

Interview number A-0125 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Jack Bass: You started out by saying organized labor was more effective twenty to twenty-five years ago.

Wilbur Hobby: Workers today make good wages, drive two automobiles. They've got a boat. They've become accustomed to living the good life. . . the wage freeze with the inflation is making people, I can sense it as I go around talking, much more conscious than they were.

J.B.: Do union members in the South at this time, in the 1970's, tend to vote Republican when times are good and Democratic when times are bad?

Hobby: I think they follow the nation in that respect. Another thing, the labor movement in the South is not yet strong enough that it's got its own identity. With only 7.8% of the work force organized, we're so thinly spread. For example, you can't put your finger on a labor precinct in a mill hill, but you can't put your finger anymore on a labor precinct in the South, not like in the North.

J.B. Do you think this is going to change?

Hobby: I think we're going to organize much more. I think we're going to go up in about 5 years and I think that it's going to jell so that southern workers are going to go up two or three times as much as now. I sense it, I feel it. Sometimes I wonder whether or not our leadership is going to be ready for them. I think the labor movement is ready to move and the fact that blacks are moving into job markets in North Carolina plus the fact that more industry is moving down here and the job markets tightening. It used to be in the South, that if you

had a job you had better hold on to the damn thing because you know there might not be another one. That's not true any longer. I think the Republican part on a national level is going to continue the line its got now and that's an anti-labor line, and I wouldn't think the thing to do would become a moderate progressive (for a young politician.) He would carry his own party. I have my doubts another Holshouser can put Republican party into moderate thinking. I think very quickly, you're going to see a conservative take over the Republican party in this area, like you had a Bo Callaway running in Georgia and a Strom Thurmond in South Carolina. And right now, they may get elected, but I think their days are kind of numbered.

J.B.: Isn't Holshouser trying to build a Republican party in his image?

Hobby: Yes, I think that would be true.

J.B.: Would the key be whether he brings enough of his ilk into the party, recruits them as candidates and get them elected before his administration runs out?

Hobby: Yes, I think that's true, but I really don't know he can do this- The people he's brought into his office haven't been overwhelmingly favorable, I don't think. I don't think Lentz is putting his best foot forward. I don't think David Jones is the kind of guy who is going to bring (On the Morgan and Wallace vote) . . . Morgan may move to a racial thing like that. Morgan's now courting the blacks, but if the blacks don't go for Morgan, what's he got to lose by picking the other side of the issue. He knows how they can be rallied because he worked in both of Dr. Lake's campaigns. He knows the techniques, but he doesn't

want to go back to that because he feels he's got them and he's courting the blacks. But if he's turned down by the black leadership, then he may take that position. You know, George Wallace was supported by both labor and NAACP in his first race for governor, but Patterson beat him. I'm told that that night he said he had been out-niggered and he'd never be out-niggered again, and that's been true to date. The race issue, though, then was a good issue because blacks were not registered. It's not a good issue now because blacks are registered. Person County has a black chairman of the Democratic party. Northampton County has more blacks registered than whites. The potential for the black voter is greater. Of course, they cut off the effectiveness to a large degree of the Voting Rights Act of '65 by cutting out money from foundations. You see more blacks registered today. Back when Lake had his heyday, you could have a college education and be black and couldn't register. There were black teachers in this state who couldn't register at that time. North Carolina is one of the poorest states in black registration at this time. We really need to do a job. There's no organization to do it. All black organizations are broke and no place they can turn to get money. They're going to have to do it themselves to a large degree. It's easier now than it was then. If the money was to become forthcoming, you could get the blacks out here to register and vote. Still, a large degree of intimidation exists in some eastern counties. Checking registration, we found some registrars offices open at 8 and close at 1 with one day at 3. You've got to miss work to get off to register to vote. You can't get many people interested in that. We've got to keep on trying to loosen up registration laws in this state. You can go

to any little country store in North Carolina or South Carolina and buy a hunting license, but to register, you have to get off work, go downtown and find a damn parking place and go up to a registrar's office. They've got automony here in assigning deputy registrars. In Greensboro, we had 54 deputy labor registrars. In Durham, they said there wasn't a need for them. Bumcombe County (Asheville), we couldn't get them to take the books out. It will be interesting to see what Holshouser does to the election machinery in this state. It's going to be a hard job and doesn't get much pay and I don't know where you'll find really competent people to run it. He's going to have election machinery unless the Democrats pass some legislation in the new session. If we had had what South Carolina's got, we wouldn't have had to go into 100 damn counties to get the lists. Democratic party in North Carolina hasn't encouraged blacks. The only place is where the blacks have taken over the Democratic party machinery. Here in Durham, when I first got active and we took over the Democratic party here, all the blacks had to vote at the court house. The whole black section of town voted there, on Main Street, and you see, would see them lined up two or three hundred all the time, a damn exhibition to the whites that you had better get out there and vote or the blacks were going to take over. After we took over the party machinery, we took over the board of elections and moved the black precinct to the black high school and appointed black registrars instead of white. Therefore, they were able to register 2,000 blacks where they had only had 400. It makes a whole lot of difference.

J.B.: What is organized labor's role in the South in campaign financing?

Hobby: We haven't been able to do a whole lot for candidates down

here. What we have been able to do is to get unions in the North interested in putting money down here for a candidate. If we get a good candidate, we usually get \$10,000 for a Senator or governor's race. There are exceptions. Yarborough and Gore got more. A lot of union interest. I don't know what the campaign contribution law is going to do to us, because we're only going to be able to give him \$3,000. But what you give him in manpower means a hell of a lot. Sam Caldwell, commissioner of labor in Georgia, got some money, but he got a hell of a lot of manpower from auto workers who have about 30,000 members in Georgia. He was for doing away with that one week waiting period when you have a model change. That's a hundred dollars a week for those guys for a couple of weeks a year, so they went out and worked for him around Atlanta. He won.

J.B.: Some people have told us that endorsement of organized labor 10 or 15 years ago was the kiss of death, but this is no longer true?

Hobby: Well, I heard Ollie Quayle answer this question one time and he said, "It depends on the candidate. If you have a weak candidate and labor rushes in, then he becomes known as labor's candidate and that's all he is. If you have a strong candidate, like Terry Sanford was in North Carolina and then you get the labor endorsement, then it helps because it adds to and doesn't detract from." I think I'd agree with that. The job we're doing in this state educating our people means a lot more to you.

(End of interview)

This is an interview with Wilbur Hobby, President, North Carolina State AFL-CIO, conducted on December 18, 1973 by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries in Durham, North Carolina.

Wilbur Hobby: ...and for about nine of those years in Kentucky, plus a few assignments, and I worked in Kefauver's last campaign and I worked in Cleve Bailey's last campaign. So I've been around a little while.

J.B.: How long have you worked in the region?

Hobby: Well, in the whole region, you mean, or in the state? In the region, fifteen years. Well, I've really been... This is my home. I got active in Durham in 1949 and was extremely active on the local level. Practically ran Dr. Frank's campaign in Durham County. Really didn't have any organization. I guess the labor movement did a better job in that election than they have since 1950 really. They put enough money in here and we were able to do it. We had a local guy who ran for Congress that year and that generated a lot of labor activity. We carried Durham County. About 6700 votes for Dr. Frank in the first primary and held it above 6000 in the second when he lost. So we did a pretty good job there.

J.B.: Well, we're trying to cover the 25 year period from '48 through '74.

Hobby: Well, I guess you know more what you want than I know, so if you want to ask questions, that may be the best thing.

J.B.: Okay. During that period when you were working in the region, did you see any substantial changes in the politics of most states?

Hobby: Yeah. I think I would have to say that when the '54 school decision came down it brought the race issue out to the forefront. Prior to that it was not as big an emotional issue even though they tried to use it in Dr. Frank's campaign, and succeeded to a degree. I don't think it was as much an issue in

that campaign as it became after 1954 when the Supreme Court decision came down.

J.B.: Do you think it was the decisive issue in that campaign?

Hobby: No, I really don't. I think the real fact is that the conservative vote just came out better in the second primary and Dr. Frank didn't have enough money really to get out the vote in the second primary.

J.B.: You don't think it was really the reason it brought the conservative vote out?

Hobby: Yeah. It helped, but they also expended the money. But it wasn't as much the racial thing, I think, then, as the red-baiting they did in that election also. They threw Communism around right much in that election. But the second primary was brought about, I think, by using the block vote. They advertised the block vote in the precincts. And we had precincts in Durham that went something like 1908 for Dr. Frank and 7 for ^{Willis}~~Willard~~ Smith. Now, in these we advertised right much in ads. So, I guess you would have to say it had a real effect in the second primary, a much greater effect. And that, I guess, was about the beginning of it. As far as the labor movement was concerned, back in those days the loyalty of the people were pretty much to the labor movement that were in the unions. But then they began to prosper a little bit and they began to get away from this to a certain degree. They'd sorta vote like their neighborhood that they live in votes. That wasn't too true, I don't think, in 1950.

J.B.: What have been the changes in the role that labor has taken, both in North Carolina and the South, especially in North Carolina, since 1950?

Hobby: Well, I really think that the militancy of the labor movement, both on the political front and on the trade-union front, has not progressed. And in fact, fell behind since 1950. I think I only got active in 1948 very briefly,

and in a city election in Durham in 1949. But in 1950 the labor movement in Durham and in North Carolina made an all-out effort. It's been extremely hard to get unions to make this kind of effort in the last few years. Now, I think probably we're better organized than we were before, but I think the fact that the worker has progressed so much... And I think TV's had a great impact. We used to be able to get to our workers as much as through the shop and more so than the newspapers could. But when TV came on, TV's something they watch every night and it has a great impact on the average worker.

J.B.: Then did the average worker rely mostly on word of mouth until television came?

Hobby: Yeah. He relied mostly on word of mouth and the communication he got from his union, I think. And today I think he relies more on television than he does any other media.

J.B.: Now he relies on television for information or...precisely what does he...?

Hobby: Well, I think it forms the basis of his opinions, too, in many instances. And I don't think he really gets the communication from the union that he used to. Communication has become extremely expensive. Even the written word. The price of printing and paper and now mailing, it has become exorbitant. And so I don't think they're getting it, and I don't think the union publications are giving them the kind of material they gave them in the early 1950's. I say that because now they are more reporting on the activity, in a lot of cases, than they do on the issues that they think they'll take.

J.B.: During that 25 year period, when did you have the most activity and success in organizing? Was it at the beginning, or the middle, or the end, or has it been consistent?

Hobby: I think it was from '46, probably, until '54. You did right much

organizing because people came back from the war and there'd been this hold-down on everything. And of course people started wanting more goods. Prices had been frozen. Products hadn't been manufactured for them, and they began to make cars and appliances and to... People needed these things and to buy them they had to have money. So there was this pressure for wages.

J.B.: Is that at the same time you think you were most effective politically?

Hobby: I believe so, yes. I believe we were most effective politically from 1948 to 1950, maybe 6, '52. I was head of an organization here known as Voters for Better Government, which was a combination of the liberals at Duke, blacks, and the labor movement. The people in Durham had taken over the Democratic party. This coalition had taken over the Democratic party in 1948. And we were riding high until... '56 was our first real contest. And what they did here... in '55 and '56, after the Supreme Court decision, the conservatives - the Klansmen, the White Citizens Council - used the union vehicle to organize in this area. And they got a lot of union people. They passed out leaflets against me saying that I was selling the people's jobs to the NAACP. I had been a precinct chairman and I moved up the line. In 1956, I was defeated in 1956, I believe, for precinct chairman. When I won in 1950, I won with 7 people attending the precinct meeting. In 1956, when I was beaten, they had 314 votes against me and 80 votes for me. And I guess 60 people who came to vote for me saw how bad I was getting beaten and they left (?). People were standing all in the auditorium. The school auditorium was filled up. The race issue was the prime thing. And these were my own members, my own people that I worked with, out there voting against me simply because I had become known then as a nigger-lover. Because of my leadership. And at that time I had been elected...I had been elected by the committee in 1955 when the secretary resigned. I became secretary of the party. So I lost

my precinct. The precinct the county chairman won in a stiff fight by one vote, and then I didn't have any opposition as secretary after he won by one vote. It was a knock-down drag-out kind of convention with 7-800 people.

W.D.V.: Since 1956 has the AFL-CIO been more effective or less effective?

Hobby: I think less effective. Well, we never had been...the AFL never was really effective on the state level, I don't think, because in those days we had some loose... the CIO was the good organization. The CIO had a pretty effective organization back in those days. And they combined together in the United Labor Political Committee. And the more aggressive people in the AFL cooperated with the CIO in this United Labor Political Committee and we did a pretty good job. But I don't think you can ever say we've really been effective in the local politics, again, until maybe 1970. We've began now to put our people back together and to educate them and to show them how to do it. You may be interested, you may know about, the computer program the AFL-CIO's got going on whereby in 35 of their states they've got state AFL-CIO organizations going in with the national organization and they're putting all the union members in that state into a computer. And they're checking the registration status of those members and they're putting that into the computer. And they're looking up phone numbers of those people and they're putting that into the computer. And they're checking what precinct they're living in and they're putting that into the computer. And so, we're participating. We're one of the 35 states that're participating. And by the first of...by the fifteenth of January, I would say, we will have completed checking registration on approximately 100,000 members in North Carolina and furnishing that data back to the computer bank. So we'll know who's registered, who's not registered, what local union they're in. We're starting a registration drive then. We'll be able to get to a local union a computer print-out of who your members are and who aren't registered.

J.B.: Do you know how many Southern states are among these 35?

Hobby: Georgia is participating in it. South Carolina's in it. Virginia's in it. Kentucky's in it. I'm sure Alabama's in it.

J.B.: How about Tennessee?

Hobby: I think Tennessee's going to get in it, but I'm not sure they're in it yet, Jack.

J.B.: How about Florida?

Hobby: Don't think Florida's in it yet.

J.B.: Texas?

Hobby: Texas is in it, yes.

J.B.: Mississippi:

Hobby: Don't believe Mississippi's in it yet.

J.B.: How about Louisiana?

Hobby: Louisiana will be in it, and Arkansas, I'm sure, is in it.

J.B.: Virginia?

W.D.V.: He added Virginia. Is that computer deal going to be used principally in statewide elections, or local elections, or presidential elections?

Hobby: Every.

W.D.V: Every election?

Hobby: Every election that people want it. Now you know, of course, the AFL-CIO will make great use of it. And presidential elections. In '76 they should have all of it completed in all 35 states. It's a lot of work in North Carolina, because what we have to do is to go into each individual county to check the registration list at the Board of Elections. And there's a hundred counties. Some of them are not the most damn cooperative people in the world. We know where there's a campaign against J. P. Stevens and the chairman of the Board of Elections in Roanoke Rapids and the management official is J. P. Stevens, and they give us a hard time. But we completed checking over there today, but

we had to go to Bailey Brockson. Tell him that they needed public records. Then they...of course, they had to do it at their convenience, and their convenience is kinda hard to get sometimes. But we'll be through in this state by...We had a December 20 deadline, but with this weather and we've had a little sickness with one of our staff people, it's going to be about January 15 before we get them all.

J.B.: Is it going to be used principally to get out the vote, or to send publications...

Hobby: No, our first use of it is going to be a registration drive early in 1974.

J.B.: What's happened to union membership in North Carolina, say in the last five years?

Hobby: Well, it's begun to grow in the last five years. It sort of fluctuated. Let's see if I can give you the figures. In 1964 it was 7.8 per cent of the work force. In 1966 it was down to 7.6 per cent of the work force. In 1968 it was down to 7...no, in 1968 it went down to 7.2 per cent. In 1970 we jumped back up to 7.8 - .6 per cent and now we're up at 7.8 per cent again. And, of course, we're keeping up with the work force now, anyway. I think we're a little bit more than keeping up with the work force. They just make a count on this every two years. It'll be due one next year. We've got...

J.B.: Who makes that count?

Hobby: The Department of Labor does it from the elections and the NLRB lists they take. The National... the forms that you have to report every year. And they get the internal organizing, where plants that have 300 members may be expanded 700 members, so they count the union membership and turn it in on all these forms.

W.D.V.: Where was it at the beginning of the 25-year period, say in 1948?

Hobby: I'm really not sure. But I would think probably - that was right after the war - that it was only about 6.5 then.

W.D.V.: But the biggest period of growth was between 1948 and 1956, and you've kind of leveled off since then?

Hobby: Umm-hmmm. Yep.

W.D.V.: Is that the experience in other states? Other Southern states?

Hobby: No. In some Southern States - Alabama...I think Alabama. You see, we're only 7.8 per cent organized. Alabama's 26 per cent organized. Alabama's got that national steel agreement and wages go up pretty high down there. They're organized pretty good in Alabama. Then at one time they were making real headway, because they got into a little scrap with George Wallace, you know, after he became governor. Wallace took over the labor movement and the state AFL-CIO lost a lot of membership because Wallace prevailed on a lot of these red-neck locals to get out of the state AFL-CIO. Now that he's courting them. He claims to be for the agency shop this year down there, which is an amendment to the right to work law which would allow labor and management to negotiate a service fee for non-union members who'd get the service of the union. And the law requires you to give them this service. Federal labor law requires you to handle their cases, take them to arbitration, spend your own money, even if they're not members. He said he was for it but they weren't able to get it out of the committee.

W.D.V.: What have been the biggest obstacles organized labor's faced in North Carolina?

Hobby: You mean in organizing? or in political education? Well, the biggest obstacle is, I guess you would say, a concerted effort by the textile industry to defeat the union. They spend millions of dollars to defeat the union, and the fact that a lot of labor laws are not upheld in the state.

The communities themselves back the companies, the local police officers, the local politicians. The situations like that...for instance, J. P. Steven's company has been found guilty I think it's either 12 or 14 times now on fair labor practices. They get a slap on the wrist when they're found guilty. Hell, it's easy for them to pay the small fine, or even to pay the million dollars they paid five or six years ago to a lot of workers in North and South Carolina who were fired for union activity. They found it much easier to pay that million dollars than it is to have a union in there, so they get a slap on the wrist. Now they're under contempt of court, see, and somebody's going to go to jail if this is done again. Well, it's been done again, and the charges are being filed. I don't know...where is it 22 people fired down at Wallace, South Carolina a while back. Now we're going to see if they're going to put somebody in jail on this. I got my doubts about it, you know, with Strom Thurmond and Roger Milliken's entree into the Nixon administration whether we're going to see anybody go to jail. But, of course, this is a federal judge and right now I don't think Nixon's got any hankering to be messing around with federal judges on something like this.

J.B.: Do you know which judge has that case?

Hobby: No, I'm not sure. It's...well, the citation's by the District of Columbia Court, and I guess they have filed in those courts citing these instances and other instances for violation in this respect. But they're still doing it. We just lost two elections in the last month.

J.B.: To J. P. Stevens?

Hobby: One in Aberdeen, North Carolina and the other one in Walterboro, South Carolina where they did the same type of thing. They're hoping to set the election aside in....

J.B.: What'd you do before you got into union work?

Hobby: Well, I was a kid before I got into the union. No, I came by the
and came into the tobacco factory to get work in the tobacco company.
I went to work down there on August 5, 1968? and that was in '46, and I
was just a local union member for about two years.

J.B.: What union was that?

Hobby: Tobacco Workers International Union. I was just a local union member
until 1948, and then they came around one night and gave us these slips saying
who we should vote for for governor and all. And that was my first vote. I
went out and voted for Kerr Scott for governor in '48. In '49, the secretary
of the Central Labor Union, which is a union of unions in the locality, was
running for City Council, as was a black man. And they came by the union
meeting one night and asked for help from the union people. Said they were
having a meeting on Sunday. I didn't have anything else to do on Sunday so
I went to see what it was all about. And met some old friends there and heard
them talk, and I just got a vision what the working people could do if they'd
just stick together. They had 15,000 union members in Durham County and they
said there'd only be 7,000 votes cast. Well, I just figured all we had to do
was walk down to the polls and vote, and, hell, we'd take over Durham. It
wasn't quite that easy, that vision got exploded, but I found out that they
had our people registered to vote in the first place, you can holler nigger
at them secondly, and half of them run the other way. But we, that year, did
elect the labor man to the City Council. We lost the black guy who was running
by, I think, about 158 votes. And then the union man ran for Congress in the
next campaign, and he carried Durham County against the incoming Congressman
by about 11,000 votes. By that time I got active enough that I was attending
all the meetings and doing most of the work. So they made me chairman of the
group and, as I said, that was before COPE. That was when the AFL had a

group that they had just set up after Taft-Hartley called LLPE, Labor's ^{League} Link for Political Education. And the CIO had the Political Action Committee. We had what amounted to a COPE organization here with the coalition backing. From '48 to '58 - we lost it in '58 when they turned our own union members against us using the race issue.

J.B.: What campaign was that?

Hobby: Well, this was a Democratic party organization fight. We lost the Board of Elections that year when a superintendant in the plant took three of my own union members away from me and voted them for his candidates. And then they won in the precinct, so I was smart enough to see that I wasn't going to win any election, so I didn't run.

W.D.V.: Is that the only issue that split them off, race?

Hobby: It's the only issue can really tear them up.

W.D.V.: Otherwise they'd pretty much stay united?

Hobby: Umm-hmmm. They'd stay united. And it's not having the effect that it did have, but it's still there.

W.D.V.: Was it there in '72 in the Wallace-Sanford thing?

Hobby: Yes.

W.D.V.: How about with Helms and (?)

Hobby: Helms' exposure on this issue and on red-baiting and other issues. But I think Helms really carried a lot of the old union members. I don't think he had the effect on the younger members that he had. But on the old people, even the fact...they just overlooked the fact that he's against Social Security. I mean, he made editorials which said he was against Social Security. But I stood around at the precinct that day and saw old workers that I knew just standing there for two or three hours to vote for Jesse Helms. Just because of his super-patriotism approach to things. And he lost them, you know.

W.D.V.: Well, on that point, this book that we're trying to do is in a sense an up-date of Southern Politics written by V. O. Key, in which he said that if you understood the politics of race in the South, you've understood Southern politics. He said that in 1948. Our question was have things really changed that much, in 25 years?

Hobby: Well, I think we are now going into a period where they are changing that much. I think you can look at the labor movement's support, for instance, for Andy Young in Atlanta in his campaign. And the labor movement's support for Mayor Jackson down there. Looks like Howard Lee is extremely popular with our membership. I don't guess he is with all the rank and file because he hasn't got exposed to them, but the fact that we are exposing people like Howard Lee. We've had Howard, I think, into each of our last three conventions and other meetings, and whenever he goes to a meeting, he...our people seem to want to hear him, you know.

J.B.: He says he believes he could have gotten elected if they hadn't split his county off from Durham for that Congressional district. Do you agree with that?

Hobby: Yeah, I think so. Without a doubt.

W.D.V.: Do you think that such a coalition, of union members, blacks, and maybe liberals like you had back in 1950, '52 and so on, is possible again?

Hobby: Yes. I think we're beginning to move toward it again.

W.D.V.: At just this local level, or statewide?

Hobby: Well, both. I think there are certain areas of the state where you're moving toward it a little faster. I think the Triangle area is probably moving toward it faster than anyplace else.

W.D.V.: Are you consciously working toward that?

Hobby: Yes. Very much so. And we're doing another thing. I don't know

whether I'm supposed to be telling you all of that stuff. The AFL-CIO has set up black trade unionists to work in the black community. A Phillip Randolph Institute. We're setting these up all over the country. Now, we've got a chapter in Wilmington, Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Henderson, Rocky Mount, and we're coming to our first statewide convention. We've had statewide planning meetings with some of them, but we'll be coming to our first statewide meeting sometime about...well, we were going to have it early January, but we want Bayard Rustin to come down and speak to it, but he can't come down until February. So it looks like it'll be in February. But we're trying to educate our own black union members, not only to work within their own trade unions, you know, to bring about things, but to work within the black community to see that the labor movement gets known in the black community and has a little influence in the black community.

J.B.: Is this in effect going to be like a black caucus within the labor movement?

Hobby: Well, yes and no. We're not trying to segregate them, but we're trying to designate where they can be most effective. And that is working on their own. Now the Durham Committee on Negro Affairs right here in Durham, to me, is probably one of the most effective black organizations that I've run across in my 15 years of work. And by and large, it's the union members who get out there and do the damn hauling to the polls, who do the registration. These men are the black tobacco workers who come down to the plants down there. Now, they've got to have...they're driving it along, the elite group at North Carolina Mutual, you know. But they're the ones who really, in most cases, do the damn door-to-door work that gets out the black vote in Durham. And we feel like that's going to be the way it's going to be done in most places.

J.B.: What cities in North Carolina have the strongest labor movement in political terms? Would Durham be the strongest?

Hobby: No, Durham used to be the strongest, but it's not the strongest any more.

J.B.: What city is?

Hobby: I would think that you would have to say probably Greensboro's been more successful right lately than any group.

J.B.: Is that Clem Dowling^{er}'s (?) influence?

Hobby: No. I guess it's just that overall activity by a lot of people.

Now, we're moving fast towards Winston-Salem being extremely active. Winston-Salem's got the best political operation now, but it's not the most effective. The Republicans have got too much control over some of our members in Winston-Salem.

J.B.: Why is that? We were in Winston-Salem and heard that there's a lot of labor participation in Republican politics.

Hobby: Well, we've had one real strong Republican up there, a very capable union man, and he's headed up that big 2,500 member local out at Western Electric. And he's been a delegate to the Republican National Convention two or three times. He went for Holshouser. Corfy Vance. And Holshouser appointed him as a deputy...not a deputy, but an industrial commissioner, which is a \$24,000 job. Looks after workmen's compensation cases. Now, Corfy's very competent and an exp...he's a...You taping what I'm saying now? He's a strong Republican. I started to say something that you might have used that would be harmful to him. I like Corfy, and Corfy and I get along fine on union work.

J.B.: We'll be discreet, I believe.

Hobby: Well, I was going to say something which I've said to many people, and if you... I wouldn't really want it used, but I was going to say he was Republican first and a labor leader second. And that's the way I feel about Corfy. But he's a very competent labor leader. And a very good organizer.

and he

And he's got a bunch of those people in those locals up there.

J.B.: Now does that result in them having some effect upon the way Forsythe County Republicans vote in the legislature?

Hobby: Well, we're going to find out more about that this year. I was pleasantly surprised when we went to the Republicans not only in Forsythe County, but in Charlotte too, to sign a public employee bill which we introduced which is a strong bill.

J.B.: Was that to allow public employees to organize?

Hobby: To organize and bargain collectively. The law now says, I mean, a judge, federal judge, has struck down that part of the law that says they can't organize, but upheld the part that says that the state can restrict their bargaining with governmental units. So we had strong support from Republicans in Forsythe County and in Mecklenburg County for this bill. We got 22 signatures, I think, and about 9 or them were Republicans, in just a few hours on the bill when it was introduced. We're going to be strongly...I'm a strong Democrat, myself, a strong national Democrat. I don't have that kind of allegiance to the state Democratic party, although at times, I guess, some of my people think I do. But we're going to have a real legislative program in this session of the legislature. And there are some strong Democrats down there that if they continue to vote against us, we're going to decide to support a union Republican. Would hope that it'd be a liberal Republican, but just to teach them a damn lesson, we're going to support any Republican if they don't vote for some of our legislation. And I think this fact enabled us last year to have a very successful year in the legislature. We got, for instance, we got \$1.80 minimum wage in this state, which is better than the federal government's got at the present time, and we made more concrete gains in workmen's compensation last year than we'd made in the previous four years. And we threatened them and we met with our

local people with them. We're doing...This may...To be showing you, this is getting our people active in politics on the local level. We had a meeting last year, in the locality. On Saturday morning we'd have a breakfast with 70-80 union leaders. We didn't try to get a big crowd, but key people and the legislators, at which time I would discuss our legislative program. And this would let our people know what our program was, and educate both our people and the legislature on the points we're going to really push. And this has gotten our people interested in politics and legislation now. And we're going back over that. Already have met in probably ten of the fifteen... I'll have to count them up here...in the last month. Had one last night down in Wilmington. We've met in Greensboro and all these other places. But this is getting our people to tune in on the issues and they're looking to see how their people vote on these issues. And so when we get this computer program back, we're going to make maximum use of it, to do these things.

W.D.V.: Are you spending more time now on state legislative matters than you are on statewide races?

Hobby: Well, I'm tying them all together. See, to me, all this stuff goes in together and I guess I'm really, because of my background, locally in politics as well as eleven years with COPE. It's made me aware of the political significance of the labor movement needs to play. And particularly, that's where the state organization's job is. It's to tie...It's to work politically in legislative and on community labor. But mostly on politics and legislation.

W.D.V.: But you see the role in the future of trying to tie the blacks, the unions, and maybe some of the liberals together in a coalition based on issues?

Hobby: Yes, I think you've got to be tied on issues. And these are the reasons that, for instance, that I fight for a high minimum wage so strongly, because it affects blacks and they can relate to this. They get the shaft on

workmen's compensation when they are hurt. Most of them don't even know about it and are shown the piece of paper to sign, you know, to get their benefits, whether they are low or high. And we've raised them up. So the fact we're going after the removal of the sales tax on food. A lot of our members don't particularly like the fact, you know, because their position... And I've had some of them say this is only to affect (?) niggers' pay, you know. But we're converting them now, because it's not just a repeal of this tax, but it's a tax reform package we're going after, where you're putting it on the...income on the higher brackets.

W.D.V: But didn't the Democratic primary kind of work against that, with you and Hawkins both in there?

Hobby: Well, it did in a way, because a lot of the blacks felt like that they had to vote for the black man. It also allowed Skipper and Pat (?) to pick up...because of split loyalties among people. Hawkins really wasn't the candidate of the blacks, he was Hawkins' candidate. A lot of them really thought they could make a better book with somebody else. And the black vote's a sophisticated vote, in most cases, and it's looking for both long range gains and short range gains. And yet at the same time it wants to mobilize and make the black vote militant. And Hawkins didn't lend to doing this, because this put Hawkins, who has a little bit of a reputation as a wheeler-dealer, dealing with the people. And not the people who ought to have been dealing. Because Hawkins was dealing more from a selfish hand than a lot of the leadership.

W.D.V.: Why did you get involved in that thing, and what do you think it meant for you and the union?

Hobby: Well, I really got involved in it because it didn't seem like we could get anybody to discuss issues on the damn thing. That thing that was going around telling people they ought to vote for him because his sister's

husband's Aunt Mary lived in this county. And he wasn't talking about a damn thing. The only thing Skipper was talking about was career education and I wasn't sure that Skipper and I agreed on career education. I don't... I hope to see career education, but I don't want to see it locked in so a... you say a worker's child is going to school. He's going to get a manual job. He can't aspire to be a lawyer or a doctor or a teacher. And never could get Skipper to really discuss that aspect of it. And I talked to him several times during this and never did get either one of them to move until I threatened to run. And when I threatened to run they both were on the phone to me within twelve hours. And when I went over and talked to them, they both were terrific in their concern. But they wouldn't make any damn commitments. Well, by this time it was getting to close that if I was going to do anything I had to do something. So I figured if I got in the race, and my advisors told me, if I got in the race, then we could make our play in the second primary. I think Skipper got a bigger lead than we thought he could get at that time. We didn't think he'd be ahead in the thing, so he could come around. But he got ahead and I think he got the idea he didn't need us, and he didn't need the teachers, and he didn't need the state employees. And they found out later that he did.

W.D.V.: Do you think your candidacy helped or hurt the union?

Hobby: I think it helped. I think it helped.

W.D.V.: Think so?

Hobby: Yeah. Well, we got a lot of people out working. The only thing that... There was a little bit of letdown during the last couple of weeks of our campaign, as Skipper and Pat began to pour the money on radio and television and newspapers. That I wasn't anywhere to be seen in the media at the time. My money had run out and I had...I had...I had put my money early, before they got it so saturated that I wouldn't be seen at all, and when it got down near

the end of the campaign I wasn't in it at all. And I think it was a letdown to our people that I wasn't on television, on radio.

W.D.V.: Has any other union leader in your position run for a statewide office like this?

Hobby: Not round here, in the South. I don't think any Southern labor leaders ever done it, to my knowledge. In some states...you said statewide position,...

W.D.V.: I was just thinking of governor, principally.

Hobby: No, I don't know of any, really.

W.D.V.: Wouldn't you think of that as gain for the union?

Hobby: Yeah, I feel like it was. I think people know...Number one, they know there's a trade union movement in the state now. They know that it can talk about issues. And I think they know what it stands for now. A lot of people, particularly in the South, have just started dealing with the unions, because....

J.B.: What was the point you were emphasizing, that you wanted people to understand unions were associated with?

Hobby: Well, Number one, the environment. Number two, tax reform. Number three, people's right to better conditions. Number three (sic), the fact that we're the champion of the little man. That the big people in the utilities and the banks and the insurance companies ran this state, and that it ought to be a people's government. And I think people realized it as much then as they do now. And I think, you know, the fact that you're seeing Carolina Power and Light Company and Duke Power Company go for these big rate increases, and Southern Bell. I think people are beginning to see that the things that I tried to bring out then are really coming to pass. And even more so. I think it's in a...different now then it was

then, but I think the focus is there to see them.

J.B.: Now, you picked up on Henry Howell's campaign theme.

Hobby: Yeah. I worked in every one of Henry Howell's elections from 1959, when I first went on the COPE staff. I went to Virginia and they had the schools closed down and Henry was running for the state legislature on a campaign of opening the schools, against massive resistance.

J.B.: Do you see Howell's...Is Howell's theme (?) starting a movement that will go throughout the South? Do you see that, or not?

Hobby: I think it's a possibility. I think really that Henry is a little more open and liberal with his thinking and his willingness to do battle with them. (Break in tape.) ...did to a lesser degree in South Carolina. And Bobby Morgan started to play on this kind of theme during his campaign.

J.B.: Do you think this is a Populist theme?

Hobby: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Do you think that Carter and Bumpers and Askew all played on this? And Edwards?

Hobby: To a...yeah, to a lot lesser degree.

J.B.: How about Edwards and (?)?

Hobby: I don't think it would have been as great in Louisiana.

W.D.V.: Do you think there's an opportunity for a Populist to win in this state in the future?

Hobby: Well, I think it's going to be...

W.D.V.: Do you think you can put this coalition together?

J.B.: Who do you see doing it? Or do you see it...

Hobby: I don't see...I really don't see anybody that's willing to take up the damn fight for it. This is ...I don't see any politician, you know, now, for instance, let me, let me give you...that the Democratic party leadership in this state is not really as liberal as the Democratic party workers.

To give you an example of this, the last Democratic state .(?)

I was elected by the Congressional *[District convention]* (?)

ran on the platform. I wrote the labor platform. I made it as liberal as I thought I could get away with. In the convention, amended the thing, and made it a lot more liberal, by including domestic workers

(?) wage law, by including farm workers under the workmen's compensation law

W.D.V.: But wasn't that convention atypical?

Hobby: No, it's been moving that way a lot. It's been moving that way for the last three times.

W.D.V.: Then it wasn't just the McGovern year?

Hobby: No. A lot of workers were very (?) prior of that convention.

W.D.V.: So you're saying that the party's ahead of the leadership in terms of the...

Hobby: I'm saying that the party workers, the blacks, the labor people and the workers are ahead of what the leadership *[is saying]* ~~(*)~~ in the Democratic party. I'm not... I think that... One thing that you got last time, that I think is very different, and I don't know if anybody... The draft of the Democratic state convention... I mean, national convention

(?) had to be elected. I had this

(A section of the tape is technically distorted.)

Hobby: ...not so far identified with any faction, you know, Tom Barringer (?) He's not identified with any faction. He has a strong Democratic leaning, and to me he's a rather personable fellow. I believe that, you know, he could step out and do it. If Morgan really stepped out and became the senator, Morgan might could do it after he became senator. I don't think he'll do it before, but if he got to be the senator, then I think he might could move out into it. I think really it's got to be a new face, almost new face. I don't think Scott can do it, I don't think... I got my doubts where Morgan can do it, unless he gets elected, and then he could use his office to do it. But I don't think Pat Taylor can do it. Don't see any of the Congressmen that can do it right now.

W.D.V.: How about the Lieutenant Governor or the Council of State members(?)?

Hobby: Well, the Lieutenant Governor had an opportunity, I think, to step out, and he was a little wary of stepping out. Scared he'll step on somebody's toes that'll hurt him a little later on. I'm looking for a leader, and I been close friends with Jim Hunt since 1950 - I met him when he was at State College as, I think, a freshman - and we've been very close. And yet I'm disappointed in Jim's real faint act on this thing. I can see that he's scared that he might go back in and create some factional living (?), but I think that if he doesn't do it there's going to emerge somebody out of the legislature.

W.D.V.: Do you think one might come out of the coalition of blacks and unions?

Hobby: It's possible.

J.B.: What would happen if Howard Lee were to run for Lieutenant Governor in '76?

Hobby: It's hard to tell, you know. Lieutenant governor is... I think Howard would have a tough fight. Don't know, you know... It takes a lot of money to raise. But... I thought I'd try to get Howard to run for Commissioner of Labor last time. I thought Howard could win Commissioner of Labor and I

thought the Democratic Party would see the value of having a black on the Council of State and they would welcome Howard. And I think if that would have happened, then we would have got enough black support that Skipper would have probably won. But somebody talked Howard into running for Congress. And he run for Congress in a district that, had he had enough money to go into and put on the right type of registration drive, he could have possibly won in, but he never did get that kind of money. I was disappointed that he didn't get more money for his race. And he was pretty well effectively shut off then. But he could have won. And branching out into a statewide race, I think Howard would probably come closer than any other black to win a statewide race. I don't know if Lieutenant Governor is probably shooting a little high right now. You know, I think he may be four years away from where the people of North Carolina are willing to elect a black. I hope I'm wrong.

J.B.: He's got three years before he could make the race.

Hobby: Well, two years, really.

W.D.V.: Why did Bowles lose?

Hobby: Well, I think the main thing is that he felt like after the primary he had it, until about three weeks before the election. Then I think he got scared and it was too late. He never did come to any of our meetings. Never came to one of our meetings. He never... He didn't attend the State Employees Convention. I've heard many a *Taylor* supporter say, "You know, he just told us in so many damn words he didn't need us. You know, we needed him." And they didn't really feel that way. And he lost the teachers by and large. He lost the PACE organization leadership. I don't think they really endorsed Holshouser, but they went out and spent their damn money working for him. They put together a pretty effective political organization in a short time.

W.D.V.: What's his future?

Hobby: I don't really know. I think Skipper may be being blamed unduly for the fact that the Democratic Party is not doing anything in the state now. But he picked Jim Sugg, and course, I don't know but what Jim Sugg might do his bidding, you know. But I think a lot of people are blaming Skipper for the fact that we're not doing anything. I think that... However, I hear a lot of people speak very high of him. Renfro. But I also hear, think that he's running for treasurer of the state in the next election and that they think, you know, he's willing to keep the reins of the Democratic Party close so that he can further his own ambitions. And these people who want to further the Democratic party don't like that very damn much.

J.B.: Getting back to that question I asked you before about where is labor most effective and in what cities, and you said Greensboro and Winston-Salem would be at the top. Then what?

Hobby: Then I guess Durham. And then...then... of course, we're effective in a lot of smaller areas on the county level. Well, take, for instance, Washington County.

J.B.: Where are you least effective? What cities is labor weakest in?

Hobby: Well, I guess, actually to a degree we're weakest in Charlotte. We're weak in Hickory in that we don't have that many union members there.

J.B.: How about Asheville?

Hobby: Asheville we do all right. Waynesville we do real good. The chairman of the Board of County Commissioners in Haywood County is off of my...was on my executive board when he was elected chairman of the County Commissioners, which is a full-time job like a County Manager.

J.B.: How about Wilmington:

Hobby: Wilmington we met last night and we had forty people down there. We're coming in Wilmington. We've been coming down there for a few years but we're just about where we're fixing to arrive. But there again, the best damn

state legislator as far as we're concerned down there is Republican.

J.B.: When you get in a... Who is that?

Hobby: George Roundtree.

J.B.: All right. When you get in a situation like that where a Republican is the best legislator that labor thinks they have, do they support him?

Hobby: Yes sir. Yes sir, I would be hard pressed right now to, if George Roundtree ran against Charlie Rose as was rumored, for Congress, but I understand they're going to have... Charlie Rose has got about the same voting record that Rich Preyer got. Very damn little bit of difference. And I would have a damn fight not to endorse Roundtree. If Roundtree... One, He's friendly with our people and, two, he carried the damn (?) the legislature on the workmen's comp bill.

J.B.: Let me ask you this question: If you were a Republican instead of a Democrat, would you think that Holshouser's moving in the right direction to build a Republican party, or do you think he's moving in the wrong direction and would do better to concentrate on the more conservative Democrat...build Republican strength in the East, or a different appeal?

Hobby: Well, I haven't seen Holshouser go to any damn extremes yet. You know, he's got a reputation of being progressive that I haven't seen, really. He's come out for state legislation that the Democrats are going to pass any damn way so that it looks like they're passing his program, but they're not going over and talking to him and asking him to do things. Now, he hasn't been the least bit progressive, and so I'd say he's probably doing just about right now, because if he goes any more progressive than he's going now, he's going to lose some of the Democrats and the Republicans he's got. If he stays where he's at, he may keep himself... With the patronage, he could keep himself a working majority.

J.B.: Could he pick up more Republican strength by moving to the right?

Hobby: No, I doubt it.

J.B.: What do you think's going to happen in the East? I mean, this is... last year's the first time the East in North Carolina ever went Republican.

Hobby: Well, I think you got this East Carolina Medical School issue that you don't really know how the damn thing's going to flop. And I find as I travel around that people who know that I take a position for it in the East... I have gassed up at service stations that... Of course, my license plate says AFL-CIO... And I've had people like that tell me how proud they was that I took that position. I think that the positions the two political parties takes on this thing here... And right now, Holshouser hasn't come right out and said "I'm against it." He's put up something else in place of it that he's pushing. But he hasn't really campaigned against it. But I think whatever way that thing goes down East is going to decide how a large part of the Eastern part of the state votes in the future.

W.D.V.: We've had a lot of people tell us that 1972 was just an accident. That in 1974 and '76 the Democrats are going to win again just like... back the way things were. Do you think that's true?

Hobby: Well, it's going to be to a degree, because they got some legislators down there can't find their way to the bathroom, that were elected on the Republican ticket. Course, we may go into those Republican primaries with some bright union members to see if we can't take them away. But they've got some people down there don't know where in hell they are that are from up in some of these Western counties. I don't really feel like this is true in a lot of areas, you know. I don't feel like you're going to beat a George Roundtree, or Tommy Harrelson, or some of these bright young people. Some of them that don't know what they're doing there in the first place are going to get beat. But I also think the Republican Party should, well,

being in power with the governmental patronage going on, should be able to attract a much better group of people to run than they have before. Now, I think right now Holshouser's got a real problem in that he can't find no competent Republicans to take those damn jobs. A good competent Republican is making a lot of damn money in big business, you know, and they ain't going to sacrifice...

W.D.V.: Is that his principal problem? One of staffing?

Hobby: I think so. I really wonder if he can't...For instance, I found out that he put a man on, a union man, on the Board of UNC, and didn't ask me nothing about it. Well, he took the biggest damn [F..] in the labor movement and put on the damn thing. University of North Carolina at Asheville. And so, you know, if he'd asked around at somebody, but he just (?) got a labor man, you know, to use that. Well, now, this guy's not influential in the labor movement. He's one of the biggest

(?) in the labor movement. He didn't make no headway with the labor movement by putting this guy on. If the guy did something else for him, I don't know, he may have used him last year and figured that's a pay-off. But that guy ain't going to do him any good in the future. And I just found... I'm impressed with Harrington and I'm impressed with Flaherty. After that, I'm just not impressed with anybody he's put up in the jobs down there, myself. I don't think he's come anywhere close to the competent type people the Democrats put on, even if I didn't agree with them when they were there.

W.D.V.: What has he accomplished in one year?

Hobby: Well, he ought to have cut into the black vote, and he ought to have made a lot of friends with the women. Because he's put blacks in position and he's put women in position where they haven't been before. And I think to a large degree he's neutralized a lot of the black opposition. I don't

think he...you know, he's going to make it hard for the black leaders to keep that black vote militant with the record the Democrats have in this same damn field. And they put one up there as window dressing but they never gave...they never had any people in the jobs like they got over there in Raleigh. The [redacted] never had anything. He neutralized the Women's Political Caucus to a large degree. This is the only [redacted], you know. He's got 40-45% of conservative Democrats who're fed up with the Democratic Party, and Republicans who are voting. And if he can get 5 to 8% more over, and he...with patronage, yet...and he can tear into that. He can continue to win on the state level. I don't know that he can... I don't agree that, you know, '72 was that much of a fluke, you know. But I think it was to a degree, but I think that it's going to be about balanced off. I look to the legislature to remain about the same as it is now for the next 2 to 4 years, and then I think things that happen are going to decide whether they go better or worse.

W.D.V.: But on the state level, you think it's a two-party state now?

Hobby: Yeah, I think it's a two-party state. I think we could very well be just like Virginia. Now, they got two Republican senators and what, now, 7 out of 11...10...7 out of 10 congressmen. And the other two haven't been giving a solid block vote on almost every issue. But I see a change. You know, Alabama's changed. Alabama used to have Mr. Hill and Sparkman, and they were liberals, you know. And they used to have about five congressmen and voted right every time on issues. Now, who have they got down there? Sparkman is a very conservative Democrat now than what he used to be. This was brought about because of a concern...has been brought about by Wallace's playing the race issue like he did. And, you know, the Democratic Party....

J.B.: What's going to be the effect of Wallace's overtures to blacks?

Hobby: I don't think they're going to make any headway to it. He may...

he may get enough... he may get enough support in there to assure him an easy victory in the governor's race down there. They may not be opposed to him as much, but I don't think he'll get anything out of it on... I don't think that he may lose as much as he gains, balance off outside of Alabama. There's a terrific in Alabama. Nationally, I don't know. I don't think he's going to get... I don't think he's going to get no black leaders, really, to go with him, you know.

J.B.: Did the Charleston Hospital Strike, which was... you know, got a lot of attention as a coalition of labor and the civil rights movement. Has that had any long range impact southwide?

Hobby: I don't think so. I don't think it really had any down there in South Carolina. It didn't have with the local leadership what it did with the national leadership. It got good support from the national AFL-CIO, the national labor movement. But it really never did gain the kind of support that... court the local leadership. And Bill Kirkland in some way had to go along to a degree with it, but they weren't happy with it. I don't think you're going to find ~~Sim~~^Wway marching out there for no cause . Kirkland, I guess you know, is dead. And Bill... turned from redneck to liberal, but he never really lost all his redneck things by it. I remember very well, we were bringing black leadership in from the NAACP with CORE to a meeting with [labor] people from three states in Washington, Virginia... And I guess this was back in '66, maybe, or '64. And, anyway, we just put on a out there, and the boy works with blacks. He's not prejudiced. But he's a Southerner, so we were sitting in there talking about how we were going to make this great coalition work and how we needed to do it. And this boy gets a little over-enthused and he say, "We got to work with them niggers." Well, I'm sitting here with Franny Neal, you know Franny. Franny is a clothing worker who comes out of Montgomery

within Martin Luther King's first thing, and then later went and we got her on the stand. She went to Tennessee and worked for Kefauver in 's campaign. A hell of an organizer. She's on the COPE staff now and is one of the fine representatives, and does a hell of a job. I felt her stiffen up, see, I'm up there leading the discussion. And Nicky, what's her name, Brown, from Charleston, the CORE guy, he says, "That's the way he feels, and I do can't work for him." And so...now, the boy really meant it. He didn't have anything... it didn't even occur to him, so I dismissed the class and said, "I want the black leadership to stay here with Mack and myself." And *Bill* had been down the hall. And Mary Zong (?) walked in. Mary Zong is Al Barkin's right arm up there in the Research Department of COPE. She walked in about that time, and she sat down. And so I said...well, and then ~~Kirkland~~ *Kirkland* came in and sit down, and I'm standing there. And everybody's finishing getting out the door. I/ ^{said,} "something just happened that I understandably knew that you blacks didn't like, but I thought that I ought to say to you that I think it was a slip of the tongue and it's not the way the man feels." And I looked down at the back row and I said, "Mack, you just said we got to work more with them niggers." He said, "That isn't what I said." And I said, "Yes, it is." And Brown popped up and said, "Yeah, that's what she said." And I said, "Well, I just want everybody around here to know that I know Mack well, and I know you got two local unions in the district down there, and I know one of them's a black. And I know that I worked with him in the last 4-5 years, and I know how he feels about blacks." And I said, "This is not his feeling, and I just wanted y'all to know about it." Course Kirkland turns around and walks out. Boy, he gives me hell when I got out of there that I embarrassed...and I didn't have any business doing this. Guys like that that come on in the state, we put up \$5,000 into

their salary. So they work under Kirkland down in South Carolina, but they also work under me. And so, Kirkland jumped me when I went out that door and he raised hell about that. And Mary Zong had heard him and she went to Barkins. See, Barkin's textile and Kirkland... Me and him got along fine all these years I worked for COPE. And we had, two or three times, pretty good little coalitions started down there in South Carolina. But this is one reason I quit. I was... I would build up something in South Carolina, for instance, in a campaign, and I'd have to go to Georgia and work. And, hell, when I got back, South Carolina has felt flat on his face. I'd leave Georgia after working in South Carolina....

J.B.: ^{That} ~~What~~ First Congressional District is pretty much a populist coalition, isn't it?

Hobby: They... that's been put together practically since I left them down there.

J.B.: When was that?

Hobby: '69.

J.B.: I'm saying, didn't that Charleston Hospital strike, did it have some effect down there?

Hobby: It had a lot to do with it, yeah. We had also... the man, Mendel, Davis had a lot to do with it. His personality and his willingness to talk right on the issues did something. Now, when you get a guy like that... I think a guy like that could come into this Fourth Congressional District here, and take it away from Ike Andrews. Old Ike's got a good vote...if Ike doesn't turn more liberal, he's . If he doesn't do something to take the black vote away from Winn in Raleigh, we're going to see a new congressman in the Fourth District. I think.

J.B.: But are any of the districts that come to mind like that First District in South Carolina? They've got a pretty active, what I call a pretty

much a, an organized labor, an unorganized labor, but pretty much a blue collar and...white blue collar and black coalition.

Hobby: Well, the Greensboro area is effective here, the...

J.B.: Preyer

Hobby: Sixth District. That's Preyer's district. And we just... the changes you're talking about you can see here. We're talking about Eden, North Carolina, where we got 3,500 textile workers. Now, five years ago, six years ago, everybody in those mills but the sweepers were black, but today they're 20-25%...I mean white. Today they're 20-25% black. And then the leadership in the textile union is extremely redneck, five years ago. Today, the blacks are leading our political education campaign up there. They go to the conventions, they hug each others' necks, they work side by side in the...in our workroom checking registration, working up programs. The blacks are there, and anybody else. And there you've seen it just by exposing blacks to whites, and working side by side. They get along just beautifully. In Rocky Mount, now we got... We have a tradition now in our organizing. This works in the South. It's hurting us right this minute. The textiles, like I say, used to either be an all black mill or an all white mill except for the sweepers. But today there's 20, 25, 30, 35% blacks. They're ready to join the union. We go into an organizing campaign, these 35% blacks will just go like that. But they're turned off to whites. The management at the unions think they might have a nigger union, you see. Right now, we're not able to get to the whites in these kind of cases, and so we're losing a very close election, but we're losing . It's turning more and more in the low-paid textile industry. We may, possibly... I mean, we can, but there's got to be some changes made. But we'll have within the next two months over in Roanoke Rapids an election for J.P. Stevens, where there are 3,000 workers. Well, right now, just every black over there,

and there's about 30-35% black over there, every black over there's for the union. Got a bumper sticker on his car, wears a badge every day and brings it to work every day, you know. And they got . I believe that if we put the right kind of emphasis over there... And we got to go after those whites now. And I've told them so, that I think they're going to win that election. This would be, to me, I'd like really not to have anything to do for the next two months and be able to go over there and just pitch in doing that. Because I'm convinced we can do it there. And if we did it there, we can have this coalition off and running. But, you see, our white union leaders come down to that place... I... We don't have - we didn't think we had, until we got this computer. You know, I thought we had three unions in Roanoke Rapids, and that's all. We got this print-out, and we got membership from 28 different unions in that county. I got the computer print-out, I know who's^y there. We had a meeting setting up a central labor union there that night where we had 55 people in that area come out there to help. So, you know, it's there. I need the money and the staff...

J.B.: Well, what is organized labor doing politically insofar as non-union blue collar workers are concerned? In campaigns?

Hobby: Well, right now, all we've done is what I've been able to try to do on public relations level, espouse the issues that they ought to be interested in. We don't have the wherewithall to do an educational job like I'd like to do. We're building toward trying to educate the leadership to get out there and do some of it on its own. I would want to handbill plants, you know, on many of these cases on political campaigns. And this is what we did. That's what's happened in the First... not the First District, but the Florence district in South Carolina, when we won in the primary down there. The day before the damn election we went out there and handbilled every non-union plant in that area. They won the primary and lost to... Republicans picked

up a...radio entertainer and a...man that beat us in November with a....

J.B.: What did the handbill say?

Hobby: Well, it talked about the issues. Minimum wage. It talked about... the position on minimum wage, the position on workmen's compensation.

J.B.: That's a very low union district, right?

Hobby: Yeah.

J.B.: Low union membership?

Hobby: Well, we got right many members in...we're organizing like hell there. It's one of the fastest organizing areas in South Carolina right now. Around Florence there, in *Konway*. And down in Georgetown there, we've had some... we won...We won the Georgetown Steel strike and hell, we've organized about nine plants down there after winning that strike. And then we fixed the prime wage at Georgetown. And the blacks... you know, the blacks... The one thing that's going to happen now, you see, they've kept us apart, and they talked about blacks. And we didn't know nothing about them, because, hell, they swept the floor. But now they're in our unions. We needed to have two separate unions back in those early days when they got us frightened, until... We still have a little friction sometimes in the local unions, but just the fact that they're meeting together in local unions... And you can see coalitions form in the local unions, where a local union guy who may have been a redneck realizes he's going to have to switch and have some black votes if he's going to win again. He ought to raise his position. I've seen this right here in this local here in Durham, where the most vicious... They've turned completely around... The most vicious anti-black guy sixteen years ago, and now he's getting in the black vote. Because he's just done a complete flip flop.

J.B.: Now, have they really changed, or are they only talking different?

Hobby: Well, they haven't changed as much outside as they do inside. But they changed enough there that they aren't able to go around and spread the

like they were doing one time before. You...usually... I guess y'all have read about Claiborn Ellis this year. You know of Claiborn Ellis? I got \$78,000 from HEW early in school desegregation for about two years, three years. I brought a young boy down from Virginia and he ran for Congress up there and I made Howell's campaigns. Good boy. He ran my campaign for me too. But I put him in charge of the school desegregation program here in Durham. He came over here. And Mark was having what's called a charette. And in this they have about a 6 to 8 hour rap session with about 250 blacks and whites pretend they is at, in a school here. How we are going to fix our school system. What's wrong with it and what do we need to do. Well, he came over here, and he wound up with co-chairman, a black, big, fat, black militant woman, loud-mouth. And the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. And I thought the goddamn thing's going to fall apart, going to explode in everybody's face any minute. Well, they met there for ten days and had rap sessions. This boy had... Met in a black school, now. Formerly all black school, in a black section of the city. This Klansman carried all his regalia down and had one classroom where he displayed it all, you know. Took them on. They took him on, and out of it became a mutual respect for each other's positions.

J.B.: Who was the Klansman?

Hobby: The name's Claiborn Ellis. I grew up with the boy. Went to junior high school with him. During this period, Claiborn wouldn't have his picture taken with a Negro because of the AFL-CIO's position on civil rights. At the end of that thing, I went to the last meeting, he got up. Got it all on television, and everything, and had, well, had 40 column inches every day about the meeting. Had good publicity. He got up and said it's the first constructive thing he ever did in his life. He ran for the school board, and made a good showing, but blacks wouldn't support him as the most liberal

Klansman in the South. (Laughter.) He went back out at Duke - he's a maintenance man at Duke - and he called me after about two or three weeks out there. And he said, "We want to organize a union." I got him in the union out there. The union's got him on full time now, in less than three months after he got in the union out there. They just did a story on him in Nation Magazine, and I ought to send you a copy of it.

J.B.: I wish you would, I'd like to see it.

Hobby: But it's just amazing to me. He's really interested in union activity now. And he comes all in the union and I'm talking... Comes to the meeting of the legislative delegation with two blacks the other night. Him and two blacks came. We met with the Durham County legislator, he's sitting there with two blacks. He's organizing blacks now. Course, he's not having overwhelming success but he's got to re-sell himself to these blacks. But, you know, he tells you now... he tells me this story, here in Nation Magazine about when the blacks were marching here in Durham two or three years ago, the businessmen would call him up and tell him what they were going to do. They'd get some of the boys down there to help keep them in line. And... big businessman in town, he said. He said he'd see these businessmen the next day on the street, and they'd cross the damn streets, but they wouldn't speak to him, you know. But he's now, instead of being black and white, it's working class against the big boys, so to speak. You know, and just to see this guy change. And they tried... someone tried to beat him for his Grand Dragon out there, and he won.

J.B.: Is he still active in the Klan?

Hobby: As far as I know, he is. I haven't dared to ask him about it, but he comes over to my office two or three days a week now, and he's doing a good job. He is. And just to see him trying to organize these blacks around here. The blacks respect him because he was honest with them, you know.

J.B.: That happened in Georgia with Calvin Craig and...

Hobby: Yeah, I was there when that happened, too. I got a... I guess four or five months after the program was over, I ran across him downtown down here and he said, "You know, when are y'all going to get some more money?" He said, "We really did a job on that program," he said. You know, I mean, Westinghouse took him and this black woman and they carried them to Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. They had them on shows up there. We hooked on to the national syndicated story when this thing was over about the success of it, and I ought to send you a copy of that too.

J.B.: I'd like to get that.

Hobby: We got the clippings on that charette, and you got your names here. Fletcher, add this on . I figure that...

W.D.V.: May I ask you a question? You really got interested in politics in 1948 and you've seen all these Administrations in North Carolina since then. Do any of them stand out in terms of accomplishments for organized labor? Or just stand out generally?

J. B.: Could you kind of rank order them?

Hobby: Well, I was fairly active in the local Democratic Party during Kerr Scott's term. And I thought Kerr Scott stood out more than anybody else. And... I mean, the things that Kerr Scott did. I think it was that careful moving would have been great, you know, but he was... his election was followed by... Bill Umstead's would just about be opposite. Umstead was sick and died and then Hodges became over and he was more of an industrial recruiter than he was an overall thing. But I thought Scott had a good Administration and was beginning to get North Carolina on the right path. Sanford, I think, although we disagreed with him putting the food tax on for his education program. I realize now - I don't know that I did then - that's the only damn place he could get it. That he didn't have that kind

of control over the legislature that... But I think that if I looked at two that I thought were beginning to move right... But then you see, events that you have nothing to do with happen on the thing. As Beverly Lake running against Terry Sanford. If he hadn't of had that vicious a campaign against Lake, I think Sanford might have had the support of the people. But Lake took away a large group of support that Sanford needed to really have been a successful governor. And then Lake goes on the run after that against Preyer, because Preyer's in Moore's victory. And, of course, I think Bob Scott. I don't know what it is. I think Holshouser's so far had a honeymoon. The governors in this state lose the people's faith pretty quick. I thought Bob Scott really made a good governor. I think he, you know, he supported his cronies a little too much in some instances, but the things he did in higher education. The things he... He came out for me for the \$1.60 minimum wage and helped push that through. I think he was heading down the thing, but then, you know, of course, it's easy for a guy like Holshouser at that time to be in the legislature and be against, you know, all the taxes. Hell, if, you know. If you're out and you're not going to get any taxes to spend, it's very easy to be against the taxes that Scott needed. I guess, it's my feeling that... I really think Kerr Scott had the best Administration, although Kerr Scott was too rough. He wasn't polished enough to get business to go along with him to have a progressive Administration.

J.B.: What are some of the things you remember from his Administration?
Besides the roads?

Hobby: Well, the fact that he stood up to the utilities quite a bit. The fact that, you know, he tried to bring the little people into the government. I remember very well, for instance, I guess it was 1952 as he was heading out of office, he - Everett Jordan was his cousin, first cousin, and Jordan

was his Democratic chairman of the party. It's custom in this state to pick your delegates for the Democratic Convention, you know. So many of the Congressional districts got about forty or fifty per cent, and then the government gets fifty per cent. And what he did, he and the Democratic chairman would get together and they'd agree on the list and that'd be it. Well, he and Everett Jordan got together and agreed on a list, and then Everett Jordan knocked five of Scott's off. And so Scott was governor, and in that Democratic Convention, Kerr Scott refused to sit on the platform because of this thing and sat down in the congressional delegation where we were at. And finally near the end of the convention, they recognized him, and he got up, told them he was sitting down there with the Branch Head boys