

Interview with George Christian, former White House Press Secretary, December 12, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter de Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen. Interview held in Austin, Texas.

Jack Bass: Texas has become almost the most open politics of any state.

Christian: What's caused it? I think just determination on a lot of people's part to try to switch it around. It goes from a slight liberal tinge to a slight conservative tinge. It's somewhere in the middle ground there. You'd have to say this is a pretty moderate legislature and likely to stay that way. With certain variations. We had a fairly liberal speaker of the house last year; we've got a conservative speaker of the house this year. We had a conservative lieutenant governor here through the 'fifties and early 'sixties. That office stayed in conservative hands with Smith. And that's a very powerful office in this state. Has a lot to do with the type legislation that's passed. And yet Barnes, when he was lieutenant governor, typed as conservative, and you know, Barnes was the last of the big spenders. He's a Lyndon Johnson let's get the government involved type of person. Legislation just pours out when a fellow like that is in office. Although he's typed as a conservative and money people love him. For whatever reason, I don't know, fellows get that type of backing. Charisma, I don't know. I just don't buy that during the rest of this decade or on things are going to change drastically. It may change less, in fact, than it changed in the last twenty-five years. This state's dramatic change in the rural-

urban population split, in the political party upheavals. All that, I think, is behind us. Single member districts are behind us.

that change has been significant but it hasn't turned everything upsidedown. The cities are much more dominant now because of one man one vote. A change has occurred. It hasn't turned the state upsidedown. It weakened the rural domination, but it's weakened rural populism, too, along with it. It's concentrated more of the power in the cities where there are more Republicans, more minorities. Tends to balance out. Because the Republicans are, generally, more conservative on a lot of these things. That's occurred. The industrial growth of the state. The big upsurge of manufacturing employment and development of all the soft industries and all that has occurred and changed the state somewhat. It's going to continue, but the real, dramatic change is over. Even during World War II and ten or fifteen years thereafter. The Great Society is behind us. The federal and state impact on local government. That change has occurred. It will continue to develop, but actually there's a lot of resistance to it now. Whereas several years ago everybody was just grabbing for federal money to get into all sorts of different things and we mushroomed state government with bureaucracy in the state government. But now it's becoming a nuisance. So much of it is not as great as it used to be, where everybody was jumping into all sorts of programs of one kind or another. Neighborhood programs. All the real aftermath of the Great Society is what I'm saying is probably gone. I think we're in kind of a level period where there is pressure for change, but it's the kind of change that is a kind of catch up thing. We had a great reform and rebellion here against negligence in treating

less fortunate people. Prison system reform in the late 'forties. Mental health reform in the early 'fifties. School reform in '49. This happened. It pulled us out of the backwoods in these programs and patches have been put on during these ensuing years. Now we're reaching a point where something else yet has to be done. Youth programs are not as good as they ought to be and public schools need a lot of change in the financial support. Financial support of the public schools, that's going to come this session. But what started it was twenty or twenty-five years ago. This is a new shift in that, but the real turnover of our governmental structure in this state really occurred in the 1950's. Everything we have now in state government, pretty well, the foundation was laid in the 'fifties in the Shiver's administration. The whole system of public schools. The higher education developments and everything else. Mental health, mental retardation, highway program all that took place. Water program. Has been repaired, but the revolution was twenty years ago, really, when you look back at it. In a short period of time in the late 'forties and early 'fifties, after the war-time neglect and the depression, and it all burst during that period. There was money in the treasury to spend at that time after we'd been destitute for years. So a sudden change occurred. And to me the most exciting period in state politics and government was during that period. There have been a lot of things since then that were significant. All the ethic reform of the last session and all that. Sure, those were highly important. But on the things that really counted, a lot of it began twenty years ago and everything since then has been building on that or changing where change is needed and so forth. But

you don't hear, today, the outcry that we heard here in the late 'forties over the prisons. And we had a very bad prison incident here this year. escape attempt. Focused attention again on the prison system here in Texas. Well, my god, we have one of the best prison systems in the country. I dare anybody to find a better state system, with the exception of California maybe. It's got a lot of flaws, but everybody's does. Every state's having trouble with its correctional system because they're about to burst through the seams. There's so many people there. The drug culture has increased the prison population so much, needlessly, a lot of people think anyway. So there's things have to be done there, but you still don't hear what we heard back in '47 when every newspaper in the state was agitating for prison reform. And then every newspaper in the state was agitating for mental health reform. We needed it badly. Mental hospitals were in a terrible state. People behind bars in mental hospitals. All that changed. We laid out a program that changed it. Now they're talking about community mental health centers or retardation centers. It's just an addition, though, to what was done back then. All these fellows that wake up in a new world around here now some of these legislators, they just think by god, our youth program is just horrible. We've got these boys in Gatesville. If they'd seen Gatesville twenty-five years ago, they would have thought it was Dachau or something compared to what it is now. I would imagine you all are finding this in a lot of southern states though. The post-war shift and change, to me, was much more dramatic than the 'siventies and 'sixties period. The big changes in the 'sixties were this great infusion of federal money into state and local

government. Made quite a change in the type program. The prosperity and well being of the people and social progress and that sort of thing. A lot of it began in the 'fifties and that's where the real change occurred. And that includes industrialization programs, programs to build lakes in the state and get water for all these areas, or a lot of these areas that didn't have it, recreational program. As a result of that type of development. The emphasis on getting new jobs for people and more pay. The increase in union activity and also during that period the vast improvement in public education and in higher education. All of that. That, to me, is what's important. This other stuff is drivel. One guy fighting another guy in the Democratic party is just a bunch of stuff. The personality clashes that went on during this period. That's the kind of stuff history will forget real fast. Whether Yarborough liked Shivers or vice versa makes a nice, exciting political story.

J.B.: The basic problem then, and still remains in Texas, is taxation isn't it?

Christian: I guess so. Again, there are lots of shades to that. Because if you go back to the theory that Texas is controlled or dominated by certain financial interest groups, it doesn't wash when you look at our tax structure in the state. Because up until a very few years ago our whole tax structure was based on natural resources. Production of oil and gas generally. Oil was the real reason we were able to avoid a sales tax for so long and why we're still avoiding an income tax. So the populist struggles in the 1930's produced a tax structure in Texas

very heavily oriented toward oil and gas production and sulfur production. Other natural resources. That tax structure, and increases that were tacked on later and a few odds and ends special type taxes, liquor and beer and automobile sales and things like that, have supported this state for a long time. So theoretically the real business push on taxes was in 1961 when the business community realized that Texas couldn't support itself--the state government could not support itself--on the old tax base. Something new had to be added. Well, they chose the sales tax as the lesser of evils and pushed the sales tax. But even at that, the way the sales tax was passed, it exempted the major purchases of poor people and taxed the dickens out of the major purchases of industry. Under our sales tax, if you buy new industrial machinery or something you pay the sales tax. Where in a lot of states they exempt replacement stuff and all that. In Texas they don't. So a large part of the sales tax in Texas gets paid by business. Passed on, sure. Any and every tax is, I guess. You have to pay on industrial equipment. That's the big chunk that business pays. But utilities services, business And yet food is exempt. Rent is exempt.

J.B.: You pay a sales tax on use of utilities?

Christian: I've forgotten how. I've got a book here--

[Interruption]

--wasn't clearly defined as a consumer versus business struggle, but it's really what it amounted to. It was a soak the rich or soak the people type fight. It changed the state when the sales tax was passed. Obviously. It shifted the burden of support of the state government from natural resources to limited sales tax. We don't tax food, except restau-

rant. Don't tax groceries or medicines. So it's still not really a general sales tax. There's been great resistance to putting a sales tax here across the board. Again, the same populist resistance it's always been here to that type taxation.

Walter de Vries: So that basic division between liberal and conservative is still here?

Christian: Oh yes. On fiscal matters mostly. It's a big spend versus frugal spending. And yet that's not really altogether true because the conservatives in the legislature sometimes are among the biggest spenders. If you look at the governors over the last several years, the so-called conservative governors--Shivers, Connally--were also governors who didn't hesitate for a minute to raise taxes and spend money like it was going out of style. If they had certain programs and programs they were interested in. You look at Alex Shivers' record, who was governor from '49 to '55, '56. He was thought of, in a sense, as being a sort of renegade Democrat because he supported Eisenhower and was involved in this classic conservative-liberal confrontation with Ralph Yarborough and others. But if you look at his administration as governor, you couldn't find a more progressive administration. In terms of what he accomplished, what he did. Mental health, mental retardation, schools and everything else. He was right in the forefront on the thing. He wanted to do it his way. And sometimes the others wanted to do it a different way. And the same with Connally. He has the image of being a conservative and the record as governor of trying to get the hotels and restaurants to open to blacks. Breaking down racial barriers in the early '60s that were still pretty high in some places in the state.

Giving the faculty salary increases in higher education that just suddenly turned us from near the bottom on the list to the top. You know, forcing things like that through the legislature. So, you know, how you judge. . . it's very difficult to judge the leadership of the state based on somebody's prejudice or something about him. Ralph Yarborough will tell you that Allan Shivers was a terribly regressive governor. Why would he say that? Because he didn't like Shivers, and they had fights in the political system and they had intra-party struggles that were very intense.

W.D.V: Yeah, but those labels mean a hell of a lot in Texas, more than in many other states.

Christian: Yes, they do. In a way it's unfortunate because I don't think they're accurate. You know, every politician says "Ah, you can't label me. I'm not a conservative. I'm not a liberal." I'm whatever it happens to be on the issue. Big deal, you know. And yet you have to classify people one way or the other in a state like this because the issues demand it. There is a conservative stand and a liberal stand on most of the major issues in this state, whether they're fiscal or not. It frequently turns out to be what is just blatantly anti-business, okay, that's immediately classified as a liberal stand. What is aggressively environmentalist, that's typed as a liberal stand even though a lot of pretty conservative people are involved in the environmental movement. It's still considered to be a very liberal stand, you know, in this state because somehow it's against business. Somehow the government is making people do things that they may not want to do. More government power. So, yes, everything generally falls into these type of action.

I think it's just for lack of a better way to describe it is why it does that in a state like this. Again, it's an outgrowth of a one-party state where the Democratic party has always had its factions and the Republican party never meant anything. And that still exists in the legislature. While there are several Republican legislators, they generally line up with the conservative Democrats on the fiscal issues and things of that nature. Where it is a power struggle with a conservative Democratic leadership, they'll frequently line up with the liberal Democrats. There's been a lot of trading around in the cities between the liberal Democrats and the Republicans to squeeze the conservatives out and get all these little by-plays going. When Gus Mutcher here was running the house and got into trouble a [reform] outfit called the dirty thirty fought Mutcher's iron hand leadership in the house. Mutcher being a very conservative Democrat. There were several Republicans in the dirty thirty along with Mrs. Farenthold and some of the more of the extreme wing of the Democratic party and the Republicans. Combining to try to do in the conservative leadership of the house. So this gets mixed in here. But the fact that we have essentially been a one party state creates factions in the party. The party is really not that important anyway in a state like this. It's a tradition, everybody's a Democrat. But as far as having undying loyalty to that party in all respects, it's just not that strong here. In past years it was. Not now. The so-called brass collar Democrats are dying out. And the independent movement is growing. Not a movement, just a current, I guess. There are just as many Democrats right now running things in Texas and

yet there is less adhesiveness to the party loyalty thing or identity with the Democratic party per se. There is more swing voting in the electorate at large. And there is no really what you would call Democratic party rule. You say this is a political party with a political apparatus here that rules the state, negative. We're a personality cult. We're run by personalities, not parties. Connally had his own group, not necessarily just the Democratic party. Briscoe, a conservative governor, has adherents who just classify them as Democratic party. Heck, he's got enemies in the Democratic party that snipe at him all the time. And that's what happens in a state like this. Whereas in Ohio you've got factionalism in the Democratic party, sure. You've got primary fights with Metzbaum and Glenn or something. But still, at the end of the thing, it tends to again be a Republican-Democratic fight. Where here, it's hard to tell. Our primaries and general elections are free-for-alls. Really, it's hard to tell who's going to vote how in the general election. Particularly presidential elections. People can switch all over the place. In key races. Not on lower down. It's going to be tough for Republicans to get elected in the state. But for the top offices the Republicans run very close races in the governor's race. And yet, as far as having a wide electoral base here in the state, state-wide and all the rural areas and everywhere else, they don't. Yet in a showdown with the Democratic nominee for governor, particularly if he's a guy that people look at with a jaundiced eye anyway or who got cut up in a primary race or who has a good many people in his own party down on him

for some reason. It will a pretty close race. Anywhere from 47 percent up to, in the case of Briscoe's first election. . . he was the first governor in history, I think, to be elected with a plurality because the *La Raza* candidate pulled off enough votes to keep him from getting a majority. He had less than fifty percent, Briscoe did when he was first elected. Of course this time he got sixty some. Against the Republican. This is the worst licking the Republicans have gotten in years. When Connally was elected in '62 he barely defeated his Republican opponent after barely winning the Democratic nomination in the spring. He had to run a tough, tough race. And this has been twelve years ago. And it wasn't because the Republican party was all that strong, even though that was a period when they were showing some signs of life. But it was because of factionalism within the Democratic party and people not wanting to support Connally because they thought he was close to Kennedy and Johnson. So they voted for the Republican. And all these factors enter into it.

J.B.: People tell us that if certain Democrats, people with money, endorse a candidate in the last twenty-five years, they won. But that may be changing in the future. Is that an over-simplification?

Christian: That's an over-simplification. I think it's a lot easier for. . . . But Briscoe wasn't. . . .

W.D.V.: They say it turned in '72.

Christian: Briscoe had to run against both an incumbent governor with considerable financial support and the lieutenant governor, who was able to raise money and was really the one that most of the powers that

be were supporting. He whipped the socks off both of them, just with a bunch of neophytes. Of course we had a scandal, Sharpsville. Probably wouldn't have happened without the Sharpstown scandal. But Smith, when he was elected in '68. Connally was against him

Connally was supporting Gene _____ secretly. Wasn't openly, but everybody knew Gene Lock was his man. Connally's brother was his campaign manager and he was supposed to be the heir apparent and all that. He came in fifth I think in the Democratic primary. And Smith, the fellow who was. . . the so-called smart boys were not for because he was the anti-Connally lieutenant governor. He was elected. Fairly substantial margin in the Democratic primary. I think it's fair to say that the guy with enough money support or enough financial support has a leg up on the governor's race. But there's not any little group of people in this state who say he's the one. We don't have that system here. As far as I know, we never have. Never have in my lifetime.

W.D.V.: How about if they decide to beat you?

Christian: They can beat you. They can whip you if the circumstances are right. Never could whip Yarborough in the Senate, though. He's a living example, dating back to the 1950's, of the fact that you can get elected on momentum or by accident or however. But that once you're in, you're in pretty good shape. Takes quite a lick to knock you out. No matter who you are, no matter whether the money people are behind you or not. So it really is

J.B.: Beat Yarborough in '70, right?

Christian: '70, yeah. But lord, he went in in '57. So he stayed there thirteen years against the grain. And was re-elected in '58 and

again in '64 against the grain, with the conservative establishment against him bitterly both times. He didn't have any trouble. He whipped the dickens out of his opponent. He beat Bill Blakely, the very epitome of the establishment, in the '58 election handily and then defeated a radio broadcaster from Dallas who had a good bit of money and ran very hard and tough and bitter race. Beat the socks off him. Then beat George Bush all over the lot. 300,000 votes or something in the general election. Of course he was riding Johnson's coattails in '64. But he never had any real trouble hanging on to his seat as long as the general public thought he was doing a good job. When he began to slip, he'd had it. And he was ripe in 1970. Bentsen hadn't beat him somebody else would have. He was ripe to be defeated. He had alienated enough people and had been there long enough without any clear evidence that he was rising above the fact that he happened to be a US Senator. His national leadership quotient was awfully low. That, plus the votes he'd cast over a long period of time, were weighing him down.

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J.B.: -- attributable to his low rating at that time? Was it his civil rights record?

Christian: No. Combination of things. He was out of step with the people here on lots of things, including the whole Great Society program. Never all that popular here. Of course Johnson overcame it. It didn't bother him ^[that] some of his best friends were against what he was doing and he did it anyway. But then people understood it with Johnson whereas with Yarborough voting for all these things, he had a voting record that was far too liberal for this

constituency. And the war hurt him. Stand on the moratorium. And his comments about Vietnam and all at that particular time. hadn't

yet. Still barely hawkish today. And that hurt, here. He tumbled. But, when you try to make a comeback two years later, you tumble very badly again, against a very underfinanced, unknown opponent. Barefoot Sanders had virtually no money running against him in the Democratic primary in '72. Of course he said he wasn't beaten by Sanders, he was beaten by Bentsen. I was still being beat by Bentsen in '72. And there was some truth to that. Bentsen had torn him up sufficiently that he had trouble making a comeback. But by all odds, he should have been the Democratic nominee for the Senate in 1972. Didn't make it because he was out of step with the people. They voted for Sanders as a protest. They voted for Sanders even though they didn't know who he was. Didn't have enough money hardly even to get on television. Again, a negative vote.

John Tower, on the other extreme, is another example. The establishment was against Tower. Against him when he was elected in the special election. He was just a college teacher from Wichita Falls. They were backing Blakely to the hilt. In '60. When was it? It was after the . . . the special election was after the presidential election in November of '60. Everybody was getting behind Blakely. Again, who Yarborough had beat earlier. And a variety of other Democratic candidates. Tower managed to get into a run off with Blakely. And in '66, when he had to run for a six year term, Connally opposed him strong. Waggoner Carr was the annointed candidate, the attorney general. Johnson helped Carr.

Everybody helped Carr. Didn't make it. Liberals wouldn't support him. He'd done some things the liberals didn't like and they pulled the rug out from under him and Tower was re-elected rather easily. Republican in '66 with Johnson sitting up there as president and Johnson trying to undo him. Using all the forces of the monied power in the state to try to undo him and still couldn't root him out. So, you know, it's true to a point helps. I've been in both races where the powers that be are for you and where the powers that be were against you. Price Daniel, governor here in the middle 'fifties on who I worked for, began as the candidate of money. Traditional political powers of the state supported Daniel in '56. Shivers didn't get along, who succeeded him. As men, personally, they didn't get along but generally the same people supported them. Once he got in he had such liberal tendencies on some things that, particularly fiscal question, sales tax questions. Bitterly opposed sales tax. And it defeated him running for a fourth term. The powers that be left him. Went to Connally in '62. And we were left holding the bag with just an assortment of people with personal loyalty. They were people who remembered his sales tax fight and that's all. We had the liberal part of it. Conservatives. And we came in third in '62. Connally defeated the liberal in the run-off. So the powers that be, in effect, did help turn out a governor at the time. But there were a lot of other factors. A lot of other factors involved. And a lot of factors on Connally's side that made it tough for him to run. Made it harder for him. He was carrying a heavy load in '62 because he was running right at the height of the unpopularity of the Kennedy-Johnson admin-

istration in the state and had to carry them, each on one shoulder. Helped him a little with the black vote, and Mexican-American vote and hurt him like the dickens everywhere else. He'd come out of the Kennedy sub-cabinet to run. So it took a lot of money to get him elected. He had to spend a lot of money on media and he needed every dollar he could get. He was a fairly unknown man and had to hit full exposure circuit. But it did elect him. Money enabled him to overcome the burdens that he was carrying in the election. From that standpoint, he very badly needed this type of support in order to pull it through. Whereas in '60, Daniel, running for a third term and getting elected handily, he ran against the money. That year the Shivers forces supported his opponent, Jack Cox. And Daniel really didn't have the resources and the full endorsement of all the establishment. Yet was elected to a third term. So went down through the years and said this year that happened and that year that happened. You can't prove the thesis that the fellows who say "He's it" always have their way. Of course one reason is these so-called fellows are not always together themselves. They're all split up. The establishment? I don't know. I'm the establishment. I don't know who the hell. . . . Shivers is an extremely influential man here in Austin and still widely respected around the state. For lack of a better term, he's kind of the godfather of the old-line, conservative, Democratic establishment. He's always stayed in the party and yet has been prominent nationally in Republican campaigns two or three times. But he's still the man people look to for advice. If you're going to run for something, go see Shivers and ask what his

opinion is. Don't necessarily always follow it. If Lloyd Bentsen had followed Shivers' recommendation and Johnson's recommendation, he wouldn't have run for Senate. Neither one of them thought he could win. Told him he ought not run. He ran anyway.

J.B.: Was that before this poll was taken?

Christian: Yeah. It was in late '69.

J.B.: Did they change their minds after that poll?

Christian: No. They never did think he could win. Neither one of them thought Bentsen had a chance right up to election day.

W.D.V.: Is Bentsen getting the same advice, not to run, on the presidency?

Christian: No, I don't think so, because everything is to his race now. The so-called establishment here likes the idea that a Texan's in the forefront again in national politics. Doesn't matter which party. You know, the provincial thing comes into it. And the resentment of the way Johnson was treated comes into it with a lot of people. Bentsen is just not the type person that just worlds of citizens look at with any kind of father-image or uncle-image or anything else. They don't look at him in that light at all. They looked at Johnson as a true native son, he's our man type thing. You know, his popularity here in the state was extremely deep during his lifetime. It fades now. It done gone here and other people have taken up the slack. But Bentsen is looked at differently. He's looked at as an extremely smart, able guy who has a chance of being president and my god, wouldn't it be great. And this cuts across all sorts of lines. You'll

get it from black leaders and Oscar ^{Mauzy} ~~Moley~~ and people like that and labor people. Harry Hubbard and others. You'll get it from them right up to the board rooms. He's built a base here that is probably broader than any other political figure's in this state since Connally was governor. Connally had that type base as governor, but nobody's really had it since then. Bentsen has put it all together and he's done it by being effective. And in a couple of three years time, he shows his muscle, you know. Shows he can do it. It makes everybody happy. Even though you'll hear conservatives in this town, conservative Democrats, say "I wish he didn't have to be quite so liberal, but he's still our man," you know, type thing. And a lot of people understand the fact that, as a Democrat in the Congress, he can't be as conservative as they are. They understand that though. The sophisticated ones do. I'm sure that some of the others probably resent him, some of his votes. But he's built himself a heck of a base in this state. He's the single most popular political figure in Texas right now. That's a long haul up from about one percent.

J.B.: That's based on what polls show?

Christian: Yeah. He's by far--let's see if I remember. I don't have the figures. There have been a number of private surveys run repeatedly in this state. He leads the list. I think Briscoe runs second and Tower runs third. Maybe it's reversed, Tower and Briscoe. But I believe it's Bentsen, Briscoe and Towers. Everybody else is way down the list. He's got enemies here. Oh gosh and they're going to continue to snipe at him.

J.B.: When Yarborough was in the Senate, was his staff set up to handle constituent service? Was that a weakness?

Christian: Sure. Caused him a lot of problems. Most disorganized Senator in the Senate.

J.B.: Was that a contributing factor to his defeat?

Christian: I'm sure it was. I'm sure it helped.

J.B.: We kept hearing the same thing about Gore.

[Interruption.]

W.D.V.: --Johnson was running the state. It was kind of like he was Johnson's man.

Christian: Well, I looked at that from both sides. I used to have Connally's view on it from this end and Johnson's after I got up there. In the time I was with him, Johnson did not really exert that much influence on the state of Texas as such. He gave very little thought to what was going on down here.

J.B.: We heard, not that he exerted, but that with Connally here he didn't have to exert anything.

Christian: Connally protected his base. That's right, he did. Connally did protect his base and Daniel did, too, before.

J.B.: We also heard that Yarborough, in '64, that Gordon McLendon was not the toughest of opposition. And that Johnson's self-interest dictated against Yarborough having strong opposition.

Christian: That's right. He and Connally and went to a parting of the ways because of it. There's another fellow you need to talk to. Joe Kilgore. The former Congressman who lives here now.

lawyer here. Very astute politician and a fellow that Johnson elbowed out of the Senate race in '64. He might be willing to give you a reasonable account of some of those activities.

J.B.: Let me ask you about that. It would be to his advantage at that time in the presidential campaign to not have the Democratic party in Texas split all to hell and back. Was Johnson thinking along the lines at that time also, or not, in terms of his Great Society program? And in effect projecting or perceiving himself as another Roosevelt type president and those type of domestic programs? And also him knowing Yarborough, and Yarborough's position in the Senate and that Yarborough. . . inclinations would be to really work and draft and produce this type legislation. The main reason he wanted him was because he didn't want that fight, but this would be a secondary, re-enforcing reason. That Yarborough would be of useful service in the Senate to Johnson in the next four years.

Christian: Dead right. You have to start with the assumption that Johnson really didn't have much against Yarborough. Yarborough, I think, still thinks he does, did. Johnson was not that anti-Yarborough.

W.D.V.: Yarborough thinks that Johnson deliberately killed his programs until Great Society, when he needed Yarborough.

Christian: Well, that's Yarborough. He finds spooks when sometimes they're not there. I've never accepted the fact, one, that there was any particular antagonism toward Yarborough on Johnson's part. If there was, I never saw it. And Mrs. Johnson never saw it. I can say that, too. I know that for a fact. They were not bosom buddies and they

had some differences over patronage and things like that. Sure.

J.B.: Did Johnson get involved at all in the 1970 Senate race?

Christian: No.

W.D.V.: Did he get involved in state politics at all when he moved back?

Christian: No. Very, very little. He liked Barnes on a personal basis and he tried to help Barnes where he could. He didn't get mixed up in that '70 race.

J.B.: Even behind the scenes, subtly?

Christian: Absolutely not. And I was in it from first to last. His tracks were just not there. In fact it was a source of some resentment on the part of some of the people on both sides, probably, that he wouldn't. He was a personal friend of Bentsen's. Their relationship had been personal. Nothing much except personal. Bentsen had helped him in '56 in the big showdown fight down here for control of the Democratic party with Shivers. Bentsen had lined up with Johnson. But other than that, their relationship had pretty well been a personal one. His relationship with Yarborough had not been personal, but it had been official. They'd been working together on programs. And he just chose not to get mixed up in it. And recommended against Bentsen running against Yarborough. So from that standpoint he did more to help Yarborough than he did Bentsen. At least he tried to keep Bentsen out of the race, as he had done in '64 earlier. He urged Bentsen not to run that year.

J.B.: Yarborough says that Bentsen's budget in that campaign

was \$6.5 million.

Christian: Well, he's been using this figure ever since 1970 and it's completely idiotic and not worthy of comment as far as I'm concerned. It just makes no sense whatever. I don't know where he got it. I think he just estimated something and now it's stuck in his mind that that's what it was. It was a well financed campaign, but it was also hand to mouth in the sense that Bentsen would face deadlines on raising money and paying money out to his ad agency and had difficulty meeting the deadlines. He spent pretty much what was reported. There was some money that was spent for him around the state, but that was not even the most well heeled campaign in modern times. It was well financed, but comparable to other campaigns of that type. Sure, he spent more money than Yarborough. He had to. Wasn't known. Had to buy billboards to get his name known, which are pretty expensive. He had no free staff, which Yarborough did. He didn't have the power and trappings of office to run the Senate race with. Obviously, a challenger has to pay more than an incumbent.

W.D.V.: You worked as a consultant in that campaign. What campaigns have you worked in since you've been back?

Christian: '70 was the first real campaign year, although we had a campaign in '69. Bob Armstrong's campaign in '70 and liquor by the drink and the attorney general's race and Bentsen. In '72 I helped Barnes, defeated. This year I helped Briscoe and a couple of minor races and one Congressional race in the panhandle. We beat a Republican incumbent up there, Bob Price. Jack Hightower. So I've been in about

thirteen or fourteen races since '69.

J.B.: Did you work in Tower's race?

Christian: No. I was for Sanders. I didn't work for Sanders in the race. I mean I wasn't on his staff or anything. But I was for him in the early campaign as a volunteer. The Texas Monthly here has got me identified as a Tower supporter, but I was with Barefoot first and last. Tower was elected, so I guess we lose them down here, too.

W.D.V.: When Connally made the switch how come nobody went with him?

Christian: He didn't ask anybody to. *[It wasn't]* that sort of thing. Made a strictly personal decision. He never asked me or Larry Temple or anybody else close to him to make the switch. Don't think anybody was going to do it anyway. He did it as a personal decision. At this point I don't know whether it was right or not. At the time, I thought he made the right decision. Thought he had a chance, at least a chance, of getting the Republican nomination. I just didn't feel he ever had any chance in the Democratic party. Burned all his bridges. Might as well go on over there and see what he could do with it. Because they had a leadership gap like nobody's business in the Republican party. I personally thought he might fill that gap there. With he and Bentsen both running for president *[and from a]* provincial *[point of view]* I'd like to see Bush and Strauss and Connally and Bentsen all in commanding roles. And Towers in the Senate. He's quite a force for the Republican party and I like that. It's good for the state. I think a lot of people down here feel the same way. We need to support guys like

Tower. I like the fact that Tower is in a leadership role in the Republican party. I think it helps us down here and we need all the help we can get. I like what he does to the state. I may disagree with him on some of his votes and philosophies and things, but when it comes to what he does for the state, heck, not very folks down here will quarrel with it. He knows Texas needs protection and fights for the things we have to have. So that's why he gets re-elected, too. That's why he didn't have any real trouble in '72. Especially with the McGovern thing sitting on Barefoot's shoulders. Barefoot never could pull the weight of Ramsey Clark and George McGovern. He was beat from the start because of it. I mean he was beat from the Democratic convention on. Just couldn't get money or anything. Again, sometimes outside influences exert just about as much on an electoral decision as anything else. Who else is on the ticket with you has a lot to do with it.

J.B.: If he couldn't get money in that race against Tower, what it suggests is that the same people who financed conservative Democrats were putting a lot of money in Tower's campaign.

Christian: Powerful lot of money went into Tower's campaign. Bentsen helped Barefoot raise some money. And a lot of the establishment guys were supporting Barefoot. Joe Kilgore, who I suggested you talk to, was state campaign chairman. Joe was close to Connally and close to the powers that be. Conservative Democrat. Larry Temple, who worked for Johnson and Connally and was state chairman of Democrats for Nixon in 1972 was supporting Barefoot. Trying to help him where he could. So it wasn't a

J.B.: Was Connally supporting him?

Christian: Yep, Connally supported him. He didn't go out and raise money or anything like that, but he did support him. But in that race a lot of Democrats did support Tower and a lot of money went into Tower's race for one reason or another. He's a very popular Senator.

polls show him in pretty good shape in the state. He's going to be very difficult for any Democrat to beat next time. Even though it's an off year. He'll run in '78, an off year election where there's no help from the top. The Nixon-McGovern thing helped Tower, too, obviously in '72. Because McGovern was an anchor around everybody's neck and it almost beat Briscoe. I think that's what made the race really close in the governor's race. Was that straight line voting down to those races. And the fact that you just get enough extra votes out of that lopsided top of the ticket race to really help whatever party it is. Johnson, for example, in '64 made it very easy for Yarborough against Bush, and other races. Sure helped Connally, to some extent, to have that landslide at the top of the ticket. Same thing in '72 with Nixon.

J.B.: Who would be the most effective fund-raisers in Texas? Would it be Shivers and Connally?

Christian: Connally is probably the single best fundraiser of this period of time. Tower's a darn good fund raiser and Bentsen has become a heck of a fundraiser. Bentsen's fund raising apparatus is as good as anybody's has ever been. He can raise what he needs to run any kind of race. In his presidential race, he'll raise enough money in Texas

to put on a heck of a showing in '75. He's got that kind of support. It's broad. It's \$1,000 contributions from a whole lot of people. And he's self-imposed a limit of \$3,000 per family or something on his fund-raising. So he's not taking these big chunks that people used to give here. And still raising a lot of money. And will raise a lot. No doubt at all that he'll replenish his coffers pretty handily for the '75 push.

J.B.: How many potential \$3,000 contributors are there in Texas?

Christian: Plenty of them. Fortunately I've never really been in the money raising business in politics. I've seen a lot of money raised. There are people in the state who will give sizeable amounts. They usually, in the past, have tried to have their wife give half of it or sons or something else, where it doesn't look like such a horrendous amount of money. But it's nothing to a lot of people here to give \$25,000 say for the governor's race. It's not as common now as it used to be because people are reluctant to give that kind of money. They don't like to see their name in the paper trying to buy a political position or something. In Connally's '62 race, he raised a good bit of money from pretty well to do people. Bass, his partner associate Richardson interest. And a whole lot of other fellows of that stature. These are men who are very well to do. Surprisingly, I think ninety percent of them never ask for a dadgum thing. They're not after that at all. They want to be a friend of the guy who's in office. But they're fellows that don't need any help, don't particularly want anything.

J.B.: Have there been any big bankrollers in the Republican party

in Texas?

Christian: Oh yeah. Sam Wiley in Dallas. A fellow in Houston that gives an awful lot of money. Can't remember who he is. One or two in San Antonio. Jim Campbell in Amarillo has been a pretty substantial giver and fund raiser for the Republicans. Let's see. Eric Johnson in Dallas has helped a good bit. Clements--

[Interruption.]

W.D.V.:--how Democratic politics might change in say the next five or ten years, or aren't you anticipating any basic changes?

Christian: I'm a great believer in the pendulum theory thing. There's always some sort of change going on. Going back and forth. I think the Republicans, after they get over this collapse this year, are going to come back just about like they did in the--Connally washed them out. And the Democrats will pretty well stay in the same mold they're in. I don't see any major change coming in Democratic politics in Texas. The reform movement has opened it up a lot where there is a lot more representation in the party councils on the part of people who are of groups and types of people who--

[End of side of tape. End of interview.]