

This is an interview with Mendel~~2~~ Davis, United States Congressman from Charleston, South Carolina. The interview was conducted on January 30, 1974 by Jack Bass and Walter Devries. The transcriber was Susan Hathaway.

JACK BASS: What do you see as the greatest change in South Carolina politics and southern politics since 1948?

MENDEL~~2~~ DAVIS: The greatest thing that I can see, Jack, to be honest with you is the switch from, and I have to say this, but let me clarify it on the basis of what I have heard before because I mean in 1948, I was six years old, I turned six, but I would say there has been a change from the old "boss" type. We had certain people that I heard of who were in precincts who controlled and could deliver votes. Whereas today, I don't believe you have that anymore, that much. You have in precincts real hard workers that can espouse your candidacy, but as far as going to anybody really anymore and saying "you know, this is boss of Ward 'X'," and he can deliver you this Ward in block. I don't believe it exists, and I'd say that is one of the greatest

changes that I have heard of, and the politics in our area seem . . . because you don't have that anymore, and as a result, what you have is a greater communication between candidate and people, and also a more of a demand by the people to see the candidate and communicate with him.

W.D.: To what do you attribute that change?

Davis: Number one, I'd say maybe the news media has helped a lot, airing those candidates views whereas before a candidate was probably just shut out. In other words when your papers and your TV didn't present your candidate, now a candidate can buy his time and buy his face and go and present his views. As a result a candidate through his media and say through the use of say advertising agencies really, gets more exposure to the people that way so that more people begin to get that personal feeling with the candidate and also want to talk to the candidate.

W.D.: Has that changed the kind of candidates we are getting?

Davis: I believe so. I believe now you are getting candidates with more . . . and like I say this is totally . . . I can't answer 1948, because I don't know; but I think for one thing you are getting candidates that go into any campaign, look at issues, try to discuss issues, and trying to debate the issues more than you have ever

heard of before, and the other thing it is doing is this. It is given opposition every year, whereas . . . alright, say my predecessor Mendel Rivers. He had one opponent in 30 years. Of course, he served through that period of 1940 to 1970, and he just didn't have the opponents, but now you have opponents in almost every race you look at. If you look at South Carolina this year and I don't believe there is a man in South Carolina that doesn't expect to be opposed this year.

W.D.: Is the growth of the two party thing related to the media too, or is that something else?

Davis: I don't believe the growth of the two party thing is related to the media. I think the growth of the two party thing is related to fewer philosophy and dis-

. Because you take almost every Republican in South Carolina is a former Democrat. I'm not saying all of them, because all of them aren't 'cause we have a great influx just like . . . I got a letter the other day. Some people living in my district said that they are former Massachusetts Republicans, and these people had been Republicans for a long time and there are a lot in South Carolina who have been Republicans for a long time, but I believe then came about disgruntlment, national issues originally associated with conservatism and how do you define conservatism tends to. It's argent, and that's what I look in our area. Now let me

just put it strictly in our area.

J.B.: In your Congressional District, would you agree that you represent what is basically a modern day populists constituency?

Davis: Yes. I really believe that, Jack, because for one thing my Congressional District is probably different from the rest of the State because I have the largest County in the State, Charleston. Forty-four percent of my economy is mainly military oriented and industrial oriented. Alright you still have some of your large land owners, but also you have a tremendous amount of small farmers in our area, but then by the same token, you've got almost half of the organized labor population in the State of South Carolina living in the First Congressional District, and also through the military element and the retirement element in my District. You get an influx of other areas that you really don't get say up in the Fifth District or in the Third District. So you get a lot of various views. So I would say really, my district is more of a populists type It's just like, well, one example. I am the first member of the House of Representatives to ever vote for minimum wage from South Carolina. My colleagues said "oh, that is the worst mistake you'll ever make, you are completely wrong. You just can't do that." I went home and campaigned on it, and most of my people appreciated it. So I mean that is just one issue that is

set aside that the people look at.

J.B.: Do you think your colleagues from South Carolina were right or wrong insofar as their own districts are concerned? Could they have done the same thing that you did successfully?

Davis: They could have done the same thing that I had done the same thing that I had done in most . . . well, I would say that maybe around the Greenville, Spartanburg area, there may have been a little cause for Congressman Mann. Bryan Dorn finally did come around and voted for minimum wage conference report. But by the same token, Senator Hollings voted against it. So, I don't know. It is really an inborn fear that comes from the past of South Carolina's newspaper editorials against unions, against organized labor, etc. It scares them on a vote like this to agree.

9 J.B.: In your District, do you consider an endorsement of organized labor an asset or a liability?

Davis: I don't consider it a liability. Organized labor, really, they don't go anymore because you have got so many different types of organized labor in my area, to where you can say whom you've got an endorsement from organized labor. Because you see you have got your Metal Trades Councils, which is strictly in the Shipyard. You've got your AMGE, which is another government oriented labor union. You've got your postal carriers which is separate;

then you've got your Longshoremen; you've got your Maritime Union; then you've got your building trades, you've got your communication workers; you've got your ladies garment workers; you've got your union down at Hampton. So, I mean, it is such a widely disbursed group that they are not that closely interwoven themselves.

J.B.: How would you rate the Charleston Labor Council? Is that an umbrella organization?

Davis: It is an umbrella organization. They have got representatives from every labor movement in the area on the labor council, but by the same token, they don't always agree on everything and so one of the most effective ways is to go to each organized labor group and be asked to talk to the membership and to the constituency. That's the way I do it, and I have found better results that way.

J.B.: Ten years, I'm just throwing a number out, roughly ten years ago when black voters were talking about . . . there was at least a prevailing view that you did have a more or less controlled vote in the sense that you had one man to go to between a precinct or county or area or community. Has that changed?

Davis: Yes. It has changed greatly. You don't have it anymore. You've got the old . . . you've still got a lot of people in the black community that will look to certain leaders in a precinct for advices, and also with his group, really, to work a poll, but as far as being,

you know, just led, hand by hand into the ballot box, just pull the lever, it's no longer true. Like I said, for one thing your communications, for another thing, you have several splits in the leadership of your black community.

J.B.: Is the leadership just more diffused? Is that it?

Davis: Yeah. This is it, and I mean we've got something going on in Charleston right now with the one black candidate for the state legislature for the election next week, the Democratic primary.

when Herbert *Fielding* had his problem was to try to find one man and try to bring the black community back together again, with a single candidate, with a united purpose. You would still have people who would try to undercut that support in the black community.

J.B.: Who is running?

Davis: In this one? *McKinley* Washington from *Wadmalaw Island*, a real real fine fellow. So, you really don't have this hand foot following of one black leader in any Ward. I guess one of the greatest examples was in my primary, when you and I traveled together, but in the City of Charleston really, your main black Ward leaders . . . your main black leaders in the community to agree, especially in the City of Charleston will follow the Mayor. Then by the same token, just straight personal contact, which is what I did, I took the votes. So I

mean that is one prime example when the masses of the voting element did not cause the so-called "Ward Healer" or "Ward Leader" of the past in that area.

J.B.: Am I correct or not in the interpretation that I heard at that time that what happened was that there was a basic coalition with organized labor and blacks that was initiated by white labor leadership going to secondary black leadership, or at least to lesser known black leadership?

Davis: For me? No, because the thing is, this is what has always been so funny . . . it's just like . . . there is one book up here Congressional and I have no respect for it at all. It's just a bunch of bums really in my thinking. They put out labor, paid for my campaign, they had endorsed me, and the first meeting that I went to after my nomination was at the State Labor Convention, which is alright. Charleston Labor Council and COPE and State AFL-CIO endorsed

, gave him the money. I didn't get anything, endorsement at all from them. So I mean to look at a secondary coalition now is completely wrong.

J.B.: There was a coalition of secondary leadership I suppose.

Davis: Well there was in some areas, but it wasn't really a coalition because what we did was we went . . . we did have one very strong black leader in the city that

was working for me very hard. And there was a fellow Cecil Morris. Now he was the head of the Maritime Union, and he did support me to try to get the labor endorsement, but I did not get it. But Cecil did work for me very hard. So I mean maybe this is where they got the idea that it was some kind of coalition, it wasn't, this was just one man, and just like in the same token, this same individual a year later in the labor council was endorsing Richard Nixon. So, I mean, you know, he was not the average labor leader. I don't believe that there was every any really coalition or secondary leadership. What we did was, to be honest with you, we were floundering, and we were hunting anybody that could and we had a lot of good help from a lot of people, but it turned out to be leaders. I mean, well you know Lonnie Hamilton, who is County Councilman, he was a big help to me. He was a black County Councilman, but by the same token, as far as your main leadership in the black community, we did not have it.

J.B.: You did have the advantage of association with Congressman [Rivers]

Davis: I not only had the great advantage of the association, I had the great advantage of his first name.

J.B.: As well as his endorsement?

Davis: As well as his endorsement, and anybody who says that won't go a long way is a fool. So that was

another thing that I would say accounted for one of the greatest parts of it because of the fact that it got for me the recognition, and you've got an association with a man who has been an institution.

J.B.: There is a theory that the role of the South in Congress is diminishing because of there are less committee chairman than there were ten or fifteen years ago, that the number is decreasing. Those who do remain are getting well up in years and their time is limited, and people right behind them in seniority are non-southerners. How do you respond to that?

Davis: Jack, to a degree, but let's look over your Committee Chairman and you will see that the South still has the big clout in the committee chairmanship situation. First of all let's go to Appropriations, and you look at George Mahon from Texas. Okay, he is getting out, but then you look right behind him and there is ^{Jamie Whitten} Whitney of Mississippi, and then there is Bob ~~Stokes~~ from Florida; then you look at all your sub-committee chairmanships also on Appropriations and they are southerners. So I mean that is a tremendous clump when you look at it, and then you look at, alright Mr. ^{Hebert} ~~Abram~~ on Armed Services Committee, a southerner, then Mel Price right behind him who is from Illinois, but I mean his philosophy on defense is just about the same as any southerner. So there is not going to be any mixture there, and then when Mel Price looks

for votes on the Armed Services Committee, he's going to know that most of his friends are the southerners, who are going to support his philosophy.

J.B.: Do you see yourself as representing the wave of the future as the type of Democratic Congressman that is going to come out of the South?

Davis: I believe so. You know, we had a big fight last year in the Congress, and it came about as a result of the Steering Committee appointments appointed by the Speaker, and I was very involved in it, and I have ended upon the Steering Committee because what had happened was that we ran some research and it's amazing, just like, well the comparison was between 1962 and 1972, it was something like the House as a whole had changed since 1964, I believe it was by something like 39 or 38 more Republicans than there were Democrats. Of those 38, 29 were southerners, and this is a big change when you get . . . you know, well like the State of Mississippi that now has five representatives, two of them are Republicans. Never before in history have they had anything like that. North Carolina, Virginia with ten Congressmen have only three Democrats now. Georgia has got one Republican, Florida has got several. So you have been seeing a change because of a less of a catering to the South in the basic policy structure of the House, in the leadership because out of Massachusetts, Speaker out of Oklahoma, Majority Leader out of Massachusetts,

Whip out of Massachusetts, a Whip out of California, most of your Deputy Whips, except for one or two that is assigned to the Southeast, the other eleven are from the other parts of the country, which made up the leadership. So it wasn't in the leadership itself, the South was not involved. So a group of us got together, and when the Speaker got up to make his ~~appointments~~ to the Democratic policy of the Steering Committee, I went to him and asked him. I said "Mr. Speaker, you are going to lose a hell of a lot of support if you don't appoint a young southerner, we've got them, and got some good ones." He said that he was already obligated and that he had to appoint a black, he had to appoint a freshman and he had to appoint a woman. My next reaction was Barbara Jordan, who fit all three and was a southerner. She would have been a black woman freshman and could fit all three categories or Andy Young from Atlanta would have been a black freshman, who also was a southerner, but instead he went to Maryland, he went to Utah, and went to Washington State to get his appointments, and just totally ignored us. So finally, we put enough pressure on him through quorum calls to where they created another slot for young southern representation on the Democratic Policy and Steering Committee, and so I believe it is a changing day, and if you'll look at the votes now, you don't . . . you've got young southerners that are more voting their constituency rather than philosophy.

That is a big difference. People like Jack Brinkley from down in Georgia, Walt Flowers, ~~Dorson~~^{Dawson} Mathews, Bill Gunter[†] from Florida, Dick Fulton from Tennessee, Charlie Rose from North Carolina. These people are not your old southern demagogue philosophical politician.

W.D.: Doesn't that tend to make them more liberal and their colleagues in the Congress too?

Davis: Well, if it makes them more liberal, then it is good because that means that their constituency is more liberal, but you will see one of these men really weigh an issue on his Congressional District in the 450,000 - 500,000 people that he represents, and what benefit it will go there as opposed to basic philosophy, and that's a big difference.

W.D.: Isn't it a little bit more than philosophy. It is also the pressure from the people in the South?

Davis: I don't believe that it is the pressure of the people because, I mean, you get down to some . . .

W.D.: . . . the old time southern Congressman, isn't there kind of a . . .

Davis: Oh yeah, there is a pressure back in there. Yeah, they have a peer pressure, but then again the young southerners today in my opinion are rejecting it.

J.B.: Is this also a reflection of a broadened constituency?

Davis: Yeah, I believe so.

W.D.: It is also a reflection of the fact that many districts are now two party, and you have to think a little bit more beyond Democratic policies.

Davis: That's right. They are also two party, but also you've got to think, Jack, just like look at South Carolina; at least since Fritz Hollings was Governor. We moved from a rural, agricultural state to mainly an industrialized state for the majority of our economy. We still have a large agricultural section, but as people become more involved in industry, you see more housing problems, you see more needs for services, you see more need for day care, more need for Head Start, more need for your Poverty Program, more need for Minimum Wage, more need for National Health Insurance, areas like this because your industrial environment creates it because you are getting larger and larger suburban areas, you need more medical care, you've got the problems of people that lose jobs, can't get trained and become ghettos, and need to be helped. So this is a big change I believe, and one of the reasons for it.

W.D.: Some believe that one reason that you can now focus on these issues is that you really don't worry about race now as the principal issue?

Davis: That's right.

W.D.: That removes the demagoguery that there has been in the past. How do you feel about that?

Davis: I don't think that race really now is an issue

in elections and campaigns. I mean, I'm being honest with you. It's just like you find your average politician in South Carolina today that is going to win and he's going to tell the same story to both sides because number one, the communications and the media is going to catch him if he tries to do otherwise; so therefore, you cannot separate it over racist standards. You have got to be honest with your people.

J.B.: Isn't race still a factor, but in sort of a different kind of way? And that blacks voting and voting in large numbers that race remains a consideration, but it remains a consideration from a . . .

Davis: It remains a consideration from a positive viewpoint rather than a negative. I would say definitely because I mean your average black voter today in franchise only 25 years, and have only been really coming into educational standards that have allowed him to progress up the ladder, that have allowed him to get a good job. Today, he will look at a candidate closer on all issues than will the rest of your society. I really believe that. I've noticed this in my campaign. That you will have more meetings, mass meetings in the black community that will ask candidates to come in and speak to the issues and question them on the issues than you do in the white community, and as a result, when it gets down to election day, they make their choice, they

are better informed, but also by the same token, because they are better informed, they choose a candidate and they work hard, and they will go get their friends and make sure they vote on election day, which is a big difference.

J.B.: How would you define the Democratic party in South Carolina today?

Davis: I would define the Democratic party in South Carolina today really as a moderate progressive party that is going to the idea really of a populist movement. I wouldn't say that it is a conservative party, I wouldn't say that it is a liberal party. I'd say that it is very moderate and the thing is that I believe that our party has shown exactly what we have always heard, you know, that the Democratic party is the party with the umbrella big enough to encompass everyone, and who survive within it, because I mean, here you've got a man that's . . . alright, look at our primary in Charleston, that is one of the greatest examples. Here you have a man that fought the Milk Commission, went to jail, was one of George Wallace's staunchest supporters, he went and sought to get the Congressional nomination as a Republican in 1972, and now he is running in the Democratic primary for the state legislature. We have a black preacher from probably one of the in South Carolina, he's running, and then you have a fellow that filed as an indigent, that's just really knocking everybody in office

on everything, and I would say that is a pretty wide spectrum, in that you have really what you might call an ultra-liberal, a moderate black man, and a very conservative white, all running for the Democratic nomination. I think that those three candidates themselves show what the Democratic party is in South Carolina. That it is a moderate, middle of the road populists progressive party.

W.D.: Well if the Democrats are that, what are the Republicans?

Davis: The Republicans are very, very, very conservative. Their party is founded more on philosophy than issues, totally and completely.

W.D.: Are they moving more and more right or becoming more moderate, or are they standing still?

Davis: Well, let me put it this way, and this comes straight from me, and the Republicans aren't going to like it. They are a negative party. In other words, I have noticed in two campaigns that I have run against members of the Republican party, that I have yet to see them come out and say "I want to do this," or "I will vote for this," and our senior Senator is a great example. It is always "I am against this," "I'm going to change this because it is no good," "We don't want this," "I'm going to vote this way," and that is purely negative conservatism, and you can not be assembling people and go into office with a negative attitude, or a negative philosophy.

W.D.: *[What about Strom Thurmond]*

Davis: Who ?

W.D.: Yeah, what is the basis of his appeal? Is it strictly a personal thing?

Davis: It is strictly personal, strictly personal because by the same token, he wins, and then Fritz Hollings will win by the same margin if not *[larger]* . But I mean one thing about Strom that shows that it is personal appeal is the fact that in 1970 it was, he proved . . . in 1972 he proved he could get elected by a good margin, two to one, but in 1970 it was also proved they he could not elect anybody else 'cuase Albert Watson is not the Governor of the State of South Carolina. So, it is strictly a personal thing.

W.D.: But you then think that the Democratic party is going to continue to move towards a populists or moderate kind of thing.

Davis: Yeah, I really do.

W.D.: Is that true in other southern states among your colleagues in the Congress?

Davis: Yeah, I've seen it. I've seen young men who came up here really very very philosophically conservative, but then by the same token, they would look back down home, and see the need and all of a sudden they are voting for four billion dollars for day care, or all of a sudden they are voting support for OEO, or all of a sudden they are voting food stamps for strikers, or all of a sudden

they are voting for minimum wage, which does not philosophically go with Alabama, but yet they are doing it.

W.D.: Do you think that that is going to continue in the future?

Davis: I think that it will continue in the future definitely. Well I think one great example is look at Jack Flint. Here is a man who was probably one of the most Hawkish individuals in the world, and he is now a member of the Defense Appropriations sub-committee, but then bam about two years ago, his constituency was fed up with Viet Nam and he was and he switched. He started voting and making speeches to get out of Viet Nam at the height of the war, and then he said he would go home, and he said people, like the mailman would say "Jack, it took a lot of guts, but you are doing the right thing." In other words the silent majority in his district agreed with him, and then last year when he ran for re-election he was elected overwhelmingly, and this was in Griffin, Georgia. So there is a change.

W.D.: Do you think that as the older members of the southern delegation retire, die off, or are defeated, that the South as a group tends to become more economically liberal or more populists or more concerned about social programs in a sense that it is almost like we are returning to the New Deal?

Davis: I think that you are going to get more of a

concern about social problems with young southerners coming out, but let me clarify one thing, these men in the older generation have done one hell of a lot for the South to bring it where it is because you know you had sort of a reversal. Now, right after the Civil War you had really, your blacks were free, slaves; you had your Carpetbaggers that oppressed really the white people to a degree, and then around the turn of the century, you had a change with people like Ben Tillman, who had a resurgents of your middle class whites back in the , and they brought the South a long way economically. Let me say this, because they have changed places like South Carolina from a rural agricultural state to an industrial complex; to a place where Germany has more money invested than in any other state in the country; to a place where the wages are pretty well; to a place where I was reading just the other day that the increase in sales in department stores were higher in South Carolina than in any other State in the country last year. It was well above the average, about 15% above the average. So they have changed the rural South into an area that has grown industrially. They have also changed the educational systems to where you have got top flight educational institutions. You've got places like Duke, you've got places like Carolina, Emory, Georgia Tech, really fast growing educational institutions. Then you've got something that was once like the

Medical University of South Carolina was once a medical college in Charleston. Now I have got colleagues from all over the country saying they have constituents that want to go to medical school in Charleston, and this has been done by this other generation, or the older generation in the Congress and in State government and in politics. They have brought it a long long way. But by the same token, I believe that one of the big differences was that they were concerned with the overall economic situation, and then to a degree the overall economic situation being brought in so fast has now created the new social **needs**, and the group such as my era that has grown up during this industrialization sees the Social ~~Leagues~~ ^{**needs**} now to balance out the needs of the population.

W.D.: Is that one thing that unites the younger southern Congressmen is the concern about social needs?

Davis: I would say the concern about social needs, I would say also that the younger Congressman get a better view because I mean, I have learned things and have been able to get more information on agriculture that I ever thought I would have in my life since I have been in Congress. By the same token, you've got more people, younger people, studying the issues in those different areas of the economy because they are worried

about getting re-elected. They aren't entrenched, they do have to go back and answer to the voter every year with opposition. So, they have got to know the issues, and they have got to know the needs.

W.D.: But there is not as much unity among southern Congressman as say there was ten years ago?

Davis: No, not at all.

W.D.: So that in a sense has declined.

Davis: It has greatly declined. One of the things that has declined it is the younger members.

J.B.: One of the points the last session that freshmen Democrats from the South voted the majority of the time with the Democratic majority rather than with the Republicans, a reversal of the trend of the last 30 years. Do you see this as a turning point.

Davis: I would say that it goes farther than the Democratic . I would say that it goes to . . . Democrats, really southerners, almost with four terms or less, to be honest with you. I mean, did you every think you would see somebody from South Carolina or North Carolina that continuously supported the Foreign Aid Bill?

W.D.: What you are saying is that since the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act of '64 and '65, eight years . . .

Davis: Right.

J.B.: Do you see yourself as breaking with the Mendell Rivers tradition on issues?

Davis: Yes, I do, to a degree. The one thing is that Mendell Rivers was more tied up being a Chairman, and having been a ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee that this was his big involvement, but this is also what people looked to him for. So, as a result, he didn't get involved in other areas where I am. Like being in fights with the OEO about defunding of the program in South Carolina such as your Farm Workers Commission, which I have been, or pushing for Comprehensive Health for Beaufort and Jasper Counties and on the Sea Island outside of Charleston, but the thing was that the magnitude of his job as Chairman of that House Armed Services Committee was so great that that consumed most of his time.

W.D.: And people understood that.

Davis: And people understood it. You know when you come to his voting record, Jack, Mendell Rivers was one of the most liberal members that has ever come out of South Carolina. One of the reasons was that he was a Chairman, and he supported the other chairman because he counted on the other chairman to support him. So you couldn't say that in his last years that he was the staunch conservative. He was very conservative on defense, which I am, but then by the same token, he did vote for the social changes, such as housing, such as medic-aid,

Medicare, some of your other poverty programs. So really when you say breaking with his tradition, maybe yes. Because of the fact that I have been more involved with the Social needs in my District, and the needs of groups, but it is strictly because of the fact that I am not Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. That job is unbelievable. It is overwhelming when you consider that you are Chairman of a group, of a Committee that is concerned with seventy four billion dollars in the defense budget. You know, that is a pretty awesome task to do it every year.

J.B.: Do you think that the fact that you have that opposition each time, and they presume or at least expect . . . require you to spend more time in the District and become maybe more sensitive to these social issues?

Davis: Yes, maybe so Jack. I go home every weekend. I commute back and forth. I've got two offices in the District now, where Mr. Rivers had one. I have one in Beaufort, *[which is in]* the lower part of my ^{*District.*} ~~County.~~ I have changed the composition of my staff as compared to his so that I can get the needs. My staff . . . I have one young man, a black, that travels 60 miles one way to work everyday. He was formerly with the ^{*Berkley-Colleton-*} ~~Becky Colliton~~ Dorchester CEO, and he gives me that view of my constituency. My top man on my staff travels from Walterboro everyday to work. He sits, and lives in the center of my district, which gives me a good viewpoint, and I have another man

who is a former newspaper man in the Charleston area, so he is sensitive to that needs, and the thing of it is that I go home every week to sit down and go over problems with them, what we should be doing, where do we need to go, or what needs to be done to help one area. The fact that I do have opposition, that I do run every two years, maybe it does make where I am more sensitive because I do stay in closer contact.

W.D.: Is that a characteristic that is true of the other younger southern Congressmen too.

Davis: Yeah.

W.D.: Charlie Rose is my Congressman, and I notice . . .

Davis: Charlie is one of the best. He's moving fast, and Charlie is one of these . . .

W.D.: He is going to have to.

Davis: This is it.

W.D.: Because it is tough.

Davis: That fact, but Lord look at the change in Charlie's voting record, and ^[that of Alton Lennon] ~~Lennon~~.

W.D.: And the that if Charlie did that there would be a great human outcry against him.

Davis: But it hasn't.

W.D.: No it hasn't worked that way at all.

Davis: It hasn't been, 'cause like Charlie was really nervous, to be honest with you, about whether or not to try for the Armed Services Committee like ^{Alton} ~~Clinton~~ or

whether or not to go to the Agriculture Committee, and he made up in his mind that he wanted the Agriculture Committee because it is sort of a vast area really of his district. Not just Fayetteville, which is mainly your military installation. Charlie has done a great job, but I believe that by the same token, his going home as often as he does, he stays in good close contact, he's got that roving office where he can do the same thing that I do . . . stay in touch with your people.

J.B.: Well, where do you see the Republicans going in the South? Are they going to be able to continue to win the candidates majority of the Republicans seem to be very conservative with some exceptions, most of them appear to be more conservative than the traditional Democratic conservatives than anything?

Davis: The local offices, Jack, the State offices, I would say that the Republican party is going to have to change to be more progressive, more in line, looking more to the needs of human beings rather than philosophy.

J.B.: There is another trait that the Republicans seem to have . . .

W.D.: But do you see them doing that?

Davis: No, I don't. I really, really don't.

J.B.: Are they winning then because they run more professional campaigns or because . . .

Davis: They are winning because they have got better

money, they've got bigger money, but when you talk about them winning look what they have won. They haven't won any of the big ones yet, really. I mean out of state, and this is where I am looking at the Republican party is in South Carolina because they have not been progressive. You know as well as I do the race question defeated Albert Watson, and he ran on an issue of race. You travelled with him in that campaign, and you take what happened ~~at~~ ^{in Dreher [Dreher]} Lamar, and what happened ~~at~~ ^{in Dreher [Dreher]} High School in Columbia during that campaign as his big issues.

J.B.: Florence. *Florence*

Davis: *Florence*, excuse me, but it is that same negative attitude . . . "I'm against welfare," I mean I sat in a State delegation meeting the other day in Columbia . . .

(Begin Side Two, Tape 1)

. . . and said that eighty to ninety thousand people in South Carolina did not even have toilets. Thousands of people in South Carolina don't even have electricity.

W.D.: Yet the Republicans have been able to pick up Congressional seats like Tennessee, five out of eight.

Davis: Virginia, seven out of ten. Two in South Carolina.

W.D.: You don't think that is going to continue? Essentially, as you look at it, they are very conservative.

Davis: I don't believe it is going to continue because for one thing, Floyd Spence now . . . Floyd is a very conservative individual. But Floyd is also one of the most liked individuals in an area that I have ever seen. I mean, he is just about unbeatable. He really is, you know that. But the thing is that Floyd has a lot of old Democratic support, and he also has a large rural district outside of the City of Columbia. But then by the same token, you saw ^{EQ} ~~Herb~~ Young come up here and about the first nine things that the Republican party did

and man that gives me a headache. Reading in the paper back home . . . because of the fact that that type of conservatism was not relating to his District, and his District was getting very upset about it. So you have seen the change in Ed to where he is not basically ultra-conservative type Republican, and you have seen Ed come out more for things. But what I am talking about is the overall picture of the Republican party is against things, and you can't do it.

J.B.: We keep hearing this over and over that the Republicans that are coming up here are elected as ultra-conservatives and then they get here and they become, they move to the middle. Do you observe this?

Davis: Yeah, I have. It gets kind of odd to see it, but the thing is that by the same token, I believe for one thing is that the same thing that happens to the Democrats.

The Republican knows that he is going to have opposition, and in order to get re-elected, he had better look at the people who are going to vote for him and their needs, and this is why I say this classification of liberal and conservative really should go out the window. To me it is an attitude of negativism versus human needs, and when a man starts meeting human needs and the needs of society, then all of a sudden he has turned more liberal.

W.D.: What you are saying then is that they are becoming more responsive to . . .

Davis: I think it is becoming more responsive to the people. I think that you can classify liberalism and conservatism on one issue and that is fiscal attitudes. But when it goes to setting up programs for people, then I don't think that you should classify them as such.

J.B.: It would reflect to some extent even on setting up programs the two of them.

Davis: yes. But then by the same token you can vote to set up the programs to create them, and then you can come back to these basic liberal or conservative thing whether you are going to give them four billion dollars or two billion. In other words, how much money are you willing to invest. Whether you are going to invest, you know, just what you are asked, or whether you are going to scrutinize the program and be conservative in the way you hand out money to direct

needs rather than It's just like we get so many Bills in here that say we need this five million or five billion sometimes, flexibility. Alright, if you are liberal, I would say that you would give them the five billion flexibility; but yet a fiscal conservative would say "you don't need it, if you need it come back to us and justify it."

J.B.: What do you think the Democrats would have to do in order to start winning the South again in the Presidential elections?

Davis: Number one, what I think we have got to do is first of all come campaign in the South. I'm being honest with you. Look at it, the last Democrat that really won in South Carolina, and it's odd because he is the only one who has won in thirty years was John F. Kennedy. But, he campaigned in South Carolina when he was the Presidential nominee. In other words so many of our northern advisors to Presidential candidates is that "we are going to get what we get out of the South, let's concentrate on New York, California and these areas. I think they are wrong. I think that we have got to start with programs that look at the country as a whole, that you have got to mix in the viewpoints of the South with those of the North, and then you have got to go to the people, and I think that is the biggest mistake that the Democratic nominees have made . . . is not campaigning in

the South. You cannot take Atlanta, Georgia . . . go down and make a speech and ride in a parade and say that you have campaigned in the South, that's ridiculous. Atlanta, Georgia is two and a half million people

in the State of South Carolina almost, and to pick that as a representative city of the South would be totally wrong, and I think this is one of the biggest mistakes that the Democrats have made . . . is writing off the South and saying "you are going to get what you get, so don't waste your time." But you know, 128 electoral votes are a lot to write off.

J.B.: You think it is a question of campaigning rather than the type of candidate?

Davis: I think that first of all it is maybe in this last election it was the type of the candidate because I am one of these people that I do not believe that 64% of the American people that voted for President voted for Richard Nixon. I believe maybe 42% did, but I believe 22% voted against George McGovern. I really believe that; because I mean just look at my area when I was campaigning. It was very very seldom that I heard anybody say "I'm voting for Richard Nixon." People always said "I'm voting against McGovern." That is a lot to look at. But the thing is that I believe last year we did exactly what the Republicans did in '64. The Democrats went to their extreme, and now they will move back into the middle of the

road again. But Hubert Humphrey, had he campaigned in the South, I believe could have picked up some of those southern states, which would have made him the President, but he didn't.

W.D.: That is the first time I have ever heard it expressed that way, but you are absolutely right in terms of the polls. Because Nixon had about 43% of the vote.

[Interruption]

Davis: Have you ever stopped and looked at South Carolina? In '43, Roosevelt came to South Carolina, in 1944 and he carried it.

J.B.: Of course Lyndon Johnson campaigned in South Carolina.

Davis: No he didn't.

J.B.: Yeah, in Columbia.

Davis: Lady Bird did.

J.B.: No, both of them. They were at that mammoth rally in Columbia.

Davis: That's right, that's right. That's one thing. But by the same token, Stevenson came one time when he was seeking the nomination and Johnson came when he was seeking the nomination. He came in December.

J.B.: No, he came during the '64 campaign. I think it was in the fall.

Davis: Well, when you look back at it, during the Presidential campaign the candidates have just not campaigned

in the South, and I think that is one of the big thing that hurts.

W.D.: Well it was based on assumptions . . .

Davis: That's right . . .

W.D.: Right, a long time ago, but I think they were right. The assumption was that Democrats in the South would be straight party voters.

[Interruption]

Davis: In my District in 1968 Nixon got 38% of the vote, Humphrey, 35% of the vote, and Wallace 37% of the vote. Now you can't tell me that had Hubert Humphrey come down there, that he couldn't have switched maybe 3% of the vote somewhere and added to it, and that would have been in my district beaten Richard Nixon, but then when you look at Nixon - McGovern, it was 69% to 31%, and again, this was that vote against in my estimation, especially in my area where you had so much military . . . such a big military complex and McGovern's stand on defense, which was bad. It's just one of those really funny things. Nixon only carried South Carolina in '68 . . . Nixon got 38% of the vote and Humphrey got 30% and Wallace 32%, and Humphrey was the only one that didn't come to South Carolina, and he ran third. So I think that . . . they have just got to start saying that we have got to campaign there like everywhere else on a Presidential scale.

J.B.: What do you think would be the effect if George Wallace actively campaigned in the South on behalf of the Democratic ticket?

Davis: I think it would be pretty good. I think it would have its effect. He has a large following, and George Wallace is a populist. I believe he proved that in his Presidential primary. He got down and he talked about needs. If you look at Alabama . . .

J.B.: Do you mean there is a potential of George Wallace playing the role that Strom Thurmond played in '68 insofar as the South is concerned?

Davis: Very definitely, more so, more so because George Wallace is no longer characterized as the racist segregationist. He is no longer characterized as being against things. He is characterized as being a very populist for something type government, and his administration in Alabama has shown it, and you can see it in some of the changes in the votes in the members of Congress from Alabama, that they are able to change because Alabama has changed, and I believe that he could be a very effective campaigner.

J.B.: Do you think that there is a genuine possibility that that could happen?

Davis: Yeah, I do. I believe it was well shown. He came out of his really '72 campaign and said that he was a Democrat, and that he was not switching parties and he was not a Democrat for Nixon, and he came into our State

and he did endorse Democratic candidates, and in certain sections of the State it had an effect.

W.D.: Are you a member of that rural caucus?

Davis: No.

W.D.: Are you a member of that other group that is suppose to be a combination southern rural congressmen and urban congressmen, I can't think of the name of the thing. It has a title.

[Interruption]

Davis: What it is is philosophically relating exactly what a southern . . . young southern Congressmen is. It's a moderate group. It is not going to go off based on philosophy, but rather looking at the needs and looking at legislation that is going to meet the needs in trying to persuade, be briefed on it, on the legislation and how we can act as a group to keep the Democratic party in power, passing legislation that does not go off the deep end one way or the other.

J.B.: Does the South Carolina delegation in Washington meet on any basis at all?

Davis: No. The only thing that we ever meet on is Textiles, and that is because the Textile people come up here and request us to get together and meet with us. But as far as having regular delegation meetings . . .

J.B.: Did they at one time?

Davis: Not that I know of. Now we have met several

times since I have been here. We have had problems that have confronted the State where we did meet with say some Agency official, or we have had where the Chairman of a Committee who had a bill would ask, he'd ask General McMillan to call a delegation meeting for him to meet and discuss a bill, but as far as meeting as a group on a regular basis, no.

J.B.: Do you ever meet on a South wide basis?

Davis: No.

W.D.: That's a change though isn't it. I mean, didn't they at one time.

Davis: At one time they did.

W.D.: That was around the issue of race thought wasn't it?

Davis: They do have . . . right now there is . . . This is a funny thing about it, this type of organizations get out of hand, and I mean why get involved in all of them. Alright, you've got your rural caucus, you've got your Democratic Study group, you've got your moderate group and then you've got what they call the DRO, the Democratic Research Organization, which is your southern ultra- conservative congressmen that usually go in a block with the Republicans.

W.D.: That is your conservative answer to the Democratic Study group.

Davis: What the hell have you got. You've got 18

different organizations and what you end up with is most of the members belong to all of them, you know? But then you get the group that really says why get involved with all of them, let's go ahead and get our own constituency use and vote that, we'll belong to it, we'll put our name on the roster, we'll get their information sheets, we'll get their analysis of bills, and we'll look it over because all of them have good research organizations. I mean, really really good. But then by the same token that is not going to govern how I vote. [Interruption] Because when Phil Burton was Chairman of the DSG at the time, got up and made this rousing speech on the Farm Bill. I mean you can't tell me that a liberal 100% ADA rating from SanFrancisco is really interested that Farm Bill except to kill it, but yet he didn't, and what has he done, he's trying to persuade his group to go with him because he wants to get some southerners to vote with him on another bill. So I mean, what do you end up with . . . nothing except good research organizations, slanted one way or the other. So the best thing you can do is to be a member of all of them, get all their views and then see how it effects your constituency.

[Interruption]

W.D.: Do you think it is declining?

Davis: I think that Regional voting is very very much declining right now. I really do. The only regional

voting I have seen lately now is Arizona's Energy Bill. You have seen your oil states, Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, Louisiana, stay pretty well together because . . . basically look at it. It's an economic people vote from the people of that area.

W.D.: Plus the geographical aspect

Davis: Right, that's what I am saying though, that that is the only example I have seen of regional voting recently.

W.D.: Yeah, but common perception is that the South votes in a block.

Davis: That is the biggest farce in the world.

W.D.: That used to be a characteristic . . .

Davis: It was, it was, and you could count them man.

W.D.: So that is a major change in the last . . .

Davis: That is a great change, that I would say has taken just like you said since 1964.

End interview with Mendel Davis.