This is an interview with Clarence B. Robinson, State Representative from Chattanooga, Tennessee. The interview was conducted by Jack Bass on August 12, 1974. The transcriber is Susan Hathaway.

JACK BASS: Mr. Robinson, was this your first political race?

CLARENCE B. ROBINSON: Yeah, this is my first. I have been in a lot of political campaigns but this is my first as a candidate.

J.B.: Are there any black legislators now from Chattanooga?

Robinson: No. When I am elected I will be the first. J.B.: Is this a majority black district?

Robinson: Yes to an extent of people. I think, according to people, the actual population is 57% to 43%, Fifty-seven percent black, and forty-three percent white. But in relation to voting pattern it is about fifty fifty because we have very hard core blacks, poor blacks in this area. There are not affluent blacks . . . they moved out and left the poverty and the older people in the city. Then the white areas within the district are more affluent than the blacks. Consequently this makes a difference in the voting pattern.

J.B.: You are how old now?

Robinson: Sixty-three.

J.B.: And you are a native of Chattanooga?

Robinson: A native of Chattanooga.

J.B.: Have you lived here all your life?

Robinson: Lived here all my life except when I was in school.

J.B.: And you are a school principal now?

Robinson: A school principal now, yes.

J.B.: And how long have you been a principal?

Robinson: Twenty-nine years.

J.B.: Is there more or less black political organization in Chattanooga?

Robinson: Well we have one which I am the President of as part of the Tennessee Voters Council state-wide organization, and we have a chapter in Chattanooga, and we have had one here since 1962. We call it the Hamilton County Have I file Tennessee Voters Council.

J.B.: How does it function? I mean, does it endorse candidates, for example?

Robinson: Yes. The Tennessee Voters Council was organized specifically for the purpose of upgrading political activities among negroes particularly in this area seeing that there was a problem with poor whites also very similar of that we have taken in and broaden the base and included some whites, but it is basically a black organization hoping to involve black people in political organizations more or less on the

lines. This is the purpose of the Tennessee Voters Council to actually go into it, not sell and buy negro voters, but to get negroes to vote for candidates and issues that best represent their interests.

J.B.: Who is the state President?

Robinson: Senator Avon /N./ Williams /Jr./.

J.B.: That's what I thought. We'll be seeing him in Nashville. Does the local chapter interview local candidates? Robinson: Yes.

J.B.: Republicans and Democrats?

Robinson: Republicans and Democrats. It's a nonpartisan organization.

J.B.: How about . . . have they endorsed many Republicans or any Republicans?

Robinson: Not many Republicans, but we have endorsed Republicans . . . some few Republicans.

J.B.: These are what, in local races?

Robinson: I think once or twice in local races and once or twice at the state level.

J.B.: Who at the state level?

Robinson: As I recall, it was Galbreath /Charles/, for judge for Circuit Court of Appeals or , one of the two. I don't recall the other one at the moment. I have just known one or two in the thirteen years and I think it is the same thing locally. J.B.: Roughly, what percentage of the registered voters in Hamilton County are black?

Robinson: I'd say about one-fifth.

J.B.: Are most of them in the city?

Robinson: Most of them are within the city limits.

J.B.: Are any blacks on city council here?

Robinson: One. We have Commissioner of Education who is black. He is the first black to be on the City Commission. He was elected in '71.

J.B.: Why did you decide to run this year?

This seat was created basically to try to Robinson: get black representation from this area into the state legislature and a number of whites as well as the blacks have been concerned about this. We call ourselves an all American city, but all American city . . . we are the only large urban area in Tennessee without black representation, which gives us a negative on a to what we want to think, and since this district was created for that purpose, and I had worked towards this end for the last ten years when I wasn't working to being the representative, after we created it I was pushing several of my students that I have taught to get them ready and to get them to qualify, and they would talk with several of these same people who have been talking to me. I've been talking with them about it, and so they got together somewhere and one day five of them came to me and said "Pop, want to tell you something, you are

in the race. We put you in the race. We told the Jaycees that they asked Wilbert Roberts for one said they asked me if I was going to run and I told them no, I wasn't running, I was supporting you." "The superintendent asked me and I told him no, I wasn't running I was supporting So I thought I would come by and tell you, so when you. you hear, to know that you are in the race and how you got in the race." Well, that put me in a very awkward position and I either had to run or maybe I'd been teaching them a lie all these years when I encouraged them and told them what I would do if I had the opportunity to run for the kind of thing that I would like to do, and that would be in the state legislature . . . I didn't say state legislature, I said United States Congress, or Senate, but they equated this with the same kind of thing. and they say "well when you taught us those years ago" and it was some years ago "when you taught us, you said that if the opportunity ever came, you would run, so we put you in there." I said "you know at this age I have some handicap, if you all are going to help me be my legs, and are going to help me to meet these people and obligations, then I'll accept." And that is basically the reason that I am in there because I had my plan to ever run for political office. I would accept appointment, I told them in '69 when I was up for appointment for the Commissioner of Public Works, I would accept it if I were appointed, but I had no

intention for running. So that is how I got into it at this stage of the game. I've enjoyed helping others and pushing others and getting others ready. That has really been my role . . . teaching. Get them ready and try to upgrade the political standing. Get away from bootel politics and buying and selling the people for the dollar. So that is my story.

J.B.: How much of the buying and selling has gone on here in the past?

Robinson: At one time it's been rare, the other time I am sure when the machines . They were real prevalent here, and there was a lot of buying and selling of voters here, and this was pretty dominant in the black community and in the poor white community. The machine control operators had them a few people, they gave a few dollars and they got the yote.

J.B.: How is financing doing now insofar as the black community is concerned?

Robinson: Most of the financing is done through the candidates. The candidates give a certain amount of money to the various Ward Chairmans and they use it to get out the vote to some extent and the rest of it becomes a personal pay-off they are able to produce. As to my campaign, it was basically financed by the black community . . . small contributions averaging around I'd say \$8, that's just about what they averaged, and this campaign gave me a pretty good base . . not a lot of money in which to operate on, but along with money it gave me people, and this is something I have advocated that if it was done in small donations, that you might get the people to really be concerned about political activities. They always told me that those who share care, and if you can get them to share in the financing of it, they certainly would care about the candidate that they are spending their dollars on.

J.B.: Does the Voters Council send out sample ballots or distribute sample ballots generally within the black community?

Robinson: Yes.

J.B.: Is this done by hand or mail, or how is that done?

Robinson: By both ways. Some by mail and some by hand . . . this is a . . . that's because there's council's ballot. Those are the candidates that the Voters Aid have supported.

J.B.: Do you know how many of them won?

Robinson: I think all but three. The Governor didn't win, the Attorney General, and . . I think the Public Service Commissioner . . I haven't seen what he did . . . in competition . . I know that Jim Roberson (?) didn't win because it was between Carr and Atkins, but Jim Roberson was endorsed by the state TVC on his record. . . his record and his attitude in the senate

toward negro legislation, and his cooperation with black representatives and senators in the state house won his endorsement. So that was the basis on our acceptance here because we generally follow the state endorsement. There were two of us from here that was on the state screening committee and we had an opportunity to vote and push for whoever we wanted to push and then whatever is done, we came back and reported to the local group. The local group may or may not follow the state endorsement, but they are supposed to, but there have been times when I've seen a group of at least one who didn't because the person locally, who was running, that is when old Johnny was running for Governor, what he had done locally for the people here won their support of him in spite of the fact that the other group had endorsed another statewide candidate. This . . .

J.B.: Who is the local man they endorsed here? Robinson: Rudy Oenjoudy (?) J.B.: How do you spell that? Robinson: Oligita.

WALTER DEVRIES: In the twenty-nine years that you have been a principal, been involved in politics in Chattanooga and the state, what are the basic changes that have occurred in politics?

Robinson: The basic change that I have seen . . . Occurred . . . has been that we . . . first when I came in and we found that most negroes in Chattanooga were voting the Republican ticket, and were not voting in the Democratic primary, and it was . . . you can tell this had been a good while ago, but there was a group of us who had just come out of school who made a strong push to get the ballot open to negro Democrats. At that time we were working with Estes Kefauver, and with somewhat of a bi-racial committee . . . Kefauver and a retired judge on there, and George McIntosh and a few others, and we got them to open the Democratic primary, and then the first race one of the silent negro districts in which Joe Bean must have been the most popular. Joe Bean in that particular box up until the last box that come in and defeated Kefauver, but after that time the negroes of Chattanooga and Hamilton County supported Kefauver in every race that he ran after that.

J.B.: Was that in the late forties or early fifties? Robinson: It was in the late forties.

W.D.: But blacks were able to register as Republicans but not Democrats?

Robinson: They were allowed to register, see we don't have party registration. They were allowed to register and see at that time we still had a poll tax. They were allowed to register, but they weren't voting in the Democratic primary. We did get a chance to vote in the Democratic primary long before they won . . . the Supreme Court rendered the decision to allow negroes to vote in the primary. We had already gained it through these young brothers at that time who were on whites.

WD.: So the basic change was the blacks leaving the Republican primary to the Democratic primary?

Robinson: The Democratic primary and then they shedded most of the hope that the ward healers, and I say ward healer -I mean those politicians who had organizations and got the money and got the people to vote and make up the money, this kind of thing . . . buying and selling. They flew off that just about to the point when the majority of negroes now are I'd say independent voters. You have to They want to know what the issues are and what sell them. they'd be gaining by supporting a candidate and not by how much money will I get. So they are not apt to in a large majority . . . and then you get a large majority who can get a number of leaders with finances we had this past election when some of the people put out quite a bit of money to corral the votes . . . that wasn't only negro, that was negro and whites and this Butcher and Haney with their money. They shifted a lot of voting patterns, but other than this kind of thing, you'll find they stick pretty close to the issues . . . the candidates that are best for their interests, let me put it that way. Then we find them becoming a little sophisticated to the point Neghes running for that they now are thinking in terms of office. We have three negroes . . .

## J.B.: Is that a major change?

Robinson: Yeah, because we haven't even been running for office, and say up until about six years ago, we were not able to elect them any kind of way . . . to the county court, and now we have three on the county court . . . one prior to this, we have elected a negro constable in the last few years and a negro on the commission and a negro judge. This represents quite a bit of progress . . . not as much as some of them would like but . . .

J.B.: Where do you see it going? Robinson: Where do I see it going? J.B.: Yeah.

Robinson: I think it will continue to improve because the younger people . . . I think it is going to become a little more sophisticated right now . . . they are for something, but I don't know whether they have definite goals, but I do feel that they are not going to be upset by going backwards.

W.D.: Do you think that more negroes are going to run for office in the future?

Robinson: Yes, I think more of them will run for office and I think they will get more financing from the negro community and there will be more unity, and there will be more whites who will be supporting them, because we will get a better caliber candidate than we used to have when the people . . . well I see two or three in my race that the people bought them with money and just put them in there to split the negro vote.

J.B.: Are there any all white precincts in your district? Robinson: Yes.

J.B.: How did you run in those precincts?

Robinson: In two of them I faired fairly well. I got I'd say about one-fourth of the vote in one. In the other district I carried it. In two of the other districts, I faired very poorly . . . 156 to 22, and 172 to 22, so in two of them I faired poorly.

J.B.: Were those districts different in terms of social economic characteristics?

Robinson: I'd say yes. The one in which I faired best, why are a higher more affluent type area.

J.B.: Did you campaign actively in those wards? Robinson: Yes.

J.B.: How did you do it . . . I mean did you go door to door or mail bout, or distribute literature?

Robinson: I mailed out brochures in all of them and in the more affluent area some of the people had receptions and invited me into to talk with the people . . . a brunch, or some kind of gathering, and this was in addition to mailing out and then they set up telephone committees in their own areas.

J.B.: Was that a surprise to you, or did you expect that? Robinson: No, it wasn't a surprise because it's the kind of thing that I saw done for the Commissioner of Education, and it was also done for Ex-Judge Benny Harris, and these people more or less are part of the onward and progressive movements of the city.

J.B.: How effective did you feel at those types of affairs where brunches and so forth in these white precinct.

Robinson: How effective?

J.B.: Right.

Robinson: I think they were fairly effective even though they didn't produce the number of votes that I had expected. I am well pleased with the attitude of the people and I believe the reception and attitude and everything will be transmitted into votes maybe in this coming general election and in the future. I think the reason it didn't do any better this time was because the white candidate that was running in one instance appealed to racism, but on the day of the election his wife campaigned in these areas, and she appealed for support of her husband on the basis of her, and I think a lot of the women yielded to her as a woman, and supported her husband. I don't think he would have done as well in those areas that she did. So I think that with a different set of circumstances, I think it would have produced more votes.

W.D.: How did he use race? Robinson: I beg your pardon? W.D.: How did he use race?

2.40

Robinson: Well to give you some idea . . . . He used to pass out a card to all of them who came up to the polls and would say "these four blacks are against my husband the white man that you see in the senate, I would appreciate a vote for my husband."

J.B.: Was he an incumbent?

Robinson: No, he wasn't an incumbent, but he had been in the state legislature before.

JB.: Labun?

Robinson: Laban

J.B.: Defriese.

Robinson: Yeah.

W.D.: That's why you want to know . . .

J.B.: So he was in the middle with four black candidates around him?

Robinson: Around him and there were some other things that our paper here the had said that . . . pointing out that he was the only white man in the race, and they billed me as being a person who had led a number of racial movements in the city, and they didn't say I had led a number of political activities or civic activities or anything like that in this city. The papers said I had led a number of racial movements and so he cut that out and used that as part of a letter, and the paper also referred to him as the only white candidate in the race. So he picked those things out of the paper andmade it up

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into a letter and mailed it to all the whites in the community.

W.D.: Do you think that race as an issue is still effective?

Robinson: They didn't buy it as well as he had expected. pected. They did buy it a little more than I had expected them to, but I can see that it has decreased substantially.

J.B.: Since when?

Robinson: Since four years ago when we had the last national election when it was really used, and the thing about it . . .

J.B.: Was that the Brock - Gore campaign? Robinson: Yeah, the Brock - Gore campaign, . . . J.B.: Why was race used in that campaign?

Robinson: See the way they used it, they haven't come out openly. It's been one of those things that . . . well for instance they talked about bussing, well everybody knows that there is nothing wrong with bussing as long as you have schools and you'll always have it. But the contentation of bussing as they pick up is that you don't want black children bussed to your schools. You don't want to ride busses with blacks. Some word that is used that reflect that you are black, and that this is not what you want. Now I attempted to counteract it in that brochure. I knew that if I sent it into the white community . . . any kind of literature with just my name on it, he would say that I was attempting to deceive them and make them feel . . . not know what race I was. So I sent my brochures so that they would know very definitely that I was black and that I was appealing for their support on the basis of my qualifications and my reputation, and I felt my qualifications are superior and that my reputation and my character traits because there are some things in his record for the level that would be detrimental to him but I didn't want to stoop to that type of campaign because that is not the level that I want to reach political activities on.

J.B.: How did you campaign in the poor white precincts?

Robinson: How did I campaign? Just talking with those people where I could make some contact with . . . around them, the stores in the area where I was going in with some white person who would probably live in that community and who was acquainted with . . . would introduce me and give me an opportunity to meet the people, and then I went on my own to meet all of the ward chairman and talk with all of the ward chairman, and got a rather favorable response from all of them. One of them wouldn't endorse me and said that he would have to give it a lot of thought because he didn't think his people would go along with him.

J.B.: Do you think they will endorse you in the general election?

Robinson: I think all of the ward chairmen will. I think they will but I don't know.

J.B.: Do you expect to run stronger against Republican

oppostion than you did in the primary?

Robinson: Yeah, because I will have the support of the Democrats supposedly . . . I am supposed to have because I am the Democratic nominee both black and white. I think this ought to give me a stronger base of operation . . . give me a broader base and I hope a stronger base.

J.B.: How is Senator Brock generally perceived in the black community, I mean this is his home territory?

Robinson: Well there's a lot of . . . I recon you can say mixed feeling about Brock because of the Brock family that has always been humanitarian family as far as black people are concerned, but from the standpoint of Bill, they don't see anything that Bill has done particularly for the group. He's done some things for the individual, but this is all the negro has been able to see. Now the thing that helps Bill to a great extent down here is his daddy, Bill Brock, Jr. is probably one of the finest citizens that we have in this town, and has been in the forefront of every movement that has opened the city and brought public accommodations, this type of thing to black people, and even when there was a bit of civil termoil. he was very active in communicating through various groups to bring about peaceful solutions. So this has been in his favor.

J.B.: Does the family candy company employ a large number of blacks in Chattanooga?

Robinson: I don't know really what his employment . . .

but I know he has always employed the blacks. Now to what proportion they employ them, I don't know, but I do know that one of the things that turned some of the negroes away from him when he ran the first time was that they were

for better jobs in the company. They weren't talking that they couldn't get jobs, but they were not being upgraded and yet they were working there and buying the candy.

J.B.: Is the younger Brock considered more conservative than his father?

Robinson: By a long shot. He is the most conservative of all the Brocks that I know. There might be one other that would equal him if he was in the public, but being in industry you never really get a chance to weight that, but his father by no stretch of the imagination could be called a conservative. His grandmother and his grandfather . . . until he ran on the Republican ticket all of the Brock's were Democrats to my knowledge. His grandmother was a United States Senator, a Democrat.

J.B.: His grandmother was?

Robinson: His grandfather.

J.B.: His grandfather was. William Brock, Sr. He's the second Brock to be a United States Senator from Tennessee. His grandfather was first by the same name.

J.B.: I had not realized that.

W.D.: What do you think you will be able to do for blacks in the state legislature?

Well I don't know of anything specific except that I plan to take a good look at employment policies in the various agencies and where we are not represented at all levels, put forth an effort to get that done by persuasion and work cooperation rather than by legislation, and the kinds of things that I would do in the state legislature from the standpoint of legislation would help black people, but it would help not only black people, but it would help everybody because I am concerned about the continued riots and public utility rates which are affecting everybody . . . black and white who are on a fixed income and who are at the poverty level. I think there is something that can be done basically there. I think that we need a stronger human relations commission with a better probation which I think would not only accrue to the benefit of blacks. Blacks might have the greater benefit, but it would accrue to the benefit of a number of people and maybe the state in general if we can do something toward solving this problem. I would hope to be a part of the industry . . . I mean the banking and insurance commission somewhere in there. This would particularly help blacks in this community because just about every insurance company when it comes to liability insurance, charge blacks two to three times the standard rate. If you live in the black community, you automatically come under what is known as the Jeffersonian rate, and I think that legislation can help that. and other

things . . . the matter of getting waivers on some of the elderly people who are on fixed income against sales tax that is on medicine. Maybe eventually eliminate it off of certain food items, and transportation for elderly, and some consideration for their homes. These are some of the things that I see that can be done.

W.D.: Is there a black caucus in the legislature? Robinson: Yes.

W.D.: Is it effective?

Robinson: I'd say yes because the very small difference in the majority between the Republicans and the Democrats give them a leverage of which to work with

. . . within their party and between the two parties.

W.D.: Is there a state organization of black elected officials?

Robinson: I am not sure whether they have organized themselves to that extent. I do know that there have been meetings called of the black elected officials of the state along, and they participated in the national elected officials convention, but whether they have a specific organization, a definite organization, I am not aware.

J.B.: Do you think there should be one?

Robinson: I think it would be good because they would be able to speak to some of the problems that they have first hand knowledge of, and pass information from one to another. In that manner, I think it is always good when you are in the minority or when you are in a peculiar situation, that you organize your forces to benefit one.

J.B.: How do you access Governor /Winfield/ Dunn as Governor?

Robinson: Well I would say that he has been a popular Governor, and I see some things that he has done that has been beneficial to the people of Tennessee, but there are a lot of things that he hasn't done. There has been a lot of increase in state personnel, but we haven't seen that type of improvement in services. I've seen some areas . . . welfare in particular, where there has been a lot of money available from the national government that the state hasn't fully utilized and I think it could have been utilized much better.

J.B.: What would be his strong points? Robinson: What would be his strong points? J.B.: Right, or accomplishments?

Robinson: I don't know. I don't see anything specifically that stands out. A plus factor would be in my mind . . . locally would be his cooperation in making Chattanooga State Tech, a community college and placing it where it is. This would be, as I say, a plus factor, but there are so many other things, that we have wanted and don't have yet that he could push . . . such as the inhibition of the faculty at both UTC and out at Chattanooga State Tech. I think this is a highly important area.

J.B.: How do you access his handling of race relations? Robinson: Well I think he has just let it drift along without having bothered himself about a strong program because there have been no substantial to the human relations commissions that he has . . .

J.B.: Did he create that, or was that already in existence?

Robinson: It was already in existence by one name or another when he came in, but there were changes made in it, but there has been no push behind it and no teeth in anything. It's a persuasion type of organization more or less without the force of the Governor's office behind it. I think an organization even though it might be an organization that uses persuasion can be much stronger if it has the force of the Governor's office behind it.

J.B.: In the Governors race coming up in November, how much . . . what do you expect to happen insofar as the black community is concerned, state-wide and in Chattanooga even, insofar as Alexander versus Blanton?

Robinson: I would expect the black community to support Blanton in the end even though he is a conservative. I'd expect them to support him. For one reason, without a Democratic Governor, we are not likely to get some of the changes . . . we won't get the changes that we need in the election machinery across the state, and the election machinery here in Hamilton County has definitely been detrimental to black people.

J.B.: Can you elaborate on that?

Robinson: Yes . . . Last year and the year before, the

supplementary registrations were held in areas where there were affluent whites at shopping centers where the affluent white went and moved completely out of the inner city, and it was impossible to get them to have supplemental registration in the black communities, and then since we have this legislative district 28, they have changed the boundary lines of all the wards and precincts in this district creating other confusion and disgust among the people, and even now half . . I'd say a large percentage of the people don't even know where they are supposed to vote. Then in using automation, they place automation in one of the lower social economic areas of the black community which meant that this type of operation itself is going to cut the vote thirty to forty percent.

J.B.: What do you mean by automation?

Robinson: Instead of using the machines that they have always used, they use a book that they punch with some form of pencil and they put it in . . .

J.B.: An IBM computerized voting. Thats a change? BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I

Robinson: The registration changes and the changes of the Wards and precincts, I'd say 80% of the changes were within the 28th district.

J.B.: Does the Governor control the election machinery?

Robinson: The election machinery works in this manner. If you have a Republican Governor then three members on the election commission are of the same party of the Governor. So if you have a Republican, you have three members of the election commission Republican and two Democrats. If you have a Democratic Governor, you have three Democrats and two Republicans, and that three constitutes a majority and they run it.

J.B.: So one of the major changes that has been detrimental then has been to make it more difficult for blacks to register?

Robinson: Register and vote.

J.B.: And vote. You think those changes will be a major factor then in blacks supporting Blanton as opposed to Alexander who is perceived to be a more or less moderate Republican against a conservative Democrat. Is that . . .

Robinson: Yeah. See because whether he wanted this to happen, or not, it would accrue to our benefit.

J.B.: Do you know whether this is true in other cities in Tennessee as well as . . .

Robinson: Whether or not you have a hostile electing committee?

J.B.: Right.

Robinson: No, I don't know whether this is true, I just don't know how liberal the other elected commissions are.

W.D.: But you felt that the Election Commission was definitely hostile to blacks?

Robinson: Yes. Let me give you another illustration that happened just in my race for the primaries where I am concerned.

There were two blacks in this race who definitely didn't qualify, who didn't meet the qualifying regulations, but the election commission left them on the ballot. The law definitely says that you are supposed to have 25 registered voters on your application. One person had 20 another person had 24, and one of these persons was told that he didn't have enough, went back and got some more and he got back about 12:10 or 12;20, which was ten to twenty minutes after the deadline which means that they didn't really meet the qualifications before the deadline, but they were committed to remain on the ballot.

J.B.: Did you say earlier that it was your impression or that you felt certain that some of these other blacks were put into the race to split the black community?

Robinson: Yes it is quite apparent that the person, the white person who ran had something to do with putting him in the race. Not only those who were in the primary, but the one . . . one of those that was running as an independent and a white person who is running as a Republican.

J.B.: This change from voting machinery to what I think they call the vote-a-matic . . .

Robinson: Yeah.

J.B.: That change was only made in certain precincts? Robinson: Yeah in certain districts. I think in the 30th and 31st district which included some of the . . .

J.B.: It was not made in your district? Robinson: No, the change wasn't made in my district. The statement by the Elective Commission that they might use them in all of the districts in the November election. They've had some people already to protest it . . . to raise howels of protest I'd say, and threatened to file an injunction to stop it. I don't know whether they are going to use it or not.

J.B.: How about insofar as the change in the registration places. You said they made it available in the predominately white precincts but not in the black. Did you or anyone else you know of actually go to the election commission and request

Robinson: Registration to replace in the black . . . J.B.: Yes.

Robinson: Yes. Not only had they done things like that

J.B.: Did you go to them yourself? Robinson: Yes.

J.B.: What did they say? What happened?

Robinson: We carried a petition in and they said that they were not having any more supplemental registration inside of the core city, that they were following through with one which they had granted the League of Women Voters, but there would be no more. The rest of them were out in Eastgate, or Northgate, and those areas.

J.B.: And those are what, upper income, white areas? Robinson: Upper white income people. J.B.: Did they give a reason?

Robinson: No. They wouldn't give a reason. For the same reason they wouldn't give a reason for the polling place was just over here on the west side where you are . . . on that side of town. The polling place was right here at Josephine . . . J. B. Henders School, which had been the polling place up until this last year. Now, they moved the polling place away from 1800 voters and moved it across the street from J. C. Towers, where there are probably 400 whites, and they moved it right across the street from them, and moved it away from 1800 people to 400 people.

J.B.: That is in your prec . . . in your . . . Robinson: In this district.

J.B.: In your district?

Robinson: Yeah. This has been pointed out; NAACP locally has pointed out that some of these things, registration and the moving of the polling places and the joining up of drawing the lines so that they put more or less the whites together where we were. It was a rather affluent group and they . . . /interruption7 . . .

W.D.: I was going to ask you about Senator Baker. How do blacks see Senator Baker?

Robinson: I think they see him as a pretty fair Senator, they don't see him to the extent I think that most of them would find the Republican party to vote for him, but I haven't seen a lot of hostility.

W.D.: Are there any black elected Republicans? Robinson: Around here?

J.B.: Anywhere in the state?

Robinson: I don't know. If there are they would be at the council level or something like that where they are not running as Republicans, where these city jobs are nonpartisan, but on the state level there are no blacks.

J.B.: Didn't Baker get fairly strong black support in his last campaign?

Robinson: Yeah. He has been . . . I would say more or less a somewhat of a liberal Republican, if negroes are going to support one when they begin to look at the man, they supported him over Blanton because of Blanton's conservativeness and his liberalness.

J.B.: Normally a moderate Republican will get fair black support against a conservative Democrat, but you don't think this will happen in the Governor's race because of the election machinery and what has taken place there?

Robinson: Yeah.

J.B.: Do you know if that feeling is extended statewide do you find, or is it strictly limited in Hamilton County?

Robinson: It's not strictly limited to Hamilton County. I have found . . . I don't know how strong it is in West Tennessee but these are some of the kinds of things that have been discussed in Nashville at some of our group meetings.

J.B.: That's what I was . . . So . . . in basing the discussions at the group meetings, your impression is the state-wide problem insofar as blacks are concerned?

J.B.: Do you have anything else? Anything else you wanted to add that we didn't discuss?

Robinson: No. One of the things that I did. Here is a bit of something on my state constitution . . .

W.D.: Is it worse than you anticipated?

Robinson: Yeah.

W.D.: Why?

Robinson: I don't know. Well I . . . one of the things, there is a group that is working against me that I think is responsible for part of it. /Interruption group of people entering the room7

(End interview with C. B. Robinson)