

Interview with Gov George Wallace, Montgomery, Alabama, July 15, 1974,  
conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Walter De Vries: Remember our conversation Saturday evening? Let  
me brief you again on what the book is. We're doing a book which is  
essentially--

[Interruption in tape.]

Jack Bass: First one to ask you is just how do you view your im-  
pact on Alabama politics and southern politics and national politics?

Wallace: I think it's hard for any individual to point out or  
put his finger on any impact he has had, personally. In our representa-  
tive form of government an individual represents a segment of the voters  
or a view point. And the view point and the people he represents has  
the impact. I don't think that I individually have had all that im-  
pact, because one person in our system, in my judgment, is not worthy  
of all that much attention. It just so happens that I've been the  
governor of a state and that's been a good forum. Whereas many people  
have eloquently spoken more so than myself about matters that I've  
spoken of. But they were not in the governor's office and therefore  
their viewpoint, which was in many instances the same as mine, didn't  
get as broad circulation and dissemination. I would say the people  
that feel as I do in Alabama and in the country have had broad, strong  
impact on affairs within this state and within this country. And I  
think they're having. . . the impact is even greater today in view of  
the fact that many of the people who years ago would say "I don't agree  
with anything he says" now will ask you "If you're in my state will you  
put in a good word for me." Or "Will you come speak to". . . I've al-

ready been invited this fall to speak in some states way away from our part of the country for the ticket. As I was in 1972. I was invited to go, even by one governor. . . called me on the phone. I was unable to go because of my physical condition. But I was asked. And maybe a few years beyond that I would have been asked not to come. So I would say that our administration here in Alabama and the people who supported it have had an impact on the industrial growth of the area, on the development of waterways, on the development of an educational system that today provides probably an easy enough opportunity at a minimal cost for higher education for all people, especially in low income groups than any other state in the union. With our comprehensive junior college and technical school program. The building of an additional medical school and two family physician programs at two other branches of our-- one at the main University of Alabama and the other at the branch. And the other day the report came out we would be soon graduating 300 doctors a year instead of 100, as we were in 1970 when I became governor that term. I think the impact of this administration here in the field of public health and the field of highway building, the field of industrial development and education has been great for all the people of our state. And at the same time we've maintained a very low per capita tax in Alabama. We have the lowest property taxes of probably any state in the union. An average \$10,000/<sup>home</sup>costs today about \$35-45 in taxes up to 50. \$20,000 home anywhere from \$75-100 maybe. Which is about \$1,000 less than you'll find in many states in the union. I think the impact on national affairs has been that the people I represented have many folks in both parties talking about the things they wanted talked about for a long time. I think you all recognize that yourselves. I would say

that they had the impact. I was only the instrument and their representative or their agent. What I'm saying is if I just got up by myself and talking to hear myself talk. . . if I hadn't had the following, then the impact would have been just the impact of one man talking. But I think it's had tremendous impact.

W.D.V.: How would you characterize that following? What do they believe? Have their beliefs changed?

Wallace: Well . . . .

W.D.V.: You say you represent a certain segment. What do they believe?

Wallace: I think they represent the majority viewpoint in the country. I think people have grown tired of big government. I feel that they feel that government has been pretty much aloof from them. I think they felt that about the Democratic party in 1972. . . was just aloof from them. Was just foreign to them. They couldn't relate to it at all. So many things happen to them that they are opposed to. And I don't like to bring up busing because that's not the biggest issue or the only issue. It's a big issue in different places. But when Gallop polls show that 75-80% of the people of both races oppose this particular sort of school maneuver yet it's still forced on the people. They wonder why is it we always have to do what we don't want to do. Is it because a certain few in the country. . .? Do we have an elitist government that a few in the bureaucracy which is stronger, as I said, than the government itself. Stronger than the president and stronger than the Congress. They've decreed that it's good for the people to do certain things. And even though the people don't like to do it, they must do it because this super elite group is so determined. I think that's the way they feel. And they feel that the government's aloof. They've

found the Democratic party in '72 adopting a platform that they did not relate with. The great middle class of our country that today is being probably subjected to the most abuse in the tax system of any group in the country. And if you ever destroy the middle class I think you destroy the group that defends your system and supports the system and holds the system together. And I think they're all recognizing that. Didn't you hear them all talk that way the other day to the Democratic chairman. Same thing I used to talk about. So I think that I represent a broad spectrum of people. In fact it turned out in the governor's race that I represented a pretty broad spectrum of people of all races in this state.

W.D.V.: Is that how you explain your continued popularity in this state? I mean you've been around now since 1958. You've been in office since 1962. How do you explain your own hold?

Wallace: Well, it's hard to explain because it's very difficult for a governor to stay in a long period of time.

W.D.V.: What do people tell you is the reason they keep supporting you?

Wallace: I believe one reason. . . people have been satisfied with the things we do in state government. They're very satisfied. Not completely satisfied. I don't think there's any way to completely satisfy everybody and have a utopia. But I think they've been pretty, generally appreciative of the feeling that this government has had for the great mass of our people. Working extra hard for more employment and utilize our natural resources for good. Providing more educational opportunities for people's children who, when I first became the governor, had no opportunity to acquire an education because of its cost and the fact that we didn't have the regional community college concept in

Alabama. A technical school concept which now puts everybody within bus distance of one of these institutions. I think they felt that I had been, our administration was successful in that way. I think otherwise, also, is that when you deal with people in our region you're dealing with people who are very proud people. You can't find any people who are any more proud of their heritage or their region or their country than you do people here. Not that people in other regions aren't themselves proud of their own heritage. But I think one reason it probably is more pronounced is because we were the number one economic problem of the nation, according to Mr Roosevelt in 1932 in one of his speeches. Which was probably true because of the restrictions and regimentations that had been imposed upon the economy of our part of the country after the war between the states. A region of the country--and I'm not trying to bring up sectionalism because that's gone and we're all one country and the people of Michigan want to see the people of Alabama prosper the same as we want to see them. But the effects of that. . . freight rate inequities in Pittsburgh plus and making us purely agrarian in the days after the war. Plus the occupation. Instead of lend-lease and Marshall aid to rebuild us. And all the schools burned and all the railroads destroyed. All of the live stock gone. And people just trying to live. Eck out a living, just eat from day to day. The white and the black. That in spite of those handicaps they did come back. Which I think is one of the great epicates [epics?] in American history. Is the come back of the people of our region under so many adverse circumstances. And in those days. . . even in the '20s and '30s, we still were feeling the effects of lack of education in the '70s and '80s and '90s. Because everybody was poor. And that spilt over into the 20th century. And so in the '30s we still had thousands and thousands

of our people who were proud people, good blood. Of course people got good blood all over the country. I'm not saying some blood's good and some's bad. Don't get me wrong. But a way of describing strong people with great pride. I used to know people that were illiterate in the sense that they couldn't read and write. But they were proud people, you know. They had pride. Many of them would never admit they were poor. Such as my own family. My father went to two years to college. My mother was a college, she went to college and she taught music. But my father farmed and he was just as poor as the next person. Because farming was on the bottom and everybody's. . . farm tenant, landlord or whoever was just devoid of money. People ate because we were agricultural. But my mother would never admit that. . . she had to go to work as a stenographer after my father died in '37, at the age of 40 after he'd been farming a part of his life that was very short. And she would never admit to this day that we were poor people. She was too proud to admit it. And the whole community was poor. But there was a great pride. You know, you'd have church services. . . be jam packed and they'd sing that song "Some Day We'll Understand." And really, I think they used to sing that because they not only had a spiritual feeling but it also told the story to them that someday things were going to be better. I can remember. . . I was in a similar position, but I never felt sorry for myself and I never did want to destroy the country. I just prayed and. . . like my folks. . . things is going to get better. And things begin to get better. But we were looked down upon. And people that came from other regions of the country said "Why aren't you as progressed as other people are progressed?" And when you would explain all of the restrictions that had been placed upon us, then I'd say we're really further progressed. Probably no other region could have come

and overcome what we overcame. You know what I'm talking about when I talk about freight rate inequities and Pittsburgh plus. It was designed to keep us from not having. . . agriculture and caused an influx of our people to leave, outmigration, in the '20s and '30s by the hundreds and hundreds of thousands in find industrial job employment in other parts of the country. And so in the presidential campaigns. . . . The South, you know, backwards, they said, you know. Yet it was more forward, under the circumstances, than probably anybody. Considering all of the circumstances. And yet we were talked about. You know, rednecks, hill billies, backward, ignorant, illiterate, racist. And the people developed a complex. They knew it wasn't true, but they had a hard time proving it, you know. And when I became the governor of the state of Alabama we still had that viewpoint about our region. And I took advantage since those early days and my political career to travel the country. And I think they feel that my position as governor was used to help restore the pride that today sees people visiting us, sees the president come to see us. Come to see me. But they feel like they're coming to see them. I'm only their representative. And Sen Kennedy and Sen Humphrey. And you name them. And I feel that's one reason we've been successful, too, in Alabama and in the region. And I also feel that the average citizen of Michigan also feels that I have expressed his viewpoint whereas the other politicians. . . . For so long most of them have expressed the viewpoint of the noise makers of the far left. And I express the viewpoint of that mass citizenry that in 1968 erupted into the largest crowds that any candidate drew. But a third party ticket was something they didn't think could win. But it sort of got the other candidates around to begin to say what we were saying. Had I been on a major party ticket in 1968, there would have been

a very close race. On either ticket.

W.D.V.: Is it their identity with you that gives you the strength? If you look at the other southern states, there's been no politician that has lasted as long in the executive office as you have. Right?

Wallace: That's right.

W.D.V.: How do you explain that? Because in all the other states this has not happened. But in Alabama it does happen.

Wallace: Well, I cannot explain. . . . I can't tell you about other governors or other people. You do know that governors have a hard time being re-elected. Or at least beyond a four year. . . maybe two two year terms. You can go to the Senate and the House and it's been a custom in our part of the country because of the seniority system that people have stayed there longer. And they've understood that and that's not difficult to do. But in the executive office it is difficult to do. I think that I've explained it to you in talking about not only the projects and progress we've made in our own state but the fact that they've been represented and they appreciated the fact that you stood in Madison Square Garden and told them you came from a great state. And have the people to stand up and give you a standing ovation. Let them know that even though the newspapers have been writing and making fun of them, the people in New York like them, and knew they were good folks. Were not what they were said to be. You know.

W.D.V.: You're saying you really haven't lost touch with that group and they still identify with you. That for other politicians, they have lost touch and people don't identify with them any more?

Wallace: Many of them. But have you noticed in the last few years how many of them are swinging back to saying exactly what we say? Don't you hear people running for the mayorship of Los Angeles and Atlanta, both

racism, saying we must have law and order and if you'll elect me I'll make it safe to walk on the streets. But when I was raising that issue in '68 they called it something evil. Said it was demagogic. And now, . . . when I talked about the urban welfare mess in '68, Humphrey called it demagogic. For instance. And yet the first thing he said in '72 in Florida was he wanted to get the welfare chisellers and loafers off the welfare rolls. And on the matter of busing. You find the busing bills have been introduced by people like Senators from Michigan and people from the state of New York, not Alabama.

W.D.V.: In your 1970 race for governor and the \$400, 000 came out of the president's campaign funds, were you aware of that at that time?

Wallace: I wasn't aware of it and I can't prove it now, other than what I've heard on television and witnesses, you know. But we did feel that there was a great amount of money being spent in the campaign for the governorship because of the excessive amount of ads and television and all of that which was just something that was beyond what had ever been put on in this state. And that cost money. But the national Democrats in Alabama were also trying to rid themselves of me, along with the national Republicans. And we had even. . . even the AFL-CIO was supporting my opponent. That is the leadership was. Rank and file supported me. Along with Red Blount, who said that my opponent was one of the finest governors during his lifetime, you know. Vice President Agnew was here on a state wide telecast with him in which he referred to him as one of the bright, coming young men of the nation, you know, or something similar. And we knew the money was coming, but we couldn't prove it.

J.B.: Were you surprised later when it was disclosed where the money did come from?

Wallace: No, I wasn't surprised. I knew it was coming, but I just didn't know how much or where. I mean I felt it was coming. In fact I so said in my campaign. Although I readily admitted that I couldn't put my finger on it.

J.B.: You spoke of your 1974 election this year and having support from people of both races. Were you surprised at the black support you got this year?

Wallace: No.

J.B.: How do you account for that?

Wallace: Well, I'd received black support in the past and the program that I had inaugurated in this state. . . the junior college program, the free text book program, the industrial development program. At one time we had 3.6% unemployment in Alabama a year and a half ago, before the energy crisis. One of the lowest in the nation. Among blacks and whites. And every black official had been to this office, when he wants to come. The lawyers who practiced in my court when I was a judge in the '50s, black lawyers, all you have to do is ask them how they were treated. You can go ask them. You can ask Arthur Shores. You can ask Fred Grey. And I don't think Fred Grey has ever supported me politically and I don't even know whether Shores has or not, either. But the programs that enured to the benefit of the mass of black people in this state and they know that I've never made any speech in my life that reflected upon them. In my early political career I never did. In fact I served on the board of trustees of Tuskegee Institute back in 1951 and 2, because of my interest as a legislator in trying to acquire more funds for the school. But the people of our state were never anti-black, as you can see by the relationships that exist now. But they

were anti-government, big government, trying to run all their schools. That was their great gripe. Step in and take charge of every school system and every jury box and every voter list and every Congressional district and every legislative district. And they resented that. And there was nothing I ever said during the times of '63 or '64 that would offend anybody because of his race. Unless, being for the system that had existed for so long, our school system. . . if that offended you, being for that, then you'd be offended. But as far as getting up and talking about people. . . . I've never talked about inferiority. I never talked about anybody had less rights than others. Talked about every citizen's entitled to equal rights under the constitution of Alabama and under the constitution of the United States. And I was not surprised.

W.D.V.: What significance is there in J. Cooper's support and Johnny Ford's? What's the significance in the state, as well as nationally?

Wallace: Well, they realize that I have tried, in my judgment, they realize that I have tried to work for all the people of this state. That I've been concerned with city governments. That I've been concerned with the problems. That my door is open to people of all races. And that programs that I've sponsored have enured to the benefit of the people of this state, white and black.

W.D.V.: We've heard the charge that they only did that because they wanted to use you to get funds, get state funds.

Wallace: Wanted to use me?

W.D.V.: To get state funds. More state appropriations.

Wallace: Well, they haven't gotten any. They haven't asked for anything in the world. I've helped Johnny Ford and Mobile with new

industrial development programs, which we help every city. But not a one of them have gotten any. . . . What have they gotten from the state? Tuskegee Institute has always gotten a good appropriation. They've gotten no revenue sharing funds, you know, for any purposes I know of. We gave some to the dock down there, which helps black and white. But you'll have to ask them. All I know is they supported me, but they've never asked. . . they've never made any unreasonable requests or demands on me or asked for anything other than that we keep on doing what we're doing. And the records will show that they've gotten no extra consideration other than what other cities and towns have gotten.

W.D.V.: You think back to when you came back from World War II. The last 25 years. What are the most major political changes that have occurred in this state since 1946?

Wallace: Well. . . you mean in programs or in attitudes?

W.D.V.: No, I mean in the politics of the state.

Wallace: Well, naturally changes have come. Repeal of the poll tax, naturally, enfranchised many more voters. Naturally more black people voting. There's been more blacks elected to office and there are more blacks in the legislature this time. Which I think is good. I think it's good to have blacks represented in city government, county and state government.

W.D.V.: The reason I asked that is. . . the book that I referred to by Key. . . his major hypothesis was that if you understood racial politics in the South you understood southern politics. My question is, do the politics of race still dominate the politics of Alabama or not?

Wallace: Does race still dominate?

W.D.V.: The politics of race, yes.

Wallace: I don't know that race has dominated politics in what we would call the modern era of Alabama. Now when you get back to the '70s and '80s and '90s, along in there. . . I'm not talking about that. It's so much been misunderstood about our region, when you talk about race. It was like when they talked about religion. You know, the South is anti-Catholic. Yet in 1928 it was only eight states that voted for Al Smith. One of them was Massachusetts, and seven of them were southern states. Including Alabama. So if you go by that hypothesis, if you want to go by that analogue, then California was anti-Catholic and New York was, whereas Alabama was pro. And in 1960 Kennedy carried Alabama. And the only states he lost in the South were those that tilted between Republican and Democrats even in the Eisenhower-Stevenson races. So when you get to talking about race, a lot of things are interpreted as race that really should have been interpreted as big government. I'm not saying there wasn't some racial politics. To say there wasn't some would be not true. But. . .

W.D.V.: Has that changed, governor?

Wallace: Yes.

W.D.V.: What racial politics there were--

Wallace: Well actually. . . in the modern days. . . when I was in politics, it never was politics. . . . For instance, in the debates on the civil rights bills in Congress during the days that I came up in politics. . . was based purely on constitutional questions and on a high level. Now prior to that time, I don't know. I haven't read the Congressional record, whether or not the debates on those bills were race oriented or not. In some instances, probably yes. But in the modern days when Richard Russell and others led the fight, it was based on

constitutional questions. And just like in 1963, my opposition to the take over of the public school system and the University of Alabama was not motivated as much by race as you think, but by big government. Actually the taking over of the Congressional district, redistricting, and legislative districts. That's not racial. That's purely political because I have no objections. I think it's good for blacks to serve in the legislature. But nobody could get elected to office in Alabama during the time that I ran getting up talking against people because of their color. He could get up and be elected talking about the government trying to take over and run everything in your state when the good white and black people of this state ought to make some of the decisions themselves. Now you can call that race if you want to and it probably did have a racial tinge, but for a man to get up and say "I am against people because of this race," you didn't get anywhere in politics in the days that I was coming up in politics.

J.B.: Why do you think John Patterson defeated you in 1958?

Wallace: Well John Patterson defeated me. . . and of course you have read these things that I said he out so and soed me. That's not a southern expression and I never made that. I was just as strong on state's rights and local government as he was. But his father'd been killed, over in Phoenix City, assassinated after he'd been elected. And he was a bright intelligent young fellow. A good looking, nice, intelligent candidate. And to run against a man whose father had been assassinated on the promise of cleaning up a city that was known as a sin city of the region--it was really too much to run against. And that's not the reason I was defeated, like some of the writers concocted in their minds. I was defeated. . . I think he would have defeated anybody. In

fact I think I had a. . . I was a very strong candidate to have run as well as I did against him.

J.B.: Wasn't race a big issue in that campaign?

Wallace: Race was an issue in the sense that he had filed a suit to outlaw the NAACP in Alabama because of it's not qualifying in certain incorporation laws and so forth. And people in those days were very strong for the school system as it existed. But I was just as strong for the school system as it existed at that time as he was. But it wasn't because he was any stronger. And I didn't take the viewpoint well next time I've got to be stronger, like they said. I was just as strong as he was on state's rights and local government, the tenth Amendment. But he couldn't have been elected governor. [nor] I could have been elected governor had we got up and made a campaign that was designed to bring confrontation and friction and violence between the races. Because people do not like that and they haven't like it in a long time in Alabama. Really not in my life time that I can remember.

J.B.: Some of the critics of the black mayors and others who have endorsed you have said, have placed part of the blame on you for the incident at the Selma bridge and also cite your speech about segregation now and segregation forever and the sending of the troops at Tuskegee on the schools--

Wallace: Let me ask you this--

J.B.: I want to know how you respond to that.

Wallace: You people all consider Sen Richard Russell and *Spessard* Holland ~~[?]~~ and ~~Farris~~ Bryant and Kenneth McKeller and Walter George and Herman Talmadge and ~~Speer~~ ~~Holland~~ [?] and Fulbright and you name them. Hoey, Sam Ervin. You all consider them non racist types of southern

politicians. And everything that I have ever said, they said it before I did. And many of the things I said, I got it from them. So why is it that I am the one who is something that they aren't when they are the ones that started it and said it first? And even stronger. You think Sen Ervin's a great man, don't you?

W.D.V.: You're asking me?

Wallace: Well, if you don't think he is, then. . . . Well, I think he is a pretty fine fellow.

W.D.V.: I think he's a fine man. I don't think he's a great man.

Wallace: Well, I think he's a fine fellow but he's said the same things I've said. Maybe not exactly like I said them. Mr Hill has said them. John Sparkman has said them, who was the nominee for the vice presidential in 1952. Well, he got up and fought all these things just like I did. But the Selma bridge. The Selma bridge was an unfortunate incident. No use to talk about it now. It wasn't handled the way I wanted it handled. My only concern about marching at that time was the distance between here and Selma and the report I got informed me that I did not have enough personnel to guarantee maximum safety, including the numbers and vehicles and so forth and the cars. And I wanted to delay until I could get sufficient forces. And I had to get them from the federal government. To guarantee absolute safety. Because I did not want anybody hurt on that march. In the Selma bridge incident nobody got hurt. Nobody had to go to the hospital.

J.B.: I think some people did get hurt in that march.

Wallace: How'd they get hurt? Who got hurt?

J.B.: John Lewis had his skull fractured. He was hit on the head with a club.

Wallace: Who?

J.B.: John Lewis, who is now at the voter education project in Atlanta.

Wallace: Well, I didn't know that. But nobody as I understood got, even had to be hospitalized over there at the bridge. But I'm not saying. . . the bridge confrontation could have been handled differently and I'm sorry it was handled exactly like it was. But actually the troopers were worried about them getting across the river where there was a group of . . . people. . . antagonists on the other side and were trying to keep them from getting over there. Because they thought if they did get over there and got tied up, they couldn't get them separated.

J.B.: Did you watch that confrontation on television?

Wallace: Yeah. Did you watch the one in Los Angeles? Did you watch the one in Harlem? Did you watch the one in Baltimore? Did you watch the one in Boston? Did you watch the one in Jacksonville? Did you watch the one in North Carolina--the several. Did you watch the one in Richmond? Did you watch the one in Washington? Where was all the people hurt. Eight or nine got their heads skinned over there and the other places, 25 got killed, 475 got injured, 2,000 got injured. So when you start talking about incidents involving race, why, go to some place where they really did something.

W.D.V.: Can I change the topic a little bit? You're described as a populist. What does that mean to you?

Wallace: I don't know. You all. . . you newspaper folks call me a populist. I never called myself publicly a populist. I don't know what the term exactly means. Its according to how you use it. I try to be a man of the people. I recognize like most southerners, that, you

know, we sort of felt victims and oppressed by eastern interests in the olden days and we sold our agricultural products on an unprotected market and bought goods on a protected market when we was purely agrarian. We sort of resented all of that because we thought folks made money off of us and we were left holding the bag. I always sort of felt that that wasn't right and I reckon any politician would say a man of the people--that's what a populist means.

W.D.V.: How about on economic matters?

Wallace: Huh?

W.D.V.: On economic matters what does it mean to you?

Wallace: Well. . . . When you start talking about liberality and populism, exactly what do you mean. You have to sort of go it item by item.

W.D.V.: How about in taxes?

Wallace: How about in taxes? Well, my history of legislation was that I fought the sales tax in '51. Led the fight against it. In 1963 I introduced a package of bills that actually fell more on big interest for education. But the legislature kicked them aside and passed another sales tax. 4%. Which is one of the lowest in the country in Alabama, by the way. And I reluctantly signed it on the last day because I had spoken out against it. But it was either that or no money for education in that biennium, which was so badly needed. So to those who say Wallace put a sales tax on, two cents of it was on when I went to the legislature and I fought the third cent, which is headlined in the papers of '51, as a leader of the fight against it. And I reluctantly signed the 4% when there was no other funds available through legislative sources. I think that the sales tax can get too high, but I think the most regressive tax in the country is the income tax at the national

level. And the social security program is becoming regressive. I'm not against the social security program, but some way's got to be found to make it cheaper on the working man who is having to bear the brunt of the burden. That's where in. . . I think the exemption of institutionalized property, estimated by many to be as high as \$152 billion, along with all the exemptions of foundations such as Rockefeller's, Ford and Carnegie's which you all are doing this under. You all have got a grant from the Ford and Rockefellers. They don't pay any taxes. So you're working for two foundations that get by scot free. And they pay you money to come interview red neck governors. And they don't pay any taxes on it. While the red necks have to pay.

W.D.V.: How you going to respond to that, Jack?

Wallace: Huh?

W.D.V.: I said how is he going to respond to that?

Wallace: Well, you're just saying that. I think they ought to pay taxes like any other groups. And institutionalized property that's used in commercial purposes in this country is a real problem.

J.B.: Are those institutions still excluded from property taxes in Alabama?

Wallace: I believe. . . I'm not quite sure. I checked on that but we don't have so much of it in Alabama. It's not all that big a problem in Alabama. But they ought not to be if they're used for commercial purposes. I checked on that one time and found out, I believe that-- I can't tell you, but it's not a big problem in Alabama because there's really not much institutionalized property for what I'm talking about in the state.

J.B.: How about, for example, church owned property that's used

for commercial purposes in Alabama?

Wallace: Well, I'm not sure about that, but commercial property. . . if there is any commercial property in Alabama that is tax exempt, it ought to be taxed.

J.B.: Well, you've been governor for almost 12 years. . . .

Wallace: But we haven't had enough of it in Alabama to make any serious inroads on. . . if you were to tax it all. . . . Cause I've had a little check made on that. There's just not enough in Alabama to amount to a drop in the bucket.

J.B.: Have you seen this book by Neil Pierce on the deep South states? It's come out this year?

Wallace: No.

J.B.: I wanted to get your reaction to a point he makes in that book. He contends that in Alabama that Judge Frank Johnson has had more impact on basic government as it applies to people here than you have because of his rulings on reapportionment, on property taxes, on mental health--

Wallace: I readily agree that the federal court system has had more impact on everything than the Congress, than the president, than all the governors. Not just governor of Alabama. When one federal judge can strike down in one line what an elected legislature of the people can do, and there's no recourse because they're automatically upheld by the circuit court of appeals and the Supreme Court, yes. You're absolutely right. It didn't have to be Frank Johnson. It could have been you. Whoever was a federal judge. And they talk about supreme, and the executive branch and the Congressional branch abregating and making the presidency stronger. . . . Why the strongest branch of the

government is the judiciary. They even legislate. They even come along and put. . . even draw up the plan themselves. They don't pass on the constitutionality of the plan, they go down there and draw it up and put it into law. And they legislate it. You're right. That's exactly what Thomas Jefferson said was going to happen someday. And that's what we oppose. And that's what I oppose. That's what people in the country oppose. Busing children all over Montgomery. Seven court orders. Seven straight years. Every time they issue a court order they obey it. Next year that's not good enough. Another court order. Hundreds of little children go to school this year this school, this school next one, next year go to school here. You're right. The federal courts have had more impact on the people's rights and prerogatives than has the legislature of the state and the governor of the state.

W.D.V.: Well would they have done it if the legislature had acted? On apportionment, for example.

Wallace: The legislature acted.

W.D.V.: On apportionment?

Wallace: Yes they did. But they wouldn't accept what they produced.

W.D.V.: How about on the mental health thing?

Wallace: The mental health thing is just another example of a state that's doing the best it can with its resources, with the people having been taxed to death at the federal level--

[End of side of tape.]

--And when my wife died, several legislatures in the country, including the one in California, passed a resolution noting the fact of her leadership in providing better mental care facilities in Alabama. And if you'll check the record, more new money. . . I've gotten up. . . . Even to the

point of crossing the school teachers of Alabama in 1971. Trying to take some of their funds. Where they had \$100 million surplus. I tried to use a few of their funds. Got in a big fight with them. But they have set standards nobody can beat. They want the number of psychiatrists that you can't find in ten states. Not even as many psychiatrists available in ten states as they want to have in one state.

J.B.: How about on the property tax?

Wallace: The property tax is low in Alabama.

J.B.: Isn't it, though, generally agreed in Alabama that there have been inequities in ~~[substance?]~~[assessments?]

Wallace: There's been some inequities in the sense that one county will maybe assess a \$10,000 home at \$50 instead of \$60 and another county will assess it at 35. But that inequity is not nearly as bad as the inequity of a state assessing that home for \$600 all over the state. I'd rather have a state that assessed a \$10,000 home \$50 in one county and \$35 in another, and \$40 in another and \$70 in another, than to have a state like many of them in the country including California and Wisconsin that assess it at \$500 in every county. And I'd rather have a \$20,000 home at \$75 in one county in Alabama and a hundred in another and \$110 in another and \$90 in another than to have one assessed \$1,000 in every county in every state like California. And double that in Massachusetts. It's become the most regressive tax in those states of the union where people cannot hardly own a home. And I used to tell them about our property tax in Wisconsin to big audiences and they'd just moan and groan at the idea. Because a policeman up there, with his salary. . . the home he lives in, they pay \$5- or \$600 a year on their little home and in Alabama it would be about \$40. So when you talk about inequities I'd rather have that inequity than that other inequity.

J.B.: Couldn't you cure those inequities through various means, such as homestead exemption?

Wallace: Well, we've cured them now but we just didn't have any big inequities. We didn't have any gripe on the property tax except the theoreticians who wanted to equalize. And when they talked about equalizing they said we could get all the money in the world for all these things by equalizing. That would be raising taxes. But if you get \$50 million extra out of equalizing taxes, you can call it not taxes but that's what it is. I for one, I've always felt that people's homes ought not to be taxed. They can't make a living out of a home. It's a place to live, not a place to yield enormous amounts of revenue for many give away programs and so forth. So I'm not ashamed of the fact that we've got low property taxes in Alabama. And our sales tax is so much lower than other states. Some have 7 cents. What's New York got now? 8 cents? Huh?

J.B.: I'm not sure. I think Alabama is among the highest in the southeast.

Wallace: Who?

J.B.: I think Alabama is among the highest.

Wallace: No it's not. It's not the highest in the southeast.

J.B.: No, it's not the highest. Mississippi I know is 5.

Wallace: It may be as high and it ain't higher and there's some higher.

J.B.: Including the local sales tax.

Wallace: You're talking about state tax. I can't account for what happens locally now. I have no authority over local. . . . I don't have any authority over the state tax unless the legislature accepts a veto.

I might could veto some. They could override the veto. But these other states you're talking about, they also got local taxes, too. And they are higher than Alabama's.

J.B.: Why do you consider the federal income tax to be regressive? Is it because the social security?

Wallace: No, I'm not against social security. I think the way it's been handled. . . . No, just the income tax itself is regressive. It's too high. It hits people in the middle income brackets too high.

W.D.V.: You mean the exemptions are too low?

Wallace: The exemptions are too low. I advocated \$1,200 exemption.

W.D.V.: What about the loop holes?

Wallace: Well, I advocated that the loop holes. . . . I'm talking about institutionalized property and foundations, such as who you're working for. Ford and Rockefeller's. You know, they make money every year. Give a little away to charity and then that gives them an exemption and they got their money invested in corporate. . . in stocks. And they're so strong, in my judgment, it helps manipulate the stock market and everything else. I believe Rockefeller-- Ford Foundation. What is it? \$7- \$8 billion. I just don't know that they should have tax shelters like that. And they passed that law after they passed the income tax amendment.

W.D.V.: Is it true that the governor's office in Alabama is one of the strongest in the country?

Wallace: Well I don't know--

W.D.V.: In terms of power.

Wallace: I don't know about that.

W.D.V.: Talking about appointment power, budget power, influence in the legislature.

Wallace: Well, budget power. I have the authority to make up the budget. But the legislature can change it and they usually do. Budget bill doesn't go through. . . . On appointments, I have begged the legislature for years to pass an act to take away these local appointments from the governor and place them in the hands of local government. But they don't want to do that. They want the governor to appoint the civil service board in Tuscaloosa county because they don't want to fool with it, because it gets to be a hot political issue. So you're looking at a governor that appoints about a 1,000 people in counties that I wish I didn't have to appoint. Board of equalization, jury commissions, board of registrars. It's the biggest headache for a governor that you ever saw. Where 20 people are wanting a little jury commission appointment and the county pays \$300 a year. And delegations coming down to see him about old man Jones, or this young fellow wants that little appointment. I don't relish that at all. But the legislators don't want to give it up. And one or two counties that passed local bills to put the appointing powers in the local governing body. And I've signed them so quick. The appointment of county commissioners. I would rather for the county commissioners to be appointed on a vacancy by the local commission until the next election. Like a city appoints a councilman when there's a vacancy until the next election.

W.D.V.: What else would you do if you could reform or reorganize this office the way you wanted to?

Wallace: That would be one way I'd like to reorganize it. Is to get those appointments away from the governor. I'd like to put my time on thinking about medical schools, the enhancement of the heart program and cancer program at the University of Alabama. An improved primary road system. To put my time on an increase in maybe night programs and

kindergarten programs. And night programs at junior colleges and technical schools for adults. I'd rather sit in my office and work, discuss that than discuss local appointments that ought to be made by the people back home locally. Because I don't know who you ought to appoint to a jury commission. I just have to take somebody's word for it. This is a good man. We recommend him. Okay, we'll appoint him.

W.D.V.: If you could reorganize the whole executive branch, what would you do? Would you consolidate it or how would you go about reorganizing the whole thing?

Wallace: When I reorganize it that's the main thing I would do, was to have more local, a local home rule amendment that would give these appointments back. . . that the governor makes at the local level, back at the local level.

W.D.V.: I'm not talking about the governor's office any more, but the whole executive branch. You got about 140 state agencies, boards and commissions. If you could reorganize that, what would you do?

Wallace: Well, they came about as a result of legislative enactment and I would like to consolidate some of them into, you know, one department. But therein. . . you run into the group. . . you have the realtors and the cosmotologists and the surveyors and everybody, you know, that wants their own commission. And I have to make appointments to those.

W.D.V.: Are you going to try to reorganize?

Wallace: I'm going to try. . . in the next session I'm going to try to do some reorganization, yes. I'm going to ask them to. But it's hard to get the local people to take it back, the responsibility of appointing these people. They'd rather for you to do it. You understand?

W.D.V.: Yeah.

Wallace: So instead of wanting the power, I don't want it. I want to give it up. I have legislators to come down and say "Why'd you appoint old man Smith to that job?" I said "I tell you what you do. You introduce a local bill today to take away the right of that appointment to me and give it to you and put in the bill that this man is out of office and put in who you want in office and I'll sign it." But he won't do that. Because he knew there were 25 people that wanted that place.

W.D.V.: Does any other governor have that kind of appointing power on the county level?

Wallace: I don't know. I hope they don't.

W.D.V.: I don't think so.

Wallace: So they can put their mind on other things.

J.B.: Why doesn't Alabama have a kindergarten program state wide?

Wallace: Have what?

J.B.: Kindergarten program.

Wallace: Well, we have some kindergarten programs but it's been, in the past, lack of money. But we're now beginning to generate, through the new industrial programs in Alabama. Added income that comes from all of that. We are beginning to. . . we started some in this administration and we're going to put in the budget more next administration.

J.B.: I wanted to ask you this question. Some people have said that you, having undergone an experience very, very few people go through, and have survived it and have overcome a great deal of adversity, that that has resulted in some change in your own outlook, particularly on racial matters.

Wallace: Well, I don't know where people. . . . I'm not a psychologist or psychiatrist and all of that. So it's hard for me to tell what's on your subconscious mind or my subconscious mind. My conscious mind. . . I never have been, prior to being shot, anti-anybody. In fact I was raised in the religious atmosphere. And even though I admit that when I was a youth the attitude toward certain people was paternalistic because they needed help. Lack of education and so forth. They needed help. Of course now we have the government trying to be paternalistic to everybody. I don't know which is better. But there never was any. . . . And I can understand how people today would reject the paternalism. It's not needed any more because of the advent of educational opportunities for people of all races and the economic upsurge in the South that's brought about opportunities for more than a few. But I wasn't raised that way. I was raised with black and white people living and playing together, close to one another. We had a different social order, no question about that. But it wasn't hypocritical. It was honest. That's the least you can say about us. It was honest. It wasn't dishonest, like it is in Washington today, where they all get up and spout off and then send their children over to an exclusive private school in Montgomery county, Maryland. That's where all the liberals live, in Montgomery county, Maryland. But they all Washington, you know. They're all bureaucrats. So they live in Washington, you know. And the blacks understand that, too. They've caught on to that. You've heard them say that. But. . . when the free text book program went through. . . . I pushed for that and there was opposition to that. One of the newspapermen in the country, I forgot. . . sat right where you are. "That'll help the blacks." I said "Well, that's the

purpose of it." Drop out among them is high, lack of school books. And we're going to provide a free school book program. I do know that when you get shot and face death and almost die that you do understand the frailty of human life. And it makes you more compassionate toward those who suffer. And you understand now, today, better than I did before what a fellow goes through when he's short of money and he's a paraplegic or quadriplegic or when he's a tubercular. When he's crippled and when he can't get a job. So I've started some programs. I started a program quietly in 1973 in the legislature for teams to go out and teach people how to look after folks in my shape. You know, because they've been sort of neglected because there's so few of them, comparatively speaking. But black ministers prayed for me in Alabama just like white ministers prayed for me. And they were upset, too, about my being shot. And I appreciate that very much because I probably got as many prayers from black churches as white churches. And I won't say that that changed my attitude, because my attitude never was anti. Because that's contrary to my religious upbringing. But I suppose that I can better sympathize with the plight of anybody that happens to be unfortunate better than I used to. I used to see a man in a wheel chair. I knew he suffered, but I didn't know. . . I just knew it abstractly, you know. In my mind. But I didn't feel it.

J.B.: Collectively, do you think blacks have suffered more in Alabama and any place elsewhere in the South?

Wallace: Than any place elsewhere in the South?

J.B.: No, in Alabama and elsewhere in the South. Do you think blacks have suffered more?

Wallace: I think the mass of people in the South all suffered because

of the restrictions and everything placed upon our economy after the war between the states. And it was white and black who were poor and it was southern politicians who led the fight to remove the restrictions that opened up the gateway to industry that provided the jobs for the employment, as opposed by some of the politicians in other regions. Not the people in other regions. Because it turns out when one region is weak it weakens the other regions. And when all regions are economically stable and strong then all regions are better off. But yes, the black people, naturally, all over the country have had a tougher time economically in the whole nation. Everybody knows that. But that is one of the things that we're trying to do at all levels of government. Maybe we disagreed with some of the legislation in Washington about how they went about it, but we all wanted to see the plight of the black man bettered in this state. And I think. . . you talk to black folks in Alabama. You've been other places. They feel like that we are trying to do that in Alabama.

W.D.V.: Do you believe that more blacks will be appointed to positions in state government in the future?

Wallace: Yes. In fact I appointed 138 during the last four years. 78 myself and 75 by boards that I appointed that then appointed blacks. Yet they filed a suit that I'd appointed three blacks. I got the list of them. There's two or three Indians in that, but there's 135 or 138. I'd appointed 35-40 to draft boards. I'd appointed them to the youth services board. Appointed them to embalming board. Appointed them to the top boards in Alabama. Been doing that for years. Just appointed one to the educational television commission. What, a five man or a seven man board, the other day.

Voice in background: Five.

Wallace: Five man board. One of the important boards in the state, Yes, more blacks will be appointed. More blacks want to be appointed now. We usually made appointments from people that applied for appointments. Lot of these boards are free gratis and take up your time and really cost you to serve. And actually sometimes you really had to appoint people who wanted to serve. If you just go out and appoint somebody they never show up at a meeting, because it cost them money to come to meetings that don't pay them anything. Most of them. Maybe some of them pay \$10 a day on the days you meet and you meet once every month or once every two months. But there are now more blacks who want to serve. As a consequence there will be more blacks appointed and there should be.

J.B.: Who would you depend on for suggestions and recommendations for blacks to be appointed?

Wallace: Well, I'd depend on. . . my own experience, as one source for appointments. Of people I have met and know in the black community. Then I would depend upon the recommendations of legislative delegations that included blacks. And then I would depend upon folks that you mentioned, like the mayors of towns who supported me. You know, mayor Cooper and mayor Ford were not the only two mayors, for instance, that endorsed me. The mayor of Hobson City endorsed me. The mayor of Brighton. The mayor of--what's the other municipality in Birmingham? Is it Midfield or Lipson? Anyway, is two there go black mayors. They signed a petition. Every mayor in Jefferson county signed a petition supporting me for governor except for the mayor of Birmingham. And he's a Republican so he just didn't get involved in the Democratic primary. And included there was two black mayors.

W.D.V.: Can I ask you something about the Democratic party?

You're the titular head of the party.

Wallace: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Yet the thing that we find curious is so much attention is focused on the race for party chairman. Yet the party chairman really doesn't amount to a hell of a lot from what we can see. But a lot of time and energy--

Wallace: I never have paid much attention to it.

W.D.V.: Yeah, but this so called defeat of yours is considered very significant. What do you say?

Wallace: Oh, it wasn't very significant. You see, any time that I made an effort in Alabama to elect a slate. . . . And when I say. . . it don't mean that you are handling the people. The people that wanted to go along with me in the national matters. The mass of them have. When I ran a delegate slate in 1972 in which we printed little cards and distributed them and ran ads and said these are Wallace delegates and will vote for him in Miami every one of them won. In some places, where there were ten running, the man who was going pledged to me won a majority over nine other candidates. That's a matter of record. In the elector elections of '64 and '68, when we got involved in the race and put out our slate and said this is the ticket that's going to support governor Wallace every one of them won overwhelmingly. Five and six and seven to one. We didn't get involved in the race for executive committee because it came the same time the governor's race did. But had it come at an off year and we decided we wanted to do that, at this stage of the game, in my judgment, the people would have elected folks that would have been my political friends and supported me. But I'm getting along fine with the chairman of the committee in Alabama at this time and

expect to continue to do so. But there were many people on the committee that were so much opposed to him that are always supported me that they put up a candidate, wanted to put up a candidate. They'd always been my friends and I did the best I could to help them a little bit. But we had not run an extensive campaign, though in some quarters they had. And where they did they elected him. That's no defeat. I carried sixty---. You can't say a man is defeated when a few people meet and vote one way. But you go out among the people. . . . That's just like in Arkansas I didn't get a delegate to the Democratic convention in '72 but I carried the state two years, four years before that on a third party. I got three or four in Georgia and carried the state overwhelmingly. Carried Mississippi overwhelmingly and didn't get a vote. In the final analysis I lose sometimes on those kind of places where politicians involved but I don't lose when I get with the people.

W.D.V.: On that point, do you find a change in attitudes by politicians towards you outside of the South? Say, to '68?

Wallace: Yes, there's a change as far as not being ashamed to be associated with me. Now whether deep down in their hearts. . . they tolerate you because they have to, that's something I think you know--

W.D.V.: What do you think?

Wallace: Oh, I think that a lot of politicians tolerate me.

W.D.V.: You don't think there's really been a basic change toward you?

Wallace: I think that some will support me out of genuine conviction, some. And some won't. I mean some would because it might not be good politically not to. But I would say a lot of politicians. . . and I'm not saying all of them. . . . would like to see me, you know, just go

away quietly.

W.D.V.: But you're not going away.

Wallace: No, not until the people that I represent go away. I may go away but the constituency that I represent's going to still be here.

W.D.V.: Assuming that you stay in Alabama, do you intend to stay involved in Alabama politics? For five or ten years?

Wallace: I don't know. After this four years as governor. Of course I don't know what happens in '76. But I don't know that I will be involved. I don't have any plans. I couldn't run for governor again until--

W.D.V.: I was thinking of Senator.

Wallace: I really don't have any intentions to run for the Senate.

W.D.V.: But politics has been your life, though, hasn't it?

Wallace: Well. . . but I've been in it a pretty good long time.

W.D.V.: Yeah, but you love it, don't you?

Wallace: I love to be in a position. . . that you can sponsor a program like I'm going to sponsor next time for quadraplegics in Alabama. You don't ever see any of those laying up on their backs because they're just not around you. But I've been in these centers and nobody knows how people suffer who can't move anything but their head. Spiritually. . . I mean mentally and physically. Well. . . I'm in a position. . . . I'm going to do something about that. Like they do in California. I'm going to help them, so their lives will be a little bit more. . . . I like to be in a position to have provided the junior college program that gave every low income family in Alabama an opportunity for their children to go to school. And that's one reason I like it. Because you are able to do things that help people.

W.D.V.: But you have to be in public office to do that.

Wallace: Yes, but. . . I can't live always.

W.D.V.: What I'm trying to get at is what is Alabama going to be like without George Wallace?

Wallace: What?

W.D.V.: What is Alabama going to be like? Its politics?

Wallace: Oh, Alabama will. . . . Nobody's expendible and Alabama will continue to go when George Wallace is gone. Because it's not George Wallace, it's the people of this state, and their spirit and their work ethic and their pride. It's not George Wallace. I've helped to channel it and I have helped to mobilize it. But others can, will do that in my judgment.

W.D.V.: Well, the reason I asked you that is most people when you ask them that question what it would be like without you, they don't have an answer.

Wallace: Well, it will go right on because the spirit will still be there and the people will still be there. But I did help, in the years of uncertainly about their national image. . . I did take advantage of this position and forum to tell people all over this country that they're as good as anybody. They knew it. And when Nixon came to Alabama not long ago and said Alabama's the conscience of America. . . I knew that all the time, but I like to hear the president say it now. When Sen Kennedy comes to Alabama and says this is a great state. They used not to say that about Alabama.

W.D.V.: How does that make you feel?

Wallace: That makes me feel good because I saw the people in the days when I was old enough to see the suffering of the masses of people in our part of the country through no fault of their own. And I saw them ragged and I saw them proud and I saw them trying to do better and I saw

them in church and I saw them never give up. And now I see them beginning to come into their own and have their day and it does me a lot of good. In the campaigns I waged had a lot to do with it. Got me initiate that I really wouldn't swap back I don't think if I had a chance to do so.

W.D.V.: No regrets?

Wallace: Oh, I regret I got shot.

W.D.V.: I mean about your political career.

Wallace: Oh yes. . . when I say regrets. . . I don't have any regrets. I have made mistakes. I haven't been perfect and there would be things I would do differently. I don't know that I could categorize them all now. I've been a human and I've made errors and I've made mistakes. If hindsight. . . if foresight was as good as hindsight, I would have made a better governor.

J.B.: What would be just one or two or those mistakes, just as examples.

Wallace: Oh, maybe not carrying the press around with me in '68 in the presidential campaign. [Laughter.] Maybe not letting them go on the airplane with me. That might have been one mistake I made.

W.D.V.: Okay, what's your response to that one? [To Bass.]

J.B.: How about another one?

W.D.V.: One that doesn't hit him so close.

Wallace: Well, I reckon one thing I regret when I go out of public life is that I won't have the press to kick around any more. [Laughter.]

W.D.V.: That's just the other side of what you said before.

J.B.: That sounds like an announcement that you're running in '76.

Wallace: The press [has been] bitter at me at times, but I never was bitter. I always talked about them some, but they always got

in the last word.

J.B.: Now governor, you know you have a reputation in the press for being the best man in the United States in a press conference. Of being the best politician in the United States at a press conference.

Wallace: At a press conference.

J.B.: That's right. You probably have that reputation and I think you probably know it. [Laughter.]

Wallace: Well, I don't know that I--

J.B.: And most of the press goes around kicking themselves because George Wallace is able to manipulate them too easily.

Wallace: Well, you all made my day bright. [Laughter.]

J.B.: Governor, could you tell us . . . there's a story somebody told us we should ask you about. . . . Somebody friendly to you said we should ask you about Gov Asquew's seeking some advice or help or address from some second cousin of yours in Florida during his campaign.

Wallace: His campaign had my first cousin on television, speaking for him. You know, he was the chairman of my third party movement in 1968.

J.B.: This was in the 1970 campaign for governor?

Wallace: Uhhuh.

J.B.: Who was that?

Wallace: Dr J. Wallace Purvis, Ft Walton Beach, Florida. And they had a lot of other of my supporters on ads, too, in Florida.

J.B.: You made some statements about staying in the Democratic party. . . . You plan to stay in the Democratic party. . . unless certain things happen or if certain things don't happen.

Wallace: Well, of course, I plan to stay in the party, and I'm

not making any plans to get out of it. Because I just believe the party . . . .  
Certainly, if it's not smart enough to have learned a lesson in '72, then  
it's not going to be any party to be in or out. They couldn't win with  
the new left against anybody.

J.B.: Suppose they have someone who's not of the new left as a  
presidential candidate and he has a running mate from the South who is  
not from Alabama. Would you support the ticket actively?

Wallace: Well, you talking about the new left. You talking about  
a new left candidate and platform like they had in '72?

J.B.: No, I'm talking about a different type candidate.

Wallace: But still with a new left platform. Well, you're asking  
highly, very highly hypothetical questions and very speculative questions.  
I don't believe that will be the case. Now I don't believe that the  
people will go for. . . . Had I been on the ticket with George McGovern,  
I don't know that the people who supported me would have gone with that  
ticket because I was on there with the platform they had. Alabama or  
anyplace else. People just don't follow you blindly, you know. They've  
got intelligence. And I think if you deserted and left what you'd ad-  
vocated. . . I don't think they would have had any respect for you.  
And as far as nominating a fellow from a region. . . . Regionalism is  
gone in this country. Sectionalism is gone. And a man in Alabama would  
vote for a good middle of the road candidate from Michigan quicker than  
he would a new left candidate from Georgia. And the people in Alabama  
would vote for a good middle of the road candidate in Pennsylvania in-  
stead of a new left candidate from Mississippi. Just being a southerner--  
you put a southerner on the ticket that means we're all going to vote. . . .  
Why, there are many southerners that southerners won't vote for. There  
are many Alabamians that Alabamians wouldn't vote for for the presidency

or vice presidency. I went to North Carolina and ran against their former governor up there. President of Duke. Well, they didn't say "Oh, he's from North Carolina. We're going to vote for him." They voted for me, didn't they?

J.B.: Do you expect the same thing to be true if that were repeated in 1976? In a North Carolina primary.

Wallace: I would expect, if I entered a North Carolina primary in '76 I would, in my mind, know that I could win it. Or I wouldn't enter it.

J.B.: How significant, in your opinion, is this mid term convention going to be?

Wallace: I don't know. I don't know whether it's a good idea to have one. I don't know whether it's a mistake or not. Can turn out to be a mistake.

W.D.V.: You say there aren't any sections any more. Are there any differences between politics in the South as compared to politics in the East or the West or the North. You don't see any differences?

Wallace: Oh there may be differences of technique and approach but--

W.D.V.: Such as. . . . What kind of differences?

Wallace: Well, I don't know about the way they campaign. Television, rallies, things of that sort. But the average man in Michigan thinks like the average man in Alabama does.

W.D.V.: You think that's a basic change in national politics?

Wallace: The basic change in national politics is that there is not a big difference, ever. But politicians in some states both vied for the noisemakers and the people wound up having to choose between one of them. But I went to Michigan and gave them a clear choice. And Maryland got a

clear choice. They voted for me. Over seven, eight others, if it had been just a two man race why, naturally, I'd of picked up a certain percentage of the other votes and naturally I'd of been even a bigger winner. Although that's a big win when you run against that many. But nobody. . . . Just like in '68. If was me who drew all the big crowds in Miami and the big crowds in Flint, Michigan. That's when the other candidates begin to talk. Say the same things I begin to say.

W.D.V.: So you think your campaign in '72 proved that those differences no longer existed between North and South, between the people--

Wallace: On the basis issues that confront the American people, the issue of big government, matter of taxes, the matter of welfare myths, matter of foreign policy and foreign aid to countries that's helped bring about all this inflation we got. It's all the same.

W.D.V.: On those issues there are no basic differences between the North and South?

Wallace: No.

J.B.: How about on the issue of school desegregation, in particular, use of busing as a means of desegregation?

Wallace: I don't think it's fair to the children.

W.D.V.: Do you see any regional differences there?

Wallace: No. I found out they're just as, probably more strongly opposed to it in some other regions than even here.

J.B.: Do you think the days of segregation are gone forever?

Wallace: Well, we never had segregation in the sense that we had separation ever. We had segregation in the school system but we didn't have it in working conditions. We didn't have it in where we lived. Always did live close together but they did have. . . . Yes, there will be

no more segregated schools in the sense of compulsory segregation. There may be segregation by choice in some places. That is, some blacks may want to go to schools that are for blacks and some whites vice versa and all of that. But no, no more legal. . . .

J.B.: Well, you had segregation also in public facilities, public accommodations.

Wallace: No, there won't be any segregation .

J.B.: Didn't Alabama, like most other southern states, have segregation in jobs, by law, in some categories? No?

Wallace: I never knew of a job. . . in my life. Any such law as that I never did know about it. It wasn't adhered to.

W.D.V.: Are you basically optimistic about the future of Alabama?

Wallace: Oh yes.

W.D.V.: How about the nation?

Wallace: Well, of course, Alabama's going to. . . . The inflationary spiral and the energy crisis and all of that's going to effect every state. But if those matters are solved, then I think Alabama has a great future. Course if they're not solved then all the country's in trouble. One section's not going to. . . . Although we're not going to be hit as hard as some sections because we have so much coal and we have an adequate supply of electric power at the present time.

J.B.: Governor, you're is the only office we've been in of any governor in nine states we've been in that there was no black in a staff position. Do you expect that to change in your next administration?

Wallace: Well, there's not any in my immediate office but there are blacks all around.

J.B.: That's what I mean. In your immediate office. Every other

southern governor whose office we've been in has had at least one black in staff position.

Wallace: Well, we'll have some blacks in the next administration but we didn't have anybody to apply. . . blacks before. I don't know but I wouldn't have hired a black before. But we've hired them in. . . . The ADO [?] office is under the governor's office and we've got blacks in that office. It's under me. And I've got blacks over there in good positions. But they just don't. . . they're not right. . . . they're not right here in this next office. But they're in my office. But my office is just not here. It's the whole executive branch of the government. And there are blacks.

J.B.: Would you anticipate having a black in a position to deal with problems facing blacks in minority affairs?

Wallace: Yes, I intend to do that.

J.B.: What effect has Watergate had on the Republican party in Alabama?

Wallace: On public employees?

J.B.: On the Republican party.

Wallace: I don't know that it's had all that much impact on the Republican party in Alabama 'cause we haven't had a strong Republican party and most of the Congressional delegation is a delegation that's all known by its constituency and they'll stand or fall on their own merits. And I don't know that Watergate will effect them very seriously. Do you believe so?

W.D.V.: Do you see the Republican party growing at all in this state? It's one of the smallest parties. . . . You don't see it growing?

Wallace: No, I don't see it growing. . . .

W.D.V.: Why not? What's holding it back?

Wallace: Well, they've just been satisfied with the . . . People with all shades of opinion can participate in the Democratic primaries. Everybody can participate in the Democratic primary. Even if you're a Republican, you know, you vote in the Democratic primary. So when you've had run for office you've had conservatives, you've had liberals, you've had middle of the roaders. And it's not a matter of not getting a choice. You just get a choice in the Democratic primary.

J.B.: How do you assess the role of organized labor in Alabama, politically?

Wallace: Organized labor in Alabama, you know, is of course a strong movement. Organized labor is pretty independent as far as its membership is concerned. They don't necessarily always follow the recommendations of . . . Just like they didn't follow in Michigan, when I was running up there. You know, I ran up there. They endorsed me this time, but I was endorsed by many local unions in '70 and the buildings and trades in '70. But the AFL-CIO endorsed me this time. But I carried the rank and file of organized labor in 1970. But organized labor is strong in numbers in Alabama because it's a pretty big labor state.

J.B.: How do you assess the effectiveness of Bernie Weeks?

Wallace: Well, all people . . . Anybody who is president of an organization of that sort's effective. There's always degree of effectiveness, but he's effective, yes. I'd rather have him for me than against me and he was for me this time and I appreciated his support.

W.D.V.: How do you evaluate the newspapers in this state in terms of the way they cover state government, you?

Wallace: Newspapers are better than they used to be as far as covering

me. In fact this last time I got newspaper endorsements I hadn't gotten in a long time. Birmingham News, Tuskaloosa News has never endorsed me. I don't believe. It might have in '58 against Patterson. Decatur Date had always fought me. They fought my political. . . locally and made fun of my presidential aspirations. This time they endorsed me for president, vice president or president. Same editors, same staff. Birmingham News endorsed me.

W.D.V.: Is it a very strong press?

Wallace: I don't know how to evaluate the press. I've always won when most of the press was against me and I've won when a lot of them were with me. But they can be. . . they are effective to a certain extent. I don't think they are. . . . I don't think that they can. . . . In a close election they'd probably have more influence than they would in one that wasn't close. I don't think they can just, by their endorsements, elect somebody. Because they endorsed a number of people that lost and they endorsed some that win. But they're not ineffective.

W.D.V.: Is their reporting on state government getting better? I'm not talking about the editorials now but--

Wallace: I believe so. Don't you? [He is addressing a fourth party, who responds. Evan somebody.]

Evan: Generally it is.

Wallace: In some instances not.

Evan: And there again you have to judge each newspaper on its own.

Wallace: Yeah. Like I know one man that's always opposed me that's a writer. And his great love was the mental health program. And yet it acknowledged by everybody in Alabama and all the mental health organizations that my wife and my administration did more for mental and are doing

more than any other administration, all of them combined. Yet this fellow still. . . . He still. . . . That's his great love, but he just still against me.

J.B.: Would you identify him?

Wallace: No. I'd rather not identify him because he talks than he used to and he has his right to be like he wants to be. He doesn't have to be for me if he doesn't want to.

W.D.V.: When you think back through time in Alabama, who are the best governors this state ever had in terms of accomplishments?

Wallace: Oh, George Wallace.

W.D.V.: Well, going beyond the. . . .

Wallace: Laurleen Wallace.

[Laughter.]

[End of side of tape. Interview continues on second tape.]

J.B.: How do you assess Lyndon Johnson as a president? He's the last southern to be elected president.

Wallace: Of course, Lyndon, you know, called himself a westerner.

J.B.: Well, depended upon his context, I think.

Wallace: And it's hard to characterize anybody, but Lyndon was a very able man. And of course he had a lovely family. His wife is one of the finest you ever met. And of course I was very much opposed to some of the things that he did. In fact some of the attitudes in some of the speeches I made were copies of his out of the Congressional record on some of the legislation. But Lyndon Johnson wanted to serve this country well and he wanted to do the right thing. I believe he was sincere in his attitude about helping all people. I think the war worried him to death. Because I've been in the White House when he was extremely

shaken about the matter because it was a situation that no one hardly knew what to do about. And he was very concerned about it. I think it hastened his death.

J.B.: Well he had the Civil Rights Act in '64 and the Voting Rights Act in '65 in his term as president, both of which have had a tremendous impact in the whole south. Alabama as well as the rest of the South. Now, almost ten years after that legislation was passed, do you think it's been good for the region or bad?

Wallace: Well, I think that in the period of time that you're talking about. . . . In the first place, blacks were voting even before then but we did have, you know, statutes that required literacy tests and so forth. I sort of objected to some of the legislation aimed at only a few states. Thought it ought to have been aimed at all the states. But I think that a lot of these gains that you call gains for blacks such as voting, public accommodation, all that, would have come about anyway. Maybe at the state level. It would have taken longer. So I think they're on the books to stay and I don't think anybody's going to try to repeal them and I think that it's really good that we've gotten all that behind us. And that we now need to look forward toward trying to make our states and the country a better place to live for everybody.

J.B.: Do you think the South has passed the North in terms of race relations? Many politicians in the South that we've talked to say that.

Wallace: Well, I read where they say that a lot of times. But there never has been. . . . The black and white people have lived together so long here that they were sort of new in other parts of the country and sometimes it takes you longer to make an adjustment when you're not used to. . . . You know, because blacks have been with us always. And in some

instances we probably have made some more progress. But I hope that as far as race relations in the sense of no more confrontations in places-- which we didn't have in Alabama between races. We had confrontations in the courts and things of that sort--never happen again and that. . . . Our country needs to be unified. It needs to be strong because we got some enemies on the outside. This country's got to be strong militarily in order to guarantee generations of peace for white and black. I think we got to all have a stake in the country being unified and a stake in all people being able to prosper and improve their status, economically.

J.B.: There were some confrontations in Alabama. Birmingham, Selma.

Wallace: No confrontation between white and black. There were some police officers and demonstrators. But I'm talking about a group of whites over here and a group of blacks over here. Having to keep them apart. That didn't happen in Alabama.

[End of interview.]