a little more selective in our industry acquisition. South Carolina did that some time ago. South Carolina had their Efficiency Study Commission back under Governor... ten years ago. Jack, who was that?

J.B.: ~~Collins?~~ Hollings?

Horton: What is it? Brought those folks in from outside the state. Dun and Bradstreet sticks in my mind, but I don't know what the...

J.B.: It was .

Horton: Yeah. Yeah. Their government was streamlined long before. Virginia...

J.B.: I believe it was Moody's Investment Service.

Horton: That's it. And they did a good job. We were sitting up here with a sort of antiquated old one horse show. So we aren't really that much more progressive. Now, we are ahead of them in some respects.

But almost invariably these are the things that extremely dedicated and patriotic small liberal people. University of Chapel Hill,

I would say, is outstanding in a number of respects. And in the high levels of the arts, for example. I think our handling of the Art Society, the Art... School of the Arts, Governor's School. All of these things<sup>that</sup>/are more elitist, if you will, oriented, we already have. And almost invariably they are the results of just a gaggle of people who really give a half a damn. They are... isn't that right?

W.D.V.: What about race relations? North Carolina was supposed to be a leader... one of the leaders of the South in that field. Yet you look at the 1972 election, a Wallace victory. You might wonder. There's really no test of that... The first test of that, and the last test, was in 1960, I guess. I. Beverley Lake and Terry Sanford race, and it hasn't been tested since until '72.

Horton: I think that people pretty well had a lot of resentment from... by voting for Wallace. Not just inflation was in it. You know, after all, what do you consider good race relations? Don't most of us really think of good race relations when the colored person stays at home and stays quiet? And if you let that... that's a pretty sorry definition because by that you'd have excellent race relations in a slave society, wouldn't you?

J.B.: It's the absence of a problem.

Horton: We probably have been more willing to accept integration in stride. That was the function of our leadership and not of our rank and file. Your rank and file North Carolinian is pretty typical southerner. Prejudiced the same way his grandfather was.

W.D.V.: Is there a movement of conservative Democrats into the Republican party? Or is it the kind of conservative you were describing



. Or is it the other kind?

Horton: You get both kinds, Walter. You get some who are real kooks. I mean, you know, John Bircher types. You're getting others who have always wanted to move into the Republican party, because they felt a little more at home there, but there was no advantage to it because the party wasn't a viable force. You've got others who are really fairly intellectually grounded conservatives, who just give us the best chance for influencing a political party. All sorts. It is not any sort of a pandemonium. I don't see, you know, great waves of people moving over. It's just been going on for... mostly since 1948, especially, when I began keeping some sort of notes. It has increased and kept increasing, and it's been steady. Up and down when... But there's the Democrat who nationally other Republicans. But in North Carolina the Republican party has been steady.

J.B.: In Atlanta two weeks ago there was a lot of talk about re-alignment. Do you see a basic political re-alignment shaping up in North Carolina? Or in the South?

Horton: You mean conservative-liberal?

J.B.: I suppose. Isn't that what they mean by re-alignment?

Horton: I think so. It always has a... you know, it has a surface appeal. But I think it'd be a bad thing for the country. I'm inclined to think that your Anglo-saxon countries have been able to govern themselves without revolutions and this kind of thing. And have pretty stable governments. Because they've got basically two party systems. And you can only have a two party system where the reins of power are handed over to the other party without incident. If both parties are

enough, so that neither is the anti-Christ, if you will... in other words, if you've got two fairly broadly based parties, with liberals and conservatives in each, and people having friends on both sides of the battle lines, then the parties can transfer power knowing that nothing cataclysmic is really going to happen. If your parties get doctrinaire, get 180 degrees opposed to each other, then it's going to be more and more difficult to effect a schooled transfer of power. That's your problem in South America, it seems to me, in your Latin tradition countries. They are very cerebral about their politics.

W.D.V.: Are you arguing that both parties ought to maintain conservative and liberal wings?

Horton: I think that...

J.B.: Do you agree with... *what George Reedy* described /in his book

*that* the two political... the Democratic party being basically the party in the middle that had problems with its groups on the left and the RepublicaI party as being basically a party in the middle that has problems with its groups on the right.

Horton: I think that... that's a pretty good way of putting it.

J.B.: Do you see that...?

Horton: We don't have any left-wing groups. But the main thing is that both of them are parties of the center. This one, perhaps, a shade to the right, this one a shade to the left, but basically centrist.

J.B.: Do you see that being a direction of change in the South and in North Carolina, or do you see North Carolina being in the same boat as the rest of the South? Because Holshouser seems to be more in that direction, and the rest of the Republicans are more of the re-alignment.

Horton: Well, Jim, of course, isn't going to be there forever. And every day that passes his troop leaves. This is because it happens to every governor. He can't succeed himself, and it won't be long before people will begin looking, you know, whose bandwagon they're going to jump on next. The long range thing, as I see it, is North Carolina's going to change to a two party state. And both parties are going to move to the left. That's because...you... each party is going to have to find votes in places they wish to didn't have to. They're both going to go... and that's going to be from labor and from blacks. So you get into a promise in that, and the party that out-promises the other gets the vote.

J.B.: How much does performance mean in addition to promise?

Horton: I think they're getting a little more savvy now. Labor, for example, [i] used to be if you just leave the door open and let them talk. Didn't expect any great things. Now, they've got good organization, they know where they want to go, they're well led. A creative sense of militance is there. And you can't patronize labor.

J.B.: Who's the best labor spokesman in North Carolina?

Horton: The only person who really does much speaking is Wilbur Hobby. He has some trouble with his own people, but...'

J.B.: That's what led to the question.

Horton: But then there's nobody else doing it.

J.B.: Do you... is there somebody in labor who's working effectively without making much noise? Who's setting up these organizations?

Horton: What organizations?



J.B.: Well, you said they were better organized.

Horton: Right. I don't know whether there's anyone who is, you know, delegated to do this. I do know here we have a central labor union. Charles Brooks is the political activist. Incidentally, he's a full member of the Democratic State Executive Committee, and he's shifted his registration to Republican. And he's a very, very strong member of the party. Delegate to the convention last time. He would probably know more than anybody else.

J.B.: You know what kind of relationship he has with Hobby?

Horton: Doesn't like him. We were... our people from this area were pretty upset with Hobby.

J.B.: So you think Holshouser's moving in the right basic direction for development of the party?

Horton: No. This is going to sound inconsistent, but I sometimes am inconsistent because I've... you know, as a conservative, I want to see that prevail. As a Republican I want to see that prevail. Sometimes they aren't on the same path. I think that he is moving to the left. He feels that his... that the place to get the margin of difference for statewide elections is in your minority votes, your blacks or your unions or whatever. The blocks. My feeling is that these blocks are by their very nature pretty fickle. And they aren't loyal to anybody, so they aren't going to be good Republicans in the sense of your mainstream bunch. They'll stay with us just as long as we out-promise the Democrats and out-perform them. But when the time comes that they out-promise us, then they're going to be moving off again. So you're getting converts there with ever-increasing appetites. The other

alternative would be to move to the right, and the only basic stomping ground there is to organize the Democratic Deast. And this is basically a fairly conservative, agrarian, rooted area of the state. They are sort of our cup of tea, so long as we stay more conservative than the Democrats. They'd be more likely, in my view, to be stable, loyal Republicans for the long pull, see, in terms of fifty years or so.

W.D.V.: But based on ideology and not program?

Horton: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Are you saying, on one hand, that the two blocs should not...

Horton: They're fickle, and they aren't going to be loyal.

W.D.V.: Well, are they going to be oriented... program oriented in the sense that whoever can promise most can get their vote, but what you're looking for are people with an ideological and philosophical commitment? to the party? They in the east?

Horton: Well, you see, the difference is this. In the east, we can move that way, because I believe it's fairly well conceded that the Republicans are a little to the right of the Democrats anyway, so as long as we stay to the right of the Democrats, this is going to be more naturally the party of the east, people in the east, than the Democratic party is.

J.B.: All right, in many...

W.D.V.: Okay, but how do you go about attracting them? On what basis do you attract the people in the east? Like Jesse did? Which was essentially an ideological kind of thing?

Horton: Well, there's a lot of good old let's-mix-it-up fun attitude down in the east. They love Jesse because he'll give them hell. He speaks for a lot of their concerns. They've heard him for a long time. He's always told it like it was, you hear them say over and over. That's

one way you can go. Another way, and we've done this, is simply go into a town and organize it for the Republican party. Get... send some expert people in there, get a good slate, and the next thing you know, you'll begin winning elections. We've done this in Johnston County, we've done it in a number of counties. Carteret. We've got little pockmarks of influence all over. Goldsboro. Republicans being elected. We need some help from the state headquarters to teach them how, get some expert assistance in there in terms of media and all this. And you can push them over. Then you begin building your party.

J.B.: What kind of candidates are they going to be recruiting, like to the left?

Horton: Well, let's face it. On your local level, most of your issues are not ideological. I mean, there's no Democratic way of laying a sewer line or a Republican way of laying a sewer line. What you're doing now is building a party from the local level on up.

W.D.V.: Well, thinking about the state legislature, what kind of philosophy do you want these candidates to have, or don't you pick them on that basis? Is it just a matter of picking who can win?

Horton: A lot of it is that. A lot of it is that. It's unfortunate, but we don't have that many to pick from. See, we are still horribly undermanned, in terms of registration - we can only pick counties from our registration. Even worse is the fact that we have an even smaller percentage of those people who normally would be expected to run. The percentage of lawyers, for example, who are Republicans, I believe is probably less - much less - than the percentage of Republicans to Democrats in the state at large. And this is a...



Democrats have been very careful about this. No Republican lawyer ever searched a highway title or did a single thing for the state or any Democratic governor. And so there was... there were pressures. If you wanted to be a judge, you've got to be a Democrat. If you want to do anything in the government... lawyers are dealing with laws and government all the time... you had to be a Democrat. And so, little by little, our loyal Republican families became Democrats if they were lawyers. And so, we've got a scarcity of talent as well as a scarcity of people. And so we simple haven't got a lot of people to choose from. A lot of times... even in Republican areas like the mountains, you've got a good strong rank and file which have a hard time finding the candidate, a man who can afford to run and is willing to.

J.B.: The situation , you have a Republican governor who has a long tradition and record of basic party-building.

Horton: Yeah.

J.B.: He came up through the ranks of the party, and his... and he now has... he has picked his own party chairman. His... the success or failure of the Holshouser administration in building a Republican party in addition to its role in governing is going to be<sup>a</sup> crucial determining factor in the future of the Republican party in North Carolina?

Horton: I certainly think that it will have a real influence on it. But the Republican party is here. It's going to stay here, even if Jim muffs it badly. They'll be a lot of people ready to pick up the pieces. We are at the point, you see, like some other southern states,

where it's still a very, very thin little structure, like perhaps in South Carolina with Thurmond being the one man who holds it together, isn't he? Pretty much. We... we've had an indigenous party that goes back into...

J.B.: There're two schools of thought on that...

Horton: ... Reconstruction times. Yes.

J.B.: Two schools of thought on that. Some feeling that the reason Thurmond switched is because you had a structure there to switch to.

Horton: Well, that may be. I heard it the other way. I may be very well... very well be wrong. But I think we've got a party that's going to stick around. And I think Jim can help it a lot, if he doesn't also succumb to the temptation of building a personal... a group of people who are personally loyal to him. In other words, a little party within a big party. And that's the tendency that his... the people who surround him most closely are always going to have. I think this is probably true of every major office holder. The closest people to him want to restrict him to nothing but the true believers, and that means someone who goes down the line with him all the time.

J.B.: And perpetuate themselves.

Horton: That's right. That's right. And if this happens, and translated into North Carolina politics, it means that if Holshouser's administration does not make some move to embrace the people who supported Frank Rouse and so forth, and principally they're in the east, I think he's going to have some difficult times. And I don't think it's going to be as helpful to the party. <sup>If</sup> /he's really interested in building the party, and I believe he is, he will want to build that party for all Republicans

and not just for those of his particular ilk who agree with him a hundred per cent of the time. And...

J.B.: Do you think he made a strategic mistake or not in fighting Rouse?

Horton: Oh, I do. I told him that. But he'd made up his mind to do it, and... at one point, he didn't think he was going to do it, but I think that he got some bad advice from somebody else. I thought that his being in the governorship and Rouse being in the chairmanship encompassed the whole spectrum so thoroughly that if they could simply find some way to work together, that it'd be an unbeatable combination.

W.D.V.: Was there no attempt to work together?

Horton: Jim could work with Frank...

W.D.V.: Did something happen that Frank...

Horton: ... and Frank could work with Jim, but Gene Anderson and Frank Rouse were like oil and water. Frank despised him with a passion, and Anderson reciprocated.

W.D.V.: So the relationship between the two was never really tested, as to whether or not they could work together?

Horton: Jim and Frank. That's right. Trouble was, you see, that ~~Jim~~ Gene Anderson was more important to Jim Holshouser than Frank Rouse was, for obvious reasons.

J.B.: And the decision, then, to oppose Rouse was based not on Rouse's support of Gardner, but of Rouse and Anderson's inability to get along.

Horton: I think that's largely part of it.

W.D.V.: What do you think that flight is going to do to the party in terms of the '74 election and the '76 election. Is it going to have any



consequences?

Horton: It can. I have a notion, though, if there's ever a time when we really ought to be pulling together, it's now. And I don't know whether it will yet. We'll begin to know when we begin to see whether there's any attempt on the part of the party or... directly or indirectly... or anybody, to purge or to oppose members of the General Assembly who supported Rouse. If we get into that sort of luxury, then, you know, it means our efforts are being dissipated killing each other instead of Democrats.

J.B.: What do you think Bennett's going to do as the party chairman insofar as building a party structure?

Horton: Very little. But you see, he's not supposed to do much. He's essentially a caretaker. When the party has the governorship, most of these things... there's no need for him to be the symbol of the party. The governor is.

J.B.: Well, is there a party Executive Director in this state?

Horton: Yes.

J.B.: Who is that?

Horton: Just thought you might ask that, and I just learned it today, so... here it is. Grady... Grady Franklin is Executive Director. He's from Rutherford County. And your Legislative Campaign Director is Bill Russell. Faye Madigan is Finance Director, and Bobby Moss is Secretary. So, you've got a staff of... one, two, three, four... in addition to Bennett. Bennett is a lawyer. He's going to spend most of his time practicing law in the court, full time job. But you don't need it, you see, when you've got these people to handle your details and Holshouser to handle the... the rest of them.

J.B.: Do you see them following along in the direction you think the party should be in the standpoint of going into an area and organizing it?

Horton: I don't know. They haven't been in long enough. I think that the big push right now is going to be finding legislative candidates.

J.B.: Is that going to be easier to find if we have President Ford than President Nixon? Or will that matter?

Horton: I don't know. It's going to be hard for both parties to find them. I think... I don't know of a single politician who doesn't feel disgusted. I mean, just... it's a total malaise about politics.

Tired, feeling slightly pointless. Wondering whether it's really worth it all, you know, there's just this malaise that's percolated down to our level. You try your best to whip them up into the same enthusiasm that they had, say, ten months ago. It's hard.

W.D.V.: Thinking back over the 25 year period, all those administrations starting with Kerr Scott, which of those administrations do you think are the most significant? Do one or two of them stand out as more important?

Horton: All right. Starting with who?

W.D.V.: 1948, Kerr Scott.

Horton: All right. I think the best governor we had was probably Terry Sanford. He surrounded himself with good, quick, intellectually alert people, and put out some excellent programs that are still being continued. I think he had a good administration. And left office so unpopular that he probably still can't be elected.

J.B.: Why?

Horton: Darned if I know.

J.B.: Was it because of the food tax?

Horton: I think that had a lot to do with it. But it's a sad thing, because of all the people who really wanted to be liked, Sanford's one of them. Desperately wanted to be liked and approved.

W.D.V.: One theory we had is that the state went through so much social change in that four year period that it was ready for a sort of a caretaker administration.

Horton: Well, it may take one, but never two or three administrations. What we haven't had since then is any administration that really had much imagination to it. We all know the normal, standard problems of government North Carolina has. But what have we offered new in terms of approaches?

W.D.V.: Can you say the same thing about the Holshouser administration?

Horton: Well, it's young yet. Some of the things he's done I think are excellent p.r., and if he pushes them and really uses them as they should be, I think they can be good for the government as a long term thing.

One of them is the ombudsman. I've been talking to him about it for a long time. The Governor's Efficiency Study Commission is another thing that, if we push it on through, will save us some sixty-six millions of dollars. I rather like that. I like the idea of hotlines into the state government offices. But so far as any creative, really catching program, I think that's all there is.

W.D.V.: Yeah, I'm not talking about the style with which they did things, but the program content.

Horton: I don't think we've got any special program content any different from what we've had in the past.

W.D.V.: Do you think that'll probably change?



Horton: Imperceptibly. Because some of your administrators - and the Governor is very much in favor of this - are pretty good themselves about it. For example, the direction of the Natural and Economic Resources in their theory of location and acquisition of parks and recreation areas has completely changed. The Highway Commission has been re-structured. They are thinking now in terms of a seven-year program. And whether this is going to work, we don't know yet. So it's just too... it's a little premature to say something there. We have been able to do... make an improvement on the A.B.C. system. There's just...

J.B.: Somebody...

W.D.V.: Jack, we better get on to see Bill . We've got a two o'clock appointment with him.

Horton: Okay.

J.B.: How about industrial development?

Horton: We are still pushing on that. Jack, do you deduct this from the royalties?

J.B.: Royalties?