

This is an interview with Arnold Goodstein, State Legislator in South Carolina. The interview was conducted on February 13, 1974 by Jack Bass and Walter DeVries. The transcriber was Susan Hathaway.

JACK BASS: Arnold, one of the things that we hear, depending upon who you talk to, is that the South Carolina Democratic party is moving to the left and that the old guard is dying out or retiring, the old people in the legislature, the people who brought fiscally strong conservative government; not necessarily in that order from South Carolina and that the Democratic party is going to move more to the left, and the argument is made that this is an inherently conservative State and sooner or later, maybe this year, or maybe in four years or later, shift over to the Republican party, the Republican domination and the Republicans will be in control for years. How do you respond to that?

ARNOLD GOODSTEIN: Yeah. That is a long question, and I was looking for a pencil to write down the different parts to it. I think your thesis, not your thesis, but

the final prognostication that you make would probably come about if the nature of the voter of South Carolina was not shifting to the left. When I say the left, I don't necessarily mean in national standards to the left. For instance, I think that you will find that more South Carolinians now are interested in human resource type programs, progressive programs, spending the money; the so-called fiscal conservatives that control the Democratic party in the State for so many years are being overshadowed by people who were allies of what you call the left, and I am not so sure that that is the right word, I am going to think as I talk on that, but mental health people, people who advocate mental health. There is more awareness now on education, kindergartens, on teachers for instance, people who have mentally retarded children. They are natural allies for those of us who think that the State governments place is to provide services for those who are unfortunate and need special institutions or more State spending. We are picking up allies, and of course the black vote is really the rock now of the Democratic party, and I would be misleading you if I told you it wasn't. It is the steadiest group of voters that tend to go Democratic, but you have also got to consider the fact that the labor movement in South Carolina has grown and is growing. In my area of Charleston, all of the major industries now are unionized, and a lot of this is the influence from the blacks.

The blacks are much more amenable to organization, labor organization than the whites have been. I think that you are going to find that the blacks were able to secure employment in textile mills. You are going to find more unionization in the upper part of the State like it has happened in the lower part around Charleston. These people just naturally tend to be Democrats. I don't think that we are going to have the experience in North Carolina. Now I think that is probably the Virginia and North Carolina political experience is the white vote shifting to the right into their end of the Republican party is not going to happen for a couple of reasons, but the biggest reason being, I think, we probably have a higher percentage of black voters than either of those two states have, enough so that it certainly made the difference in the last gubernatorial election and in any local races. I think it is just the opposite. I think that because of that peculiar situation that the South Carolina Democratic party is probably going to continue to be the majority party in this State in the future. Did I answer your question? You had several other parts that now escape me. There were one or two other things, I can't remember the first part of your question.

W.D.: . . . you started building from the black voters. You had people who were also essentially populists in nature and governmental spending and

you build on that.

Goodstein: And you've got a majority in this State. You did have that majority in one campaign.

J.B.: In which?

Goodstein: In West's gubernatorial campaign. You had a lack liberal . . . this is fair and frank candidate as you could have had. I mean his ability to win votes on so-called sex appeal, which I am sure is a factor in an election, wasn't there. He had to beat Albert Watson [Interruption] . . . he won that thing strictly on

J.B.: It was the most issue oriented campaign this State has ever had.

Goodstein: It was.

W.D.:

Goodstein: I think he is probably right.

W.D.:

Goodstein: I think he is right about that. The Republican candidate, whoever they run, not because he is afraid of losing the black vote. I think the nature of things especially in this next election is that he won't get the black vote, but Watson's overt racism turned off a lot of . . . on the scale partially moderate people, those who were really moderate went for West, and were going for him. But I think there were some who had moderate streaks running through them and it turned them off.

J.B.: Scared them?

Goodstein: Yeah, just scared them. This guy figured "Goddamn, he's going to recite names." You know, I heard that. Some white people voted for West because they felt he <sup>[Watson]</sup> would antagonize "the nigger," and they would be battling the streets. Of course, they would fight on the side of the whites, but they didn't want to be battled. So I think he is probably right about the race issue. But I think the Democratic party, that's and I don't think it is the same in North Carolina, I may be wrong, but the Republican party spots the Democratic party with almost 30% of the registered voters.

J.B.:

Goodstein: It's coming up. Is it 24% - 25%. That means all they have to have is what 25% of the white voters. 26%.

J.B.: It would be a third.

Goodstein: Is that right?

J.B.: Because you are talking about a third of the remaining 75%.

Goodstein: And all you get 50%. If you got 100% of 25%.

J.B.: Right. If you got a third of 75% . . .

Goodstein: Would give you 25%. Well one out of three is not tremendously a difficult task.

J.B.: Do you agree that Mendell Davis's Congressional

District or the First Congressional District now represented by Mendell Davis is now basically a populists controlled district in the sense of a coalition of blacks and working class whites.

Goodstein: Yeah, basically, with a lot of influence from the military and industrial crap may join with that. I think that Davis has been able to gather into his campaign, that so-called populists element.

J.B.: But are you saying that the so-called top level financial business community support Davis, just as they support Democratic candidates on the state level.

Goodstein: Yeah, on the basis that that is the sure shot. They are very pragmatic. I am sure that they support the other crowd too, a lot of these fellows.

J.B.: If the Republicans were to win the Governors race and substantially increase their legislative representation, do you think that top level financial business support is part of a key element of the Democratic coalition in this State would shift over to the Republican party?

Goodstein: Yeah it would as the Republicans got stronger. I would think, I certainly don't have any proof about it, but knowing the people involved and the contribution level, the heavy contribution level in the Democratic party, there is no doubt in my mind that they don't play both ends against the middle. I assume that right now they are contributing less to the Republicans

than they are the Democrats, but any change in the power would probably cause them to re-evaluate their role.

J.B.: Is there a Jewish role in South Carolina politics?

Goodstein: A Jewish role. That is an interesting question. I think that although I have the same ideas as a lot of gentile young men in the legislature, I am considered the wild eyed radical mainly because I am Jewish. I think that it is expected of me probably that has some part . . . no, no, I don't think that, I really don't, but I was thinking that as people are referring to me as the liberal or radical, which I really am far from being a radical. Sometimes I think I ought to reaccess some of the views I take and they ought to be more liberal, but basically as a tagged liberal Democrat, I think that any Jew who is in politics in South Carolina, unless they do what Mr. Speaker did, and just show that they are not got liberal tendencies and ain't a liberal, so obviously I think he is going to be classed as one. I think that it is a robe that you put on.

J.B.: I meant also though another role, a non-candidate role insofar as fund raising, supporting candidates.

[Interruption]

Goodstein: Is the Jewish vote a block?

J.B.: No, it is not numerically strong enough to be significant as a numerical voting block.

Goodstein: It is probably in Charleston.

J.B.: Possibly in Charleston. But I was thinking more in terms of financial commitments, contributions, and particularly candidates on the state-wide or congressional level?

Goodstein: I think it can be. Very seldom has it been.

J.B.: For example, do the . . . is the established leadership, if I may use that term, of the Jewish Community in Charleston get together as a group either with political candidates or to discuss political candidates and sum up as a group conscious Jewish group in terms of campaign support?

Goodstein: No,,and that is the nature of the people. One thing, you don't find everybody in the Jewish community thinks of himself as a leader by upbringing, by economic standards. There are a very few things in the South that you can get Jews in the South to agree upon. Only recently they got them all to agree upon the support of Israel, as a matter of fact. A great deal of the dissent to the establishment of Israel as a national homeland . . . what is it the American Jewish Congress or whatever the anti-Zionist movement was supported by southern Jews, and the same carries into politics. Jews just don't tend to be



monolithic about politics and you will find that because one particular individual is for "a" and all the folks that don't like him in the Jewish community will be for "b" and will get behind "b" so you don't.

J.B.: Well what I have been told, I don't know if it is true, but I have been told for example that in Texas candidates like Ralph Yarbor, who is a Democratic liberal in Texas depend upon two sources of finances, the labor unions and Jews.

Goodstein: I think that a man can go to individual Jews and get contributions, but as a concerted action, I don't think that it is there. For instance, John West certainly appealed to the Jews in South Carolina, I'm using that race as an example, versus Albert Watson. Albert Watson brought back to most Jews an image, frankly of a red neck whose attitude towards Jews was not too far behind his attitude towards negroes, and when he ran out of negroes he started on Jews, and I think they gave their money then, but as far as analogy with the black community isn't there of course. They are pretty much oneness of support.

W.D.: Are Jews any more interested in politics today than they were ten, fifteen or twenty years ago.

Goodstein: Well you get in the South an attitude among a lot of Jews who have lived here that they don't want to get to visible in politics, that is among the older

generation. They don't want to rock the boat. They were doing well here, and their father had found this to be a good land to set up business in and so forth, and they didn't want to get involved in politics. They didn't want to make enemies. They figured they had enough enemies living in South Carolina anyway without getting involved in politics, and I think that is changing. I think you find more active participation in politics, visible participation.

W.D.: When did it start to change?

Goodstein: I think with possibly the generation that is under 35.

W.D.: Might it have observed the change the same time the attitudes toward blacks and politics observed the change, the Voting Rights Act of '65.

Goodstein: I think so. Well I think that always in the southerners mind was the attitude that anybody who hated blacks that much, and Jews tended in the South to be more broad minded. They were certainly were more concerned about prejudice of any kind. I think they were somewhat afraid of that white southerner who could hate with so much vehemence the black man that I think it had an effect on him . . . very frankly on Jewish candidates in the South there is an not so much so as it was when I first started running four years

ago in Charleston, but there was an <sup>af</sup>finity by the black towards the Jew, and when I entered politics, it was easier for me to go out and seek black votes. Blacks had associated Jews and Jewish names with the Civil Rights movement. Most of those people unfortunately were not native South Carolinians who were involved in it, but a lot of the names in the Civil Rights movement, the young men who were killed in Mississippi those were Jewish people. So they felt that the Jew understood a little bit better.

W.D.: Plus their affinity from the Old Testament. Let me try this thesis on you. In Louisiana you have two states. You've got the northern part and the southern part dominated by [Cajuns and] New Orleans and what not . . .

Goodstein: Excuse me just a minute, can I get some coffee. [Interruption]

W.D.: . . .

J.B.:

W.D.: I beg your pardon.

J.B.:

Goodstein: In a certain segment, yeah.

W.D.: Are there that strong cultural differences between that area of the State and the rest of the State that you can see when you are up here?

Goodstein: Yeah, they appear to be. Several factors I think make them. I think one, Charleston is a much more cosmopolitan city than anywhere else in South Carolina, and that is because of the military, that is one reason. You've got a lot of retirees, you've got a lot of people

who settle in Charleston who are not from Charleston. Out of the 250,000 people who live in Charleston County, a very small percentage of them are Charleston aristocrats, who has been there for generation after generation. The great influx of population in Charleston is caused by the military, and a lot of people that retire there. You've got the influence of being . . . well, you have a port, you have a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Charleston being a tourist town brings in constant outside elements. I think that all adds to the character of Charleston.

W.D.: Is there anything in the native culture of Charleston from way back that would explain . . .

Goodstein: I think that the native culture would probably . . . if the native culture predominated the Cavalier influence, your English families, of course there are French families too; the old French and English families, it would be just the opposite. I think that has been, I think that without that influence, it would be even more so different from the rest of South Carolina. It would be even more cosmopolitan and more atypical of a southern town. I am convinced of that.

W.D.: That is a reverse of what Neal Pierce says.

[Interruption]

Goodstein: Support of the ERA, you know any number of issues . . .

J.B.: What you are saying . . . your sponsorship of Martin Luther King Day, ERA, death penalty . . .

Goodstein: More benefits to welfare, things like that, would cause me to be defeated in most parts. Possibly not Richland County, but any other County. I don't think that there is any other County I could get elected in, and probably not Richland from the experience that happened here in the last general election.

J.B.: Why were you able to be elected in Charleston on that because certainly some of your colleagues from the Charleston delegation don't share those attitudes.

Goodstein: No, but they move as close to me as they can comfortably and still maintain some semblance of conservative vote; although the Democratic ones I think they just pick up as being a better alternative than what the Republicans are running, but obviously that doesn't hurt me in the black community and doesn't hurt me with labor unions, and of course, there is always a question of how influential that vote is, it is hard to tell. The leadership, you can tell where they are and whether the rank and file votes that way or not is always a question.

W.D.: Yeah, but aren't the basic ethnic differences between the low country and the high country that you would find in Louisiana between New Orleans . . .

Goodstein: No, I don't think so because I think you are going to find, that for instance, all of the . . . there is an aristocracy in South Carolina in every area and every town which generally traced its origins back to Charleston. They were influenced by the Charleston society. For instance, the First Families, the first families in terms of settlement and economics in the up-state in the communities generally would trace their origins back to Charleston, and those people . . . if you attribute the difference between Charleston to the rest of the State, up-state, I don't think you can base it on the Cavalier theory, or what Pearce talks about being what the aristocrats brought, because it would be the same thing up there. Their influence would be the same because most of those people are Charleston people and their names, they came out of the Columbia aristocracy.

W.D.: Does Charleston exert any kind of special political influence then because of that, or did it?

Goodstein: I don't think it does because those people haven't since the Voting Rights Act especially been very influential in South Carolina politics.

[Interruption]

W.D.:

Goodstein: Yeah, the upper stratum, the first settlers in South Carolina.

J.B.: The aristocrats?

Goodstein: Yeah, that is probably the best description.

J.B.: What has caused the decline of the aristocratic influence in South Carolina?

Goodstein: I think one is his inability to . . . his inability and lack of desire to go out and seek the common vote and the common vote in particular meaning the black vote, and the unions . . .

W.D.: How does this aristocracy with politics.

Goodstein: Alright I am going to tell you.

W.D.: I want to get into politics. How does the aristocracy traditions affect me?

Goodstein: There was one time when the State Senator, when we had one State Senator who was always from that group, and the last one to come from that, that I can think of, from that element is T. Allen Legree, who had pretty much the common touch. He was a guy who had some of the common touch that went into politics out of that community, but the house delegation, twelve members from the house, and we have nobody who was representative of that crowd.

J.B.: But you did until this year.

Goodstein: Who did we have last time?

J.B.: Teddy Gerrard.

Goodstein: No, he didn't run for re-election in '70. Since '70 there hasn't been. There hasn't even been anybody

to even [ruh] .

J.B.: Is that group retiring now from politics?

Goodstein: I think so.

W.D.: They didn't even offer any challenge?

Goodstein: No, I think they . . .

J.B.: They stay active in city politics.

Goodstein: Yeah, but they . . .

W.D.: Isn't the ~~ma~~or one of them?

Goodstein: The mayor is one of them. City politics are still able to operate in, but I think that is coming. Ackerman represented a challenge to that, a real front to that control, which I think is still there, but it is lessening; but as far . . .

J.B.: But why is it . . . are you saying there is a fundamental reason for why they are not ~~running~~ and why they are withdrawing. Teddy Gerrard would have no trouble getting re-elected would he? I think that Teddy could have run into some difficulties probably. It wouldn't have been as easy in '70, but he probably would have been re-elected.

W.D.: Is it a matter of the candidates being defeated or just a lack of interest or withdrawal from the whole thing?

Goodstein: Well I think there is a lack of ~~in~~ability of their leaders to go to other people and make sure they are going to get elected when they offer. I think when their people offered for an office, they were pretty well



assured that they had the North Charleston precinct vote, and they had this precinct vote from Broad Street which is the traditional center of town political. They were sure they were going to win these boxes for the magistrate or whoever they could exert influence on. Now, I don't think they can go to the black leadership. I don't think that Gus Mike can go to the black leadership and elect . . . I don't think that ~~U. D. Saintler~~ <sup>Huger @ G. Sinkler</sup> can. All these names are names that date the colony to the first days. I mean ~~U. D. Saintler~~ <sup>Huger Sinkler</sup> lives in a home that the first ~~U. D. Saintler~~ lived in as a boy, but I think that these fellows who were in the legislature now are not in a position to go out and talk to any more influentially than a guy named Arnold Goodstein is with the Bishop of the AME Church, or a Catholic Priest who dropped out of the brotherhood as a political leader in the Union Heights Community. They just can't converse with these fellows. They don't know how to go out and scrap for that vote. I am not saying that they couldn't and there aren't some that won't come along and will, but they are going to have to compete just like I do or anybody else does.

W.D.: How about for state-wide office.

Goodstein: Well, they played the part in John West. Allen Legree, for instance, in Charleston, he was able to

get them behind John West, but I think, I think that that followed from some other things.

W.D.: Was that a function of finance, or something else?

Goodstein: I think from finance and also realizing that . . .

J.B.: That would be strictly class consciousness. John West was a poor boy, but he went to the Citadel, which made him acceptable and ~~two~~<sup>too</sup> Albert Watson was feeling too much the red necks and that would be repulsive.

Goodstein: Yeah, yeah. Given the choice between a red neck and a mick it's a toss up. Probably they would go with the black. They'd feel more cultural identity, I think, with the black than they do a red neck from up-state. They let the black in their homes, they come in the back door and they clean, and they know black folks. But red neck, there is no reason for them to even be near their home.

J.B.: There is no such place.

Goodstein: Well, blacks you know, any black at least . . . they can trace that black back probably to where their family had some contact with him in ownership.

W.D.: So they lost most of their power in the political life of the area, does that extend on the economic and social areas as well, or just politics?

Goodstein: I think that economically being basically

conservative folks then they haven't made the risk adventure than say a lot of Jewish folks have done down there and outsiders have done, and therefore I think their economic cloud<sup>\*</sup> is less. I don't think that you will find too many of them. I mean they own solid state businesses. They are involved in banks and insurance agencies and so forth, but very few of them have really been involved in the risk adventures that have created the wealth of today. So I think as an economic group, yeah, they are.

W.D.: Socially.

Goodstein: Well socially they have their own social life in which they are content with.

W.D.: What you are saying is that basically the only bastion in wealth is socially

Goodstein: Yeah, I think that is their bastion because I think there is a lot of <sup>nouveaux riche</sup> ~~Hugo Reese~~ people who would like to get into their social strata. I think that most Charlestonians that have been there any length of time understand that they aren't going to get in no matter how much money they make. I know a Jewish guy whose family is immensely wealthy, and I mean he would love to get in there, he would really like to be accepted by them. He's got everything else that he could possibly want. I don't want to go into anymore description, because it would be in the book.

J.B.: No, no, no.

[/Interruption/]

Goodstein: . . . being Jewish and having arrived economically, that the only thing left for him is to crack that social strata that the aristocrats have, and if possible . . .

[/Interruption/]

End interview with Arnold Goodstein.