

[4007: A-113]

Interview with Clarke Reed, Chairman, Mississippi Republican party,
April 2, 1974, Greenville, Mississippi, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter
de Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen. [Chairman of ^{Conference} Congress of Southern
Republican Chairmen?]

Jack Bass: How did you get active in the Republican party?

Reed: I was born Democrat. Family Democrat. I was not active in
civic clubs, that sort of thing. Went to church. That's about all. Out-
side of making a buck.

The state of the nation didn't look
very good to me. I was [receptive?] maybe to some activity. I voted
Republican. My first vote was for Eisenhower in 1952. But I thought the
real good guys were the southern Democrats. But then people come to me,
my predecessor _____, he'd say you need to get active. I'd
say "Well, I'm not a community leader. Let's go and see a friend of Bank."
And all these leaders. These guys running Red Cross drive and all. And
I began to see maybe they were fakes. A little strong word, maybe. You
know, I'd say this needs to be done. But I could see by and large that type
of ^{political} leaders were pretty much followers. They go where the wind
goes. At least on political and philosophical issues as a rule. And so
I'd wind up taking on ^{Republican} chairman, county chairman, that sort of
thing. And just devolved more into it.

J.B.: What period was this?

Reed: I did a little bit, very little bit, in the first Nixon cam-
paign in '60. County chairman not long after that and got pretty active
I'd say '63 in the governor's race and appreciably more so when became
state finance chairman in '65 and then state chairman in '66.

J.B.: ^{You had} been chairman for how long?

Reed: I think ten years. A long time.

J.B.: So you and he are really the only two chairmen of the Republican party has had in Mississippi in the modern era? What was the Republican party in those days, early '60s?

Reed: Well, by the time I got up here it had devolved into something. [Earlier chairman's name] started. He went through the competition. . . . Wasn't until '56 that you had the party recognized [?]. Part of that time Perry Howard, black lawyer in Washington, voted the delegation. Then they seated. . . the '56 convention as I recall, understand it--before my time--both units, you know, with the understanding that the evolving group in the state, the viable party to be, would be recognized de facto and then be fully credited at the next convention.

Walter de Vries: What major changes occurred in that time until this time in the party?

Reed: Well, you make all the mistakes you can make. Like, you know, in '64. The thinking. . . I wasn't part of it, but I don't feel I'd have any different position. . . was that it was all [something about having to prove to people that there is a party, in other words, that there is a difference.] That the Republican candidate is the conservative party. [Something about being part of the Goldwater movement]--if you want to call it that. The effective control of the party by the conservatives, which I think is now in question. So. . . they had the absurd notion we don't want to run anybody on the ticket and we want to be sure to carry the state for Goldwater. One Congressman ran and was elected. With the type vote we had we could have elected five. But. . . at the time I remember Reston was writing about filing deadline time that Rockefeller had a chance, about as much chance of losing the nomination as he did of going broke. That was the smart thing in the United States, see.

It was obvious that *Goldwater* had the convention sewn up before the delegates left their front porch. It was evident. So, people didn't run, not knowing, well, how things were going. [So we'd of done good, contrary. . .] Alabama did. And they did very well on the strength of it. That was one thing we did wrong. Then *there was the* governor's race. Then, of course, going through the race and problems and all.

J.B.: That was what year and who was the candidate?

Reed: '63. Rubel Phillips. I worked for him. I opposed his candidacy on the basis of his. . . I didn't feel his philosophy was. . . . I opposed it in the very small group that made the decision. [Really, I was kind of annoyed at them.] I thought this guy was a Democrat and the last one in the field at the time. . . .
But he did well and he was a good candidate.

J.B.: Wasn't he sort of a former Truman Democrat?

Reed: Yeah, and Rockefeller Republican or whatever. You know, I don't think. . . . At the time I thought it would be a mistake. However, he did a good job.

J.B.: Didn't he get about 38-39% of the vote?

Reed: Right. Close to 40.

W.D.V.: He got the same percentage that Gil Carmichael got. The state hasn't voted for a Democratic nominee for president since the '50s. Had enormous pluralities for Goldwater, for Nixon.

Reed: Right.

W.D.V.: Yet it's apparent. . . you look at Phillips' race in '63. 38% of the vote. Carmichael the same thing. There's really no growth in the Republican vote state-wide. At least it doesn't appear that way for state-wide office. To what do you attribute that? Didn't you think back in '64 with that victory that it was the beginning of kind of a new era for

Republicans?

Reed: We did. The leadership at the time *did*. I wasn't that active at that level. Came on the central committee in '64 at that convention. Anyway. . . 87%. . . by the way, the vote like it was, it was no campaign run in the state. So in effect this was a very bad thing. Like inheriting free money or something. We looked like. . . we were a paper tiger. That vote was just there. They did nothing. We optioned. . . spent no money in the state, ran no campaign

. You know, because it wasn't necessary. So we looked like we'd done something and we hadn't done anything. The next year nothing happened. We had no fund raising, no activities, no anything.

W.D.V.: So '64 was strictly a personality contest.

Reed: All the way.

W.D.V.: Nothing really happened

Reed: That's right. See, first off, our state-wide races are not in the same year, for one thing. So it really. . . if anything, it hurt us.

W.D.V.: [Something about Prentice Walker's] and he won it.

Reed: That's right. He won. So there was nothing else going on. . .

W.D.V.: So you think you made a mistake by not fielding. . .

Reed: Absolutely, absolutely. I mean I think names on the ballot would have probably won that race, with that type of vote and that type of ~~people~~ feeling. So that was bad. We made. . . . You know, this last go around, we went through the motions in the presidential campaign, which we didn't even do in '64. Although it was almost as certain this time. Or it was as certain but the percentage was almost as high. But we wanted to try to get some *advantage* out of it, some advantage, a little of the action. But in '64 we just stood. . . . I remember seeing it written up in some national magazine. How the organization in Mississippi. . . wasn't

so. Wasn't there. In the second governor's race, which was a loser, Phillips did not want to run. We urged him to run. Very bad situation. John Bell had just been kicked out. John Bell Williams. Of his chairmanship of the state commerce commission. Because of having supported Goldwater. So that made him a hero to all Mississippians. He was conservative, Goldwater supporter and all. So, we didn't have much. . . . Still, he got about 30, I guess.

W.D.V.: Do the people in this state see national politics completely different than state politics?

Reed: Yeah. That's the problem. That's the ~~goal~~ *goal*.

W.D.V.: Well, does it also *mean* they don't see the parties as two distinctive units but rather as a personality thing.

Reed: Well, it's always been. . . politics has always been personality. One party system. You have personality *politics*. I mean they can serve up the Bilbos, the Barnetts. They ~~come~~ *come* in. . . a governor comes in, an unknown, and you leave highly unpopular. Anyway, that's what we're going against, you might say. So we're to the point. . . I don't take a poll of party identification. . . In the beginning it would probably have been 90% Democrat and 8% independent and 2 or 3 Republican.

W.D.V.: -- Republican party in Mississippi see itself as basically kind of a philosophical thing. Ideological rather than--

Reed: Right, right.

W.D.V.:--haven't been able to do anything with it.

Reed: Right. Once you've done that, you're here. You're the dominant party. I accept this philosophically. Changes in a ~~republic~~ *republic* or especially changes ~~under your old system~~ *under your old system* will come slow. If they ~~do~~ *do* don't ~~come~~ *come* slow, they'll be volatile, like a banana republic. I accept this difficult problem with party identification, especially also in an era

where parties and politics per se was down. Every Mississippian thinks he's independent, votes for the man, doesn't care much what party he's in. But there's an increasing number of people that will identify with the Republican party. The polls show it. It looms higher in presidential elections or maybe in a strong election where we've got something going or in certain pockets of the state. This county, Jones County, the coast, and areas where. . . . That is the goal and the opposition is the personality politics. We're trying to sell the two party system concept. The idea of philosophically different parties to people.

W.D.V.: Has it been tough to sell?

Reed: Well, no tougher than I anticipated. Although sometimes I get more optimistic--say after the Goldwater race. But I mean in hindsight that was foolish optimism. And going ~~(to/through?)~~ the race thing, that was the overwhelming, overshadowing issue of all. It's hard to perpetuate reasons through that climate. Now that's no longer there and I think some reason. . . our salesmanship should be more effective.

W.D.V.: But do you see the state continuing to vote Republican at the presidential level and Democratic at the state level?

Reed: Definitely Republican at the presidential level. And we hope--more than that, I believe--we'll make increasing gains in the state.

J.B.: In 1968, of course, the state voted overwhelmingly for George Wallace. I think Nixon ran even behind Humphrey. Third.

Reed: Got the lowest vote in the nation, yeah.

J.B.: Does that suggest Mississippians tend to vote for the more racially conservative candidate?

Reed: Well, at the time of that race the race issue still was red hot, probably hotter than it had been even before. Nixon was an unknown. He was

the fellow that was vice president way back and had been a defeated candidate for governor. He was an unknown quantity. Our polls showed, prior to the '68 election--[something about running Muskie before McGovern?]-Muskie ran 20 with Wallace and Nixon up around 30 with Nixon ahead. I believe he would have carried the state in a three way race last time. I think the Wallace vote was independent, as a way station into the Republican party, at least in the national picture.

J.B.: What do you think will happen in '76 if Wallace actively campaigns for the national Democratic ticket, regardless of who is on it?

Reed: I think *Republicans* would carry, without any work. I think we'll carry easily, let me put it that way.

J.B.: You think the Republicans will carry.

Reed: Yes. Any particular nominee I foresee coming out of the party or any nominee I foresee coming out of the Democratic party.

W.D.V.: Do you intend to field more candidates in '75 for the legislation and state-wide office?

Reed: The plan. . . leadership. . . is always to field more. You know, to get them. ~~We've found two~~ We haven't been as selective as we might be. We've had some good ones and we've had some bad ones. We've had some very good ones be beaten. We've a long way from the point where being a Republican is. . . I just hope we arrive at the point where it's equal. [I think in some areas its a help on the local level.]

W.D.V.: Is that attitude changing, about Republicans. Somebody told us that ten years ago if you were a Republican--I forget what the term was--but that was about as low as you could get in terms of social status and prestige.

Reed: Yeah, well, you have to go back a little farther than that. But that's right. [Unclear.] There were so few they were oddities. But

that part's right. But the beginning in the South of the Republican movement might have been--if it was anything, it was just the opposite. It was [very peculiar] being a country club crowd. It was the young guys. *Someone* wrote a book I thought covered it pretty well in one chapter about how it was kind of the thing to do. It was kind of a kick, you know, to get active in Republican politics. Because they'd never been involved in politics prior to that. Most of those people were young idealists or young businessmen. Across deep South, particularly Mississippi and Alabama.

W.D.V.: Is it getting easier to recruit candidates?

Reed: Oh yeah.

J.B.: How many candidates did the Republicans field for mayor last year?

Reed: Gosh, I've got the exact figures down. We kept good records *It was a* pretty *good* campaign. And we elected half of them. I think if we'd run twice as many we'd have elected half of those, too.

J.B.: I'd like to check with you later and get those precise figures. Gil said around 100 and elected half.

Reed: I think we had in the range of 200 total municipal officials, and elected about half.

J.B.: Do you plan to challenge almost every legislative seat in '75?

Reed: [Something about hindsight and thinking that they should have not worked so hard on the governor's race in '67 and concentrated on the state legislature.] But we had some good people get wiped out in the last race. So in hindsight, we might have been better off starting at the bottom, so to speak.

J.B.: How many legislators?

Reed: Four.

J.B.: How many legislators were there at the peak? Republican.

Reed: I've forgotten. Maybe like 7 or 8.

W.D.V.: To what do you attribute that? Four out of 162 or something. And yet you can get 38% of the vote for a candidate for governor or for a candidate for the United States Senate.

Reed:

A candidate for the state legislature

~~desire to serve~~

and says
He looks at it, why should I take the hard road when everybody else running *as a* Democrat, ~~Republican ticket~~.

So you have to have a *@* zealot or whatnot to make that move. Or in an area where we've grown in strength, like say Jones county, maybe it's an advantage to *run as a Republican*.

W.D.V.: Did reapportionment help you at all?

Reed: Yeah.

W.D.V.: How?

Reed: Well, it gave some bigger counties *incentive* ~~better off~~. You know, where you can concentrate your work, more strength.

W.D.V.: If the court rules and it sets up single member districts in Hines county and other places, will that help you?

Reed: Sure. Because, see, take Hines county. Very expensive. You can concentrate in target areas instead of running. . . . rural state, that's a big job running a state-wide, Hines county wide.

[Question and answer unclear.]

J.B.: I think you told me that roughly 80% of your finances comes from \$10 a month contributors. Is that the silver elephant thing.

[Answer unclear.] How many of those people are there in Mississippi?

Reed: About 800.

[The tape has started picking up some kind of radio transmission which makes it impossible to understand everything being said. Transcription will be sketchy until transmission stops.]

J.B.: So that pretty much pays for the state operation, office.

W.D.V.: What is the state operation?

Reed: Well, it goes up and down. Executive director. Printer, mail-room supervisor. Bookkeeper . [Off and on we've had a field program with field director and field man in three districts where we have races. Hope to get that up where there'll be a man per district.]

W.D.V.: *Only for organization?*

Reed: Oh yes, strictly organizational.

W.D.V.: About 6 or 7 people?

Reed: Yeah, it goes from a low of 6 and expands greatly in a campaign.

W.D.V.: Is yours one of the largest of the 11 southern states?

Reed: I would think so. Not sure. Course Texas would be a lot bigger. Yeah, it's one of the largest.

J.B.: In '72 you had challenges in three Congressional districts. With the pretty much assurance that Nixon was going to win big. Why did you not challenge all five? After the 1964 experience.

Reed: Let's get the context of this whole thing. It's not just what we at the top set out to do. Which is the impression that is made and it's somewhat true. We've challenged in the past and done very poorly against ~~Whitten?~~. And Montgomery votes all the way with us anyway. To, see, to be a conservative Democrat in the South is a tough job. Because that fits both worlds. People are traditional Democrat,

Walker, you know, saw a burning bush and ran for the Senate a year

after he was in Congress.

And he votes with Republicans and he meets with the Republican caucus and does an excellent job doing his homework. I was hoping he'd switch parties. If things had broken right, without the Watergate problem and other things going on, I think he might have, maybe. I don't know. Whitten is chairman of the Appropriation Committee and people think well of him. Great deal of seniority down there. That district is tough, too. I hope to replace him. But I think the strategy to ~~beat now is to~~ try to beat this guy here and keep our two men in and replace *another* or switch him and replace Whitten.

J.B.: If the Democrats resolve their conflict between the loyalists and the regulars and the results of that, of course, are going to have to be compromise on both sides, presumably-- In a merger between the loyalist Democratic party and the regular Democratic party, in Mississippi, in your opinion, is going to have what effect, politically?

Reed: *Realignment.*

J.B.: You think it's going to result in realignment?

Reed: I don't think it will be instant realignment, but it will be more and more move in that direction.

[Interruption]

Reed: The answer to those questions, we done arrived. I'm through. Or, you know, I feel I've done my job. But it's just slow in coming. And you know, that's true all across the South. I'm very disappointed in local level and you have to have that.

W.D.V.: But the way to do it is to get the candidates on local levels
is recruit them.

Reed: Right. Yeah, that's right.

W.D.V.: Do the same thing at the state level.

Reed: Candidate recruitment is the number one problem in the South.

I guess the number one problem everywhere. It's the problem.

W.D.V.: Well, it's always a much greater problem for the party that's not established. That doesn't have any tradition.

Reed: Right, right. Yeah, you don't have the opportunists. . . ~~which~~
is ~~not an opportunist.~~

J.B.: How do you define your own political philosophy?

Reed: *I am a* conservative.
~~libertarian, all those things.~~

J.B.: Okay, nationally, what political figure would you say you associate most with philosophically?

Reed: *Barry* Goldwater. Put Nixon in that category. Maybe a lot of my *people* don't. Reagan. I identify very well with the National Review crowd. Bill Buckley's a friend. Course as a politician I compromise more than they do. I pretty much agree with Buckley 90% of the time.

W.D.V.: What would it mean on specific issues in Mississippi? Let's start with race.

Reed: I never could put race in the conservative context. Moral. . .

W.D.V.: Economic conservatism--

Reed: Right. The main thing. . . identify with people of like background. A southerner I think is a conservative area. More in a sense of tradition and philosophy than economics or race. Economics does apply. More important, tradition. Your values. Being rural, you're more in tune with real life, nature, trials and tribulations of living. Being poor helps. Or living in a poor area. Church oriented. Family oriented. Traditional.

W.D.V.: You mean in a social sense you're more of a traditional *conservative*.
... a fundamentalist?

Reed: That's right.

W.D.V.:--a fundamentalist in that sense. What about economically?

Reed: Conservative in that, well, I'm in business. Economics is somewhat of a hobby. Now I'm not in ^{the big} league. I couldn't carry on a highly ^{Milton} intelligent conversation with ~~Bill~~ Friedman or somebody.

W.D.V.: I bet you could. Have you ever tried it?

Reed: Yeah [laughter.] In other words, I think business is interesting. Somebody said the business of America is business. I agree with that. I think it's the system. I've started businesses and I've had a good time at it. And I like the freedom and the opportunity of this country. I think it's. . . system's taken a lot of battering but I'm proud of it.

~~make a buck.~~

W.D.V.: How do you describe yourself in racial relations?

Reed: Oh, I guess in terms of what you're probably thinking of I'd say liberal. Enlightened self-interest, I think, is one premise of conservatism. Try to put everything on that basis. You all heard last night, my daughter was [something about private schools.] But anyway ^{then all} various sides of the civil rights question, ^{let me} just point out self-interest. Or, what do you plan to do? I mean we're here today. Blacks vote, they're citizens.

Where do you go from here? Put it on that basis. Enlightened self-interest. Enlightened self-interest says you should see to it. . . go an extra mile. If they get more political participation, better education, make more money, pay more taxes, we'll all be better off.

J.B.: Would you like to run for political office? Would you be willing to run? We find many Republican office holders from the South in major offices are people out looking for candidates, trying to recruit candidates, and finally someone says "Why don't you run?" and they end up running.

Reed
 Reed: -I am ashamed of the fact that I haven't or that I say I won't. I've tried to. . . . I'm like the Cincinnatus thing. I like citizen-soldier. That's my concept of this whole thing. Unfortunately that's the way it's set up. You can't be a part time Congressman anymore. Or even hardly a part time state legislator. Two things. If you take the partisan role I have, [if you become] Mr. Republican in a sense, then you appear to the voter as captive of the party. It's not so, but you appear that way. I would not advise anybody in the deep South to be an active, outspoken chairman as I've been and as a practical matter to be an office seeker. That's oversimplified and probably overstated. But still. . . . And I feel as a patriot I probably should have. But I rationalize that on the basis that I'm 45. And for going to Congress in Mississippi that's almost middle aged. We had a little light fight in the last convention. I considered for a few days running in this district and still come under light criticism from my friends for not having done so. [Something about thinking the chairmanship more important than running and] beat the hell out of the minority kook opposition I had to keep it on the track. Carmichael race coming up. The position it was in. The things I saw coming up. Anyway, I devined that's where I belonged the last time.

W.D.V.: You say you think you got the Republican party started off to a good start and from that point of view your role, your job might be finished.

Reed: No, I haven't. In fact I think I'll have to quit before I get it. . . . No, I meant if I got it, if we were there, if we'd arrived at a point where we had a strong basis in the state legislature and maybe a few more plums around, then I'd feel we were there and I'd feel my job was done. We haven't got it. [SOMething about the job is transitory.] And I'm here longer than I thought I would be. But I don't want to quit. *J* may have to. I may grow old in the job.

W.D.V.: When you started this thing your delegation was being voted in Washington by a black voter. Since then you've seen the role of this party in the national Republican politics increase in strength, indeed to the point where many say it's way out of proportion to what it ought to be. Do you have any comments on that?

Reed: Well, there's a vacuum in the national party and eventually, if you--and it's incredible to me, like I can move in down there last--our opposition was organized to say that we were out of proportion. We were not organized, regardless of what they say. I told you people last night, we plan a few days ahead.

I don't care what
the administration says or what anybody that says it, the administration, says. I wound up being the only person running. Or I mean it at least seemed so. I did it, anyway. So maybe out of proportion just because the vacuum's there. If a chairman from a state that at that time had nobody elected to office can do these sort of things, I guess maybe it speaks bad for the party organization. Not so much of my great infinite wisdom or strength or ability.

W.D.V.: If you look at the other Republican state parties in the South, how do yours to them, in terms of organization, influence. Are you the strongest in the national committee for the national convention?

Reed: Oh, I think it would be somewhat pretentious to say that. These things are fleeting.

W.D.V.: I'm sitting here trying to think of the name of another Republican chairman.

Reed: Well, I've been around longer for one thing so I know more about it.

W.D.V.: Right. But in terms of the South versus the rest of the

nation, are the Republican chairmen *in the South* stronger than the other *parts of the country?*

Reed: Yeah, I think so. We're. . . by and large there are less lawyers. I have nothing against lawyers. ~~But the average guy that~~

~~so obviously that points to more dedication,~~
~~perhaps.~~ I mean as a generalization. Certain exceptions all over the country. Yeah, I think the South has got more viable leadership.

there is a high turnover. We bring people on, keep them up to date on what's going on. Like I think it's next week or the week after, the executive directors are meeting here from the South.

I'll host them one time probably and ~~asked to come here and~~ glad to have them. But I'm not sure the other states *even* ~~will~~ have executive directors. I don't really know.

J.B.: What was the comparative role of Sen. Thurmond and Sen. Goldwater at the '68 convention in so far as influence over southern delegates in determining whether or not they went for Nixon or Reagan?

Reed: Goldwater probably had ten times as much influence. It could have gone either way with neither of their influence, but you know we deal in personalities. That's life, suppose to. Goldwater was the man that got most of these people really gungho in the Republican party. You know, four years later, you see, from the time they'd been supporting him very strongly in the South. Our polls show that Sen. Thurmond wasn't very well known in Mississippi, even though he'd been running for president here some years before and carried the state. A thoroughly honest man, you know, and I like him very much. *He took the* delegates from the South, *It was a* Goldwater sweep.

W.D.V.: Let's pursue that. How do Republicans perceive a guy like

Thurmond, after being in the Democratic party, who switches to the Republican party? Is he instantly accepted or trusted?

Reed: Yeah. I'd say, right. Oh, maybe a few *don't*. See, I wrongly thought that--as everybody will still tell you, or maybe they won't tell you *that* I'm basically Republican. [They put up with me, maybe send \$10 to the next committee or state legislature?] So I assume once people saw the difference there would be an instant change. And some of them did say well, we're going to all change at once. In effect, going to keep the one party system but move to where they have a national home. But I don't anticipate that ever happening. I thought it would, way back. That was what I envisioned. Once everybody is being honest, philosophical politicians they'll see where they belong after Thurmond and all those people changed. But it hasn't worked out that way.

W.D.V.: Nobody saw it as a possible personal exploitation?

Reed: I don't think so. I think it was probably easier for him to stay where he was

W.D.V.: Are you going to deliberately try to encourage large number of disenchanted Democrats to move into the Republican party?

Reed: [An affirmative answer]

W.D.V.: Based on what? Ideology?

Reed: Right. Come on where you belong, where you're welcome. They don't throw you out of the convention.

J.B.: Once this Democratic squabble is resolved here, between the regulars and the loyalists, how many members of the legislature do you expect will shift over to the Republican party?

Reed: I'm afraid it's not going to be that dramatic. Waller had pre-filed a bill--somebody had pre-filed it for him--to, in order to try to make this thing get back together. They had a bill that called for primary,

direct election of delegates, central committees and all, with 25% left to fill the quota system the Democrats still have and I certainly hope they still continue to have in '76. But we opposed this effectively. The idea not to keep them together, but we didn't want to see our process torn up where you had people, delegation, people voting--not the concept I feel [under which] we should operate. And I think the system we have with the county precincts state conventions was better. And the argument I made to them down there--these people didn't know. Only two or three of them had ever been to conventions that hadn't been thrown out until way back, maybe. They didn't know the process. So I said you're trying to resolve a political question with law. Can't be done. Let me speak to you from the experience of the Republican party. Let me tell you how to do this. I posed as a non-biased expert in the process. I said you'll be accepted when they're ready for you. A political question. When they need you, when they want you, you'll be received. You're not going to be seated just because you change these laws around. And they understood that. Just like the Republican party. I mean they still recognize Perry Howard in Washington because the convention is still [a free thing] They bought that and we beat it. Beat it handily.

J.B.: What's your reaction to the idea of registration by party in Mississippi?

Reed: I'm opposed to it. But I've had many active Republicans who are in favor of it.

J.B.: Why are you opposed to it?

Reed: [It offends] my concept of a laissez-faire conservative in matters economic and political. I think a person should--I have some ambivalent ideas about it--but to state my opposition position about it, I think a person should be allowed to express the franchise when and where, you know, he wants to except on the same day. Most people in the state, also, identify

themselves as independent. I like for them to have an easy choice rather than to make it a hard choice all the way, ~~for one or the other.~~ Alternative. And also I guess maybe be in the minority party they'd be reluctant to say do I want to go over there and vote--that will keep me from voting in the primary where I'm going to vote for my alderman or where we have most of the action in the state.

But I believe that I'd be opposed to it even if we were the dominant party.

J.B.: What's your reaction to this open primary--

Reed: I think it's a nightmare. It's an effort to perpetuate the one party system. No party identification, no nothing. I mean you'd just be Mugwumps. No name, no nothing. You just run.

~~had to run so many times and the Republicans~~
~~ceased in without a primary.~~ Well, [as I said last night] I think it's a disadvantage not to have a primary. As we grow, we'll have more primaries. So I think the system of elimination, you get more exposure and the voters get more shot at the people, know who they are and then develop a party system where you have a general understanding of what the philosophy is. We're not up to that point yet, but in the meantime you go through a series of elections rather than a mass run and two run off. I think it would be horrible.

W.D.V.: Isn't there a way to get around that? [Just look at the second primary and let the winner take all in the first one] Within each party. As they do in the states that are really competitive in terms of the two party. They don't have a run off.

Reed: Yeah, well, I can't think right off of any objections to that. No. But that's not what's passed. It passed overwhelmingly in the state legislature.

W.D.V.: ^{is been set aside} It ~~hasn't passed yet~~, has it?

Reed: It's a pretty technical thing. Tom told me, Eastland told him that he killed it. Told those judges. . . really something unbelievable. They talk about Pontius Pilate like ruling by Mitchell and how *they* had been kicked around. That sort of thing. Since the Attorney General refused to rule on it. Under law, if he doesn't act that means the same as approve. As I understand the Justice Department, they was arguing on both sides and the Attorney General said we'll do nothing.

W.D.V.: So if Saxbe doesn't do anything then it stands.

Reed: Now there's been a ruling--I've forgotten the exact nature of it--

J.B.: Am I correct that the 5th Circuit said, in effect, the Justice Department had to rule. The Justice Department had taken the position that if they didn't rule that that was approving it by acquiescence. Fifth Circuit said no, that their interpretation of the law was the Justice Department had to rule specifically yes or no. And that the thing is still in the Justice Department at this time?

Reed: It's been sent back to the Justice Department. I don't think that's right. I think it was a three judge panel that made this [ridiculous] ruling down here, not the 5th Circuit. There's been a case since then--at that time they had a limited period, like 60 days or something, to act on it. Since that time there's some court--I'm not a lawyer--that extends the time. And it permitted the Attorney General to resubmit it to Justice because of some other court's ruling. Court somewhere. I talked to people in Justice about it. So rather than pass it again, as they planned to do, they knocked it out under this new ruling that came from some other court that said Justice Department does have longer than the period they have. So it's going back for reapproval or disapproval. My guess is it will be appealed and probably be a year or two before it's in

effect. [Something about supreme court.]

J.B.: But Mitchell said that Eastland is the one who blocked--

Reed: That's what he told me. Then, right after we left these Congressmen, I think Mr. *Jim* Eastland had a change of heart.

W.D.V.: I was going to say, why would he have set out to do that?

Reed: I asked Mitchell, and he said hell. . . . One had passed before and Paul Johnson pocket vetoed it. Paul pretty much did what Eastland says a lot. So. . . I don't know this, but I think that veto is not a good thing. But since we did so well last time, we discern an instant change of opinion on the thing and the senator's for it.

W.D.V.: Well, if he's for it doesn't that suggest that it's going to come out the way he wants it?

Reed: I would think so. He seems to have quite a bit of influence over there.

J.B.: But then it's expected that it will ultimately go to the Supreme Court? By whoever doesn't win.

Reed: Right. I asked them about it. I mean we put up a position, what we thought about it. Of course really I'm *disturbed* about the voting rights act. If it weren't for the voting rights act it wouldn't be in the Department of Justice. And Mitchell had the idea the voting rights act should be nation-wide. But Congress said oh no, you know, there are no votes [stolen?] in Chicago. And if we have nationwide enforcement of this sort of thing then it will dilute the enforcement in the South. So it's still southern.

W.D.V.: Do you want to see it extended?

Reed: Tell you, it's been a pretty good thing down here. It sure solved a lot of arguments. I mean when the kooks start hollering they're stealing the election, well, it's nice to have those registrars say no it

wasn't. We probably have the more honest elections in the country.

W.D.V.: So you want to see it extended?

Reed: I'd like to see it extended or taken out of the South. Philosophically I have a hard time saying extended, but I can't help think it would be a good thing.

W.D.V.: If it were not extended, what do you think it would mean? It would mean that the black registration would decrease and black participation would decrease?

Reed: I can't cite no statistics or anything, but I'm confident it would in no way.

W.D.V.: You think those changes are permanent?

Reed: Absolutely.

W.D.V.: Along that line, what if the anti-busing passed the House and essentially just kind of freed up the school situation ? ?

Reed: Well, as I understand it, Walter, ~~the only~~
~~would probably be Jackson.~~ They've got a separate rule for the South. They say you bus to segregate and now you've got to bus to integrate. I think whatever goes in still won't take the rural South off the hook. Now it may affect Jackson, Mississippi. But that's the only place in the state it would affect.

W.D.V.: So it wouldn't really change much?

Reed: It would change some, but see, neighborhoods in the South are pretty much--I mean, like this town is kind of all over. There would be more near black and white schools, but it would be a long way from complete. It would be a long way from going back.

W.D.V.: Are you for that provision that provision that passed the Congress?

Reed: Frankly, I'm very *upset* about it. I just don't like this

constitutional amendment business every five minutes.

I'm opposed to amending the constitution except on major things and I don't think busing is one that should be [in the constitution.]

W.D.V.: What about the ERA?

Reed: I'm opposed to it. Got no big hang up on it. *Don't like the* quota system. I think you're right. If women, where they're doing the same job and not getting the same pay, then I'd like to see some *equity*. But where do you stop with this sort of thing? Is *she* not a supervisor because she's a woman? Well, she may not be a good supervisor. I mean being a woman may be a problem. I think that's *not deal*. But I think women have been getting a raw deal when I know we ourself have hired women, paid them less for the same job. My present secretary [is a blackmailer]. Pay her more than most men in town get. Blackmail. She threatened to quit. That's all it took.

J.B.: We've been told that the Republican party in Mississippi, sort of individually and selectively recruits blacks to join the Republican party.

Reed: Well--

J.B.: My real question--

[End of side of tape.]

Reed: I would like to see conventions every two years. Have a lot more vital party structure. But that's not likely to be passed because the mood of most politicians is to diminish party roles. I would like to strengthen and add to your conventions by the way. But in '68 convention, local county chairman said we need to get some blacks on the county committee. I agreed with him. Where are you going to get them? We haven't had any blacks participate. Well, we'll get so and so. I was opposed to a black

exhibit. During the next few years, though, in the course of campaigns some blacks on the basis of candidates--no candidate of any party is going to ignore the black vote in this state. Maybe in the 5th district or somewhere, but I mean overall you're certainly not going to do it. So they did evolve some black participation. So, without any quota system or anything else they elected a black chairman in this county and they were elected on the basis of merit, or, you know, participation. Maybe went an extra mile for them, maybe an extra half mile I should say, to get their participation. So my idea is to build with the black community you build with the legitimate leadership. Not the--the leadership, in my opinion, so called black leadership in the nation and the South has not been legitimate leadership. It's been the screamers or people who are in the civil rights business. I see involving black leadership same as white. Businessmen, attorneys, churchmen are traditional, of course, leaders. But I mean the same type leadership involved in the white community evolving in the black community. There is our target. They will be considered the same reason I am. They're southerners. They're family and church oriented, as I am. They're rural. And you're not going to get that--skipping a minute--the poverty white or black level. I mean the ones that are down that lower strata. They're not likely to be with you anyway. I don't mean to write them off. But by working with the legitimate black leadership they can in turn maybe involve some of the lower economic strata of blacks through that system. So to evolve as the blacks develop that leadership--which they're doing. Legitimate leadership is being developed rapidly in the state now. Those are our targets.

J.B.: By Republicans.

Reed: No, I mean they're developing. . . . There are two black lawyers here in this town. There were no black lawyers period. Olé Miss law

School graduates. Legitimate leaders in their own right in the black community and some in the white community. They are our targets for active role in the Republican party. And then they, of course, will have influence on blacks that we probably couldn't touch directly.

J.B.: This is a hypothetical question. If you were to run for governor, what would be your program for the state of Mississippi as candidate of the Republican party?

Reed: Well, give you an indirect answer. The governorship in this state, due to populist reform, is probably one of the weaker in the country. One term. The cabinet, if you want to call it that, is elected. Within a year they're jockeying for position. The legislature has the power. You've got very little power. It's just the power of persuasion. I'd like, oh, just the usual things. Clean up the supervisors of the system. I'd like to see single member districts. Anything you can do for economic development, of course. Tax equalization. Two terms for governor for the one that followed me, you know. A new constitution to give the governor more power.

J.B.: What type of industrial development?

Reed: Well, of course, everybody's for that. Capital begets capital. ^{provide} An [absentee] industry is better than none, without a job. The idea of local entrepreneurship, which is, of course, tougher to get all the time. But local energy that creates its own capital. And you've got additional capital [investor?] ~~That national~~ that's the way ~~they got going.~~ [Something about the land being so poor that they stopped farming long enough to get into business.] Have home owned industry with money they can do other things in the community which, in this poor state, we haven't had.

W.D.V.: Can't talk about Mississippi politics without talking about Jim Eastland.

Reed: That's right.

W.D.V.: Everybody that he has supported for governor since '55 has won. What's the basis of his power?

Reed: Well, he's been there a long time, he's pretty tough [transmission begins again]

But I want to say this, too. I think it's a misnomer. This last race Sullivan ran a miserable campaign. Waller ran a good one. And Eastland, by his own admission, didn't get on that until after he saw how it was going pretty well. He didn't think Waller *would win* and he told me that. Of course, he'll tell you that and the next moment he'll say "oh, I didn't have anything to do with it" wanting you to say, of course, he did. And he did, at that. But I think the main thing he did, at the last minute he called, pushed a few buttons, got some money for Waller. I don't think he delivered the vote. I think his power is overrated. Now, he's got it. And he doesn't mind using it.

W.D.V.: But doesn't he have Republican support in this state? He certainly has it in the administration.

Reed: Oh yeah. Yeah, he's got some. Right. He votes, most the time, just exactly like I like for him to vote. So, you know.

W.D.V.: How about patronage? Does he control it for the state?

Reed: Oh, we have a running battle pretty much. He controls everything in Justice. You know, like for most states, the party handles things like US attorneys and marshalls and all.

W.D.V.: Outside the judiciary, does it go through you?

Reed: He just kind of ignores it outside of that. ~~with~~
~~the federal government.~~ No, he doesn't go through me for anything.

W.D.V.: No, I mean does the administration go through you?

Reed: Right, right.

W.D.V.: It's just assumed that the bench and so on is his.

Reed: Right. Here's one way.

In ~~[Pinchurst's]~~ *Eisenhower*

second term he held up 200 federal judge appointments. Eisenhower offered him half of them. Said no he waited until Kennedy got in and appointed them. So, when you're that mean, you can get what you want, I guess. At least in that field.

J.B.: I want to discuss the Carmichael race a little bit. If Meredith had not entered that primary, would there have been any Republican opposition?

Reed: Frankly, probably not.

J.B.: After Carmichael got in--

W.D.V.: Can you explain to us why, why you feel that way?

Reed: Well, we knew we couldn't beat them. He'd been voting with the administration. We didn't have a philosophical argument. Eastland takes a very dim view of the Republican party. He doesn't like it. The administration's fine. But the Republican party in this state is not.

W.D.V.: Why was it that Meredith propelled you to get--

Reed: Okay. In all candor, Meredith returned here from New York. He'd been *charged* as a slum lord as I recall. Do you recall, do you remember this? Anyway, he hadn't been in Mississippi in years. Came in with no Republican credentials. I mean I never met him. Don't know any Republicans ever met him. Filed as a Republican. I said well this thing is a fake. This guy's a *fake*. You know, he's not accepted even among the blacks as a legitimate leader. We didn't know what we had at the time. Wallace wasn't shot at that time and we weren't sure the Democrats would nominate a kook like they did. We didn't know we had that easy a road to go. I could see Meredith embarrassing

Nixon, hurting our Congressional candidates. Because, being a typical civil rights activist *over* the past years, I can see him picketing the White House,

and he'd have all the news on it. You know, he'd be national news

figure. I could see that cutting off Nixon's coattails. I'm more concerned about the effect on our candidates. As I said openly, they said do you accept him? I said well, he hasn't labored in the vineyard. He has no party credentials whatsoever. Contrary to *what you may have heard* no attempt made in any way to keep him out. I said hell, we need to beat him but if we get into it we just can't beat him for the sake of beating him. You know, that would be only one step different than trying to flim-flam him on the run. So we talked to two or three people about running and Gil had been an active *party worker* active for years. Wanted to run. Said I want to run for governor. I said hell, this may be the shot to go. I said now don't count on administration support. Not going to get it.

With Kleindinst coming down here for Eastland and that sort of thing. Agonizing parts of it. But I knew by that time how they functioned up there. We're not going to get anything out of them.

But he ran and said I'm going all the way. I said let's go. And that was the base.

J.B.: What was your role in the campaign? You said you knew you weren't going to get the White House support. How active were you in working for Carmichael?

Reed: I was active. . . you know, as state chairman I have a lot of bouncing balls. But I guess I gave him more money, personally. \$1,000. I did more for him than anybody else. But still, we had three Congressional races, the Senate race and the presidential race. I was trying to keep

them all together. Then we went out of our way to keep control of CRP because I didn't want them to screw us up. I mean we made a big effort to run it ourselves. Which ~~made~~^{many} people in the party [didn't understand.] They said what the hell you doing? I said it's better to run this thing than let somebody else run off with it. So we just took it to keep it under wraps, you might say.

J.B.: Didn't you say you kept more money in Mississippi, higher percentage of the CRP money in Mississippi than any other--

Reed: Right. Of course I don't want to say it quite that blanket.

We did it quite legally. I mean any money where people said I want this to go to Nixon, well, it went to Nixon. But we had a joint dinner, you know, publicly stated, where half of it went to us. As I understand it, when people check with us, we're the only people that had that in a state.

W.D.V.: Were you the only state party that controlled the CRP operation?

Reed: Yeah, I think so. Some of them had it work pretty well along together. Florida chairman and myself I think were the only ones that were both chairmen of the CRP--

W.D.V.: How come you could get away with it? Didn't they resist those efforts?

Reed: Right. But I just kind of hung in there. Gave and took a little to make it work out.

W.D.V.: Did that effort on your part split the party in this state?

Reed: A lot of people didn't fully understand it.

it was absolutely necessary.

W.D.V.: Are there two factions in the Republican party?

Reed: There's a mickey mouse faction that. . . . I had challenge. . .

You know, hell, I didn't even plan to win again. But Rubel Phillips. ~~patronage~~ ~~such a horrible loser~~. We got a battle here whose going to be head of Farmers Home. There's a guy that's a crook.

Anyway, he decided I had to go because I wouldn't approve his appointee to Farmers Home. Well, that right alone is suspicion enough, ~~that maintains~~ ~~wanted to run for chairman and ran~~. We beat him so horribly. I mean they carried one or two counties. There are 25 votes on the committee to elect a chairman and I got 25 out of 25. So Jack Bree who's I think a nut frankly, county chairman in Hines county. And he keeps this thing running.

calling us crooks, saying we're on the take. Just totally fabricated stuff. Very horrible to go through. I mean that's one thing about politics we had a shake down system supposedly going, selling housing permits, you know, passing credibility in today's world. I called a hearing to hear everybody out. Nobody came forth with any evidence. I mean this . . . nothing. But they keep this stuff going. But its such a minute--but now they're going to throw him out. He was beaten for county chairman. He had the club, they're going to throw him out of that. So I guess--sure, there're [factions], but I'd say probably less than any party that I know about. There may be some that are more harmonious.

W.D.V.: What is the nature of the split, even though it's a small minority? Why?

Reed: Personalities.

W.D.V.: It's not a moderate-conservative, or it's not an ideological thing?

Reed:

They might say that. Supposedly we're more interested in Washington than the party. *They are* raising hell. They're always interested in patronage. All their interest is in Washington. That's been a distracting, sad part of this job. Sad's not the right word. But you can do better party work with the administration out than you can in. Because when you're in, especially with no Congressmen, hell, half our staff work will be people calling wanting something. Maybe just one guy every two years but if that fellow will work and give you money you have to respond. So we almost had a Congressional office here. Which is a horrible waste of time and something you have to do. I mean it's demoralizing. Demoralizing's not the right--but you're away from your mission. Then the school thing. We're right in the middle of it. Pat Gray and Bob Mardian operated right out of-- we [desegged?] the last 29 districts in the state. ^Ppolitically it should be done and done right and done well. That was constructive, even though it was away from what I consider the party mission. *DA* had to be done. But somebody worrying about somebody in jail or getting out of the army or where the post office is located is a hell of a loser.

J.B.: How did Eastland react to the seizing of patronage through you rather than through him? Didn't it go through him in the Eisenhower administration?

Reed: I think so. He doesn't seem to ~~care~~. There's been not that much of it and I think he realized better than I did it's more of a problem than it is a plus.

J.B.: How about on Farmer's Home? We've heard one version that you had to almost really fight hard to wrestle control from him on Farmer's Home.

Reed: Well, yeah. In a sense, there would be some truth in that. Fred

LaRue, who is now pretty well known, and always worked closely with Eastland. Mitchell and Eastland go-between. Well, Rubel was close to Fred. They wanted this guy Rixon who had been a bureaucrat in there. I had said well, okay, fine. Okay with me, you know. I had no problem with him. Then tells me that his name's on a letter where the went down borrowed some \$15 million. Well, I said this ain't going to go, you know. And his name come out publicly. I don't know where in the hell it is, SEC has it and they're looking into it. This won't at all. Eastland tried to help Rubel and that's one reason ran against him. By the way carried his county, this past for governor. So Barber came in, who they nepotism because his brother, who didn't want the job but kept it is our executive director. Big deal. Anyway, our and had just jillion dollar loans but at very low percent friend of Eastland's. One percent, some ridiculous thing, one percent loan for a bunch of houses. Barber resisted and So Patterson went all over the place saying that we're politicizing. Had an investigation. All over the news. Investigating me. In the process, it hasn't come out yet, but they found Rixon, the guy who wanted it, had really been in all kind of deals.

The irony of it. That's never come out. Been all over the country how I was shaking down everything. But that's the unpleasant part of this business.

We got an honest man in and found out we didn't realize what a dishonest man we got out. And that is politically nonproductive.

J.B.: Do you think you made a mistake in going into the housing business in retrospect?

Reed: No, I feel very strongly about that. If you can't be in business and be in politics too, we're in a sad, sad state. I've found, too, in

the process, you know, we've lost money because of this. Our appraisals are lower than other people's because they don't want to look bad. I've found a lot of prices you pay for it. We farm in Arkansas. There's a large feed grain allotment over there available just for the asking. I applied for it. Committee said because of who you are we don't think you should take but half of it. If I'd been a Democrat, could have had it all. So, if you can't be in business, you know, and do business with the government-- I've done business with the government ever since I've been in business-- then I think we're in pretty bad shape.

J.B.: Did you make any effort to get the White House to support Carmichael?

Reed: Yeah, but I knew in the beginning it wouldn't

J.B.: But did it look like later that you had a better chance than it did in the beginning?

Reed: Well, but we'd given up on anything late in the game. I'd tried ~~all~~ *to* do things about different things, but it didn't work.

J.B.: You say you knew from the beginning it wasn't coming. Is that simply because of their indebtedness to Eastland?

~~Reed:~~

~~J.B.: Does that go back to the bond issue from ?~~

~~Reed: No~~

J.B.: Wasn't there some connection there, though. Didn't the Mitchell firm handle the bonds?

Reed: I'd sort of like to say there was, but I don't think there was. I don't think there was any effect on that.

J.B.: Do you think that was an error on the White House in terms of

party building in the South?

Reed: Oh, sure.

W.D.V.: Who made the decision? Do you think the president did?

Reed: Oh, one of those things you never know. [Even if he didn't make the specific decisions, Reed thinks the president has to be held responsible for it.]

J.B.: If the White House had given full support to Carmichael and to Blount also in Alabama, as they did to Helms and Scott in North Carolina and Virginia, do you think it would have made the difference?

Reed: No.

J.B.: Do you think it would have made a substantial difference?

Reed: I would sure liked to have seen him come. And they did do. . . I think they did pretty well by Blount.

J.B.: Let's stick to Carmichael then.

Reed: Okay. I don't think. . . . This sort of thing you don't know. I can't bet a quarter either way, but I think the scenario worked out he probably got a high vote because of it. Again, I don't like it. I wouldn't want to go through it again. It's not my kind of politics or the scenario I would choose. In other words, I say its questionable it would have been anymore. I don't know. I just don't know.

W.D.V.: In the last 25 years of Republican politics, Nixon has been the party man. More so than Eisenhower, even Goldwater.

Reed: Right.

W.D.V.: And yet when you're looking at what happened in '72 he did very little in the South. How do you handle that?

Reed: Right. Well, I don't like it. I mean I can accept the fact that he's the first guy in 150 some years that never had control of Congress if he hadn't lived with these people and take their side. Which I don't

necessarily agree with. In 1970 they bombed out in trying to take the Senate. I think their thinking was . . . if they were thinking, the more I win the more this will follow. Now, of course, that's pretty ^{extreme} strained. They didn't have to do with the money even if they were following that policy.

W.D.V.: Well, would you say that the Committee to Re-elect's activities in '72 set the Republican party back in the South?

Reed: I don't think so. I don't know.

J.B.: How about in Mississippi?

Reed: Oh, well, we did so darn well. We might have done better with more help. I don't know.

J.B.: I mean in the Congressional races you had the full support of the national party structure. You had Agnew down endorsing the candidates, they had the rest of the Nixon family. In the Senate race you had just the opposite. Carmichael being snubbed. Kleindinst and Butz going down to in effect make it very clear and obvious that the White House is supporting Eastland.

Reed: Yeah. I want to . . . on that. . . . He praised everybody and on the side he had a fund raising for us. Go ahead. I want to defend him.

J.B.: My question is, do you really feel that Carmichael did as well as he could have done under any circumstances?

Reed: Well, there's no question. . . . I guess on balance I would have to say he would have done better. But I just don't want to swear he would have done better, you know, in my own mind. . . . the other way, very much, much so. . . . balance the ball.

W.D.V.: Are you going to let that happen in the future?

Reed: Well, what do you do about it?

W.D.V.: Well, one thing you do like you did in 1972, you can get some kind of commitments out of the candidate.

Reed: Man, you don't know the commitments I had at the convention, when we went in '68. But they didn't come through.

W.D.V.: Well, isn't that kind of anti-party, too? Isn't it generally understood in the party if you get these kind of commitments you carry through?

Reed: Well, yes, but some people don't.

J.B.: What kind of commitments in '68? Commitments in what area?

Reed: Well, that we'd have all patronage, all say so, and. . . there was carte blanche. I put a pretty mean stick to them. Including justice patronage.

J.B.: And then you had to fight like hell to get Farmers Home and that was about the major part of it?

Reed: Well, we had other mickey mouse stuff. You know, little things around. Different committees and that sort of thing. Boards, commissions. That was a battle. Lot of personalities. Fred LaRue was working. . . you know, he was the White House what do you want to call him, was working very hard on the other side of that thing. And hell, all I was trying to do was get an honest man in. In the process, if I had let Rixon through, we'd have a crooked Farmers Home but the personal

W.D.V.: The failure of Mitchell to keep these promises, does this fit in with Jerry Ford's charge that that crowd that ran that operation really didn't understand party politics? Do you agree with Ford's assessment?

Reed: Sure.

J.B.: How did Elliott Richardson come down here a few weeks ago?

Reed: He had a, he accepted a lecture invitation to come to ole Miss. Man needs to make a buck to keep his operation going. He's on circuit. And I had a call from on the coast said that Whitlock, a friend of his, would like to have him down there for breakfast and what do you think about it? I said well, I didn't see anything wrong with it. Hell no, go on. But don't show up with 20 people. If you do it, have a respectable crowd. And they did. I was talking to Dick

said he had that night free and if somebody asked him to come

which I saw as a losing deal why don't you come here instead.

J.B.: And so he came and then what?

Reed: I had the committee in here, district people. A rather small deal. And he talked to everybody. About it. Had a meeting with the press. He met with the press on his own in Oxford. Had him meet here and he met them on the coast.

W.D.V.: It seems to me in the future it's going to be easier for you to invite a liberal Republican candidates down. By liberal, you know--

Reed: Yes, right.

W.D.V.: You won't have the kind of pressures against that sort of thing you had, say, in the '60s. That's just an impression of mine. Is that correct?

Reed: Sure. For several reasons. First off, like for example Rockefeller will probably be here next year as an active Republican. . . wants him to come to a Chamber of Commerce dinner and I've talked to him about it. But, you know, they want a little more action if they come, which I sure understand, and try to work it out. So we'll probably have a party thing for them at the same time.

W.D.V.: That means that the problems of the South get exposure to

more Republicans and different kinds of Republicans than they have in the past.

Reed: Yeh also I guess it comes from the supreme confidence that convention and somebody that we can live with will be nominated. We don't have to worry-- you know, everybody was worried it was going to be stolen quote unquote in '64. And Goldwater's forces security plans.

W.D.V.: Does that suggest to you that the South is changing in terms of the Republican party or the rest of the country is changing?

Reed: The country's changing. The only change down here is the race thing. Otherwise, the country's changing our way.

W.D.V.: But the removal of that race thing is making it possible for more contact or more interchange and a better understanding?

Reed: Right, right. Of course I have never bought the idea of Richardson being any kind of super liberal anyway. And Rockefeller has changed. So, I think the country's come more like the South. Hope it is, for the good of the country.

J.B.: Do you view Richardson, at the moment, as being an active unofficial inactive presidential aspirer.

Reed: Sure. I can't take Percy seriously. You know, if he wanted to come it would be all right by me. I'd be glad to see him. But frankly I wouldn't want to crank up some effort, you know. If somebody wants to do something, okay. like Richardson. I think it's good for these people to be out. The more exposure, the more interchange, dialogue, the better to bring the country together.

W.D.V.: One of the general complaints we've heard, particularly from Democrats, is that none of the national candidates really want to come South. They don't think it's necessary to do so.

Reed: Right after Baker was elected and I never had met Baker before. I knew most Tennessee people. Invited him down for dinner. Wrote and never did get a goddamn answer out of him. Excuse me, never did get an answer. At that time it was not proper to come to Mississippi. I jumped maybe I chewed him out about it. At least the courtesy of a reply. Like you say, back then it was not the place to come. Percy came down to speak to a black gathering and didn't even bother to check in years ago. Made his points and went back to Illinois . But nobody would come. Now, of course, everybody wants to come. Which I think's good

J.B.: What accounts for that change?

Reed: Well, we're more respectable. We're not the racist society we once were. There's no stigma. In fact it's a plus I guess, you know, to be here. I think it's good. Good for the country, good for the state, good for the South. It's all around good.

W.D.V.: Could you have foreseen this change ten years ago?

Reed: It was a hope.

J.B.: Was the fact that you had a Republican administration in 1970 any factor at all in the way massive desegregation was accepted? Because Nixon did not go in with any overwhelming popularity in Mississippi in 1968.

Reed: Well. . . we were in an impasse. Our polls would show that people didn't like the position we were in [on race] of being one against the country. You know, this sort of thing. They wanted a way out. But, you know, people still had to have their pride and what not. Regardless of motives, they saw education suffering and, you know, education is next to God in the average middle class person anyway, lower middle class. That's their hope, education child to get ahead. They may be extreme racists, but still they saw that as a threat to the kids' education.

But anyway, they fought it, fought it, fought it. And when Nixon was elected I, in my own mind--the courts, the judges being politicians, being human, were afraid. . . they thought there was a conservative revolution coming on which I hope so not just a way station victory. Other side to it has all the power, in my opinion. So I think they quickly

all right, you're going to deseg now.

no, do it this fall, zap. Well, that's the way to take a dose of medicine. Get it done. So, we sent around here

work it out under a friendly hand. The courts removed the issue from guidelines, but in the past guidelines had been written by secretary of HEW or some of his--that was it, those were the laws. They were removed. When the president wrote and signed the guidelines, which gave us time, you know, or tried to work things out, keep neighborhoods cool and all that. Courts threw that out and said no, you're going to do it zap, now. It got done, it worked. You know, the schools are still in existence. And it was done with a friendly hand rather than with a stick. So it made a hell of a difference. And Nixon, he's the first president that hasn't been hated down here in twenty some years, I guess. So that in itself is a big change.

More deseg happened under him than anybody and of course prior to that some other changes had helped bring that about. Like public accommodations bill. I would vote against then and today, but it's probably the best thing that's happened down here in that it got people out of the impasse if they owned the Holiday Inn or grill and served a black guy, the whites would be very unhappy. It was a constant affrontage to blacks. He couldn't get a room or coffee where he wanted and that sort of thing. Now he doesn't have the affrontery and when blacks do go in and get served nobody turns their heads. So that one thing, I think, removed . . . it was more significant than anything I can think of.

J.B.: Why would you vote against it?

Reed: Well, rightly or wrongly, I think if a fellow owns a place he's got a right to restrict it to male patrons over 40 if he wants to. I think it was a bad law but excellent sociology. They did us a favor, not knowing they were going to do it, by passing that.

J.B.: Do you believe the Nixon administration would have moved as they did on desegregation if the courts had not made the decision they made in the Alexandria case?

Reed: Well, the dye was so cast. . . wait, okay. Well, you know, who knows. It was going to go on. He stated it, just a fact of life. I think have had some neighborhood schools. . . . in other words, we wouldn't be as segregated as the North, but we'd probably be more segregated than we are now. I mean by segregated there wouldn't be. . . classrooms in Mississippi by and large are salt and pepper. We'd probably still be more integrated than the rest of the country, but not as integrated as we are.

J.B.: There are a lot of people who would challenge that and say they're really not, that the schools in Mississippi are basically integrated within the walls of the schools and segregated within classrooms to a large extent because of pupil placement based on testing, so forth.

Reed: Before you all leave you may want to talk to my business partner. He's head of the school board here, I guess it's the second biggest in the state. And it's as integrated as any you can get. I mean it's almost quotaed. There may be some like that, but I think by and large. . . I think we can certainly say it's the most integrated state in the country. Schools, classrooms. Again, I'm not an expert on the subject but I've had a lot of people .

W.D.V.: How could that be accomplished so peacefully?

Reed: Well, the people wanted a way out, they were trying to fight

the thing, they were trying to accept that it was inevitable, and a lot of people decided maybe we're better off because of it.

W.D.V.: Nobody would have predicted that ten years ago.

Reed: No. I kind of hoped it, as I said.

J.B.: In terms of looking for statewide candidates in 1975, to what extent do you think Republicans in Mississippi will be looking for disenfranchised Democrats?

Reed: Oh, all the way. I mean I think if we have to grow on our own we'll be at this thing 50 years.

J.B.: You see that as a fertile source for candidates recruitment?

Reed: Sure.

J.B.: Do you see that South-wide, Republican South-wide?

Reed: [Affirmative.]

W.D.V.: Anything we haven't covered last night and today?

Reed: I can't think of one. Well. . . I guess I shouldn't be, but I'm a southerner before anything else probably in my way of thinking, emotions. And I see an incumbent responsibility on an area less screwed up than the rest of the country to give of what we have, try to help them.

J..B.: You became chairman what year?

Reed: '66.

J.B.: '66. It's now '74. As a result of your experiences--and you've had a lot of national experience and because of your role in the state party and the fact that you have a national Republican administration, have even been exposed to the ivy walls of Harvard--as a result of your total experiences in the party, what changes have taken place within you?

Reed: Oh, I guess its understand--I mentioned it to Walter last night--I'm very poor about. . . won't say I'm a functional illiterate, not that bad off, but as a gungho active businessman I never take time to record things.

I wish I'd so done. But at least I've got it all up here. The effect of it, not the details. can't recall. If you don't write something down, you don't have it. But at least I've got an understanding of what it's all about and I'll know, whatever that's worth, as I go back to real life. I'll know what went on. There'll be no mystery about it. To get downright personal about the thing. . . nobody wanted this job at the time and you've got to take it on until we find somebody. If you can't get somebody will you take it?

But I knew I would have a problem of conscience if I didn't. You know, it would have weighted heavily on me in the future if I hadn't done it. So, more or less, I had to do it. I'm not sorry. It's been expensive, but so what?

W.D.V.: No regrets?

Reed: None. The only thing I regret is, like you say is, one thing I did not anticipate. And it came so late in the game. I assumed and I still like to assume . . . the most shattering thing to me is that I would assume. . . I like to say business is a great thing. I mean, you know, you build a reputation, you do a world of business, you can do millions of dollars worth on your word. And most people I find are honest or they're in trouble pretty early. And I assume--family background all that--if you've done right then you never have any problem. So I wasn't prepared to be called a crook. And I find in the McCarthyism that's involved here, the conservatives--or at least I don't have any Joe Welchs around. And that's been disturbing. That that would come out. And I don't know. That would probably have been enough excuse for me at the time to have not gone into it had I known this would come out of it. There would have been enough excuse for me to say I'm not going to do it. It's hard to believe, but you know. about the nature of the thing. The open irony is that the people that make the accusations are actively involved

themselves. Not just politically, but I mean in crooked activity. I assume will go to jail. I don't know. But that's never been in the press. Front page of the Washington Post

I've been in business and I started business with government operation. Financing grain stores. Made a hell of a business out of it. We're the biggest in the South. We dominate that business down here. When the Republican administration went in, they gutted it. And I don't believe. . . I didn't spend a year trying to get them to change it. I didn't succeed. But I tried. I did what I was being accused of doing, but it didn't work. And this damn housing business.

We sold that business. It's virtually identical to what we were doing. We're in it on a very small basis and I don't think we'll make any money. Because inflation's gone so much faster than . And hell, we're wide open. Anybody can look at any books. Anybody can see anything. And yet it comes out, one side of the story. One just wild story is that the party is on the take, too. And somehow we made something out of it.

W.D.V.: Anybody in the party come to your defense on that?

Reed: Oh yeah, we had a hearing. I just called the committee together and said look, anybody that knows anything about this would they please come forward. Well, they were saying until the day before that they had a check but nobody had it. Oh yeah, people in the party know what this is all about. But the guy that reads it in New York City or Washington, he doesn't know. You don't know. All you can do is take my word for it if you choose. You don't know it. There's no Joe Welch for us.

[Interruption]

Reed: We have a cause, you might say.

W.D.V.: Yeah, minority party always has a cause until it becomes the

governing party and becomes more pragmatic. So you say the difference is basically because of an ideology?

Reed:

J.B.: Would you say the Republican party tends to be more ideological in the South than elsewhere in the country?

Reed: Yeah. I'd use the word philosophical, but anyway. . .

J.B.: What's going to be the effect of Watergate in Republican party development in the South?

Reed: Oh, it's hurt, but hurt less than in other areas.

J.B.: Hurt in what ways? Has it hurt in candidate recruitment?

Reed: Yeah. Because candidate is going to think about everything, of course. He's going to fine tune in on problems more than the voter or the guys talking him into running. So it has that effect on that, yeah.

J.B.: And it's also hurt this realignment process, or has it?

Reed: Well, you know, we all look for excuses. I don't think it's been that big. . . it's hurt, of course, but I still am going to say us less than the rest of the country. It hasn't helped, I'm sure. It's hurt, but to a less degree.

W.D.V.: Is there more cynicism about politicians among southerners? Let's take this state.

Reed: Oh, I don't know. Well, even this state, I don't know. I don't really know. I just don't know that much about the rest of the country.

W.D.V.: Is there more volatility when you look at candidates? Say the Democratic primaries for governor.

Reed: I don't think so, but I don't know. I haven't really cased the country enough to know. No, I think there's probably not as much interest here. We have a lower vote turnout.

W.D.V.: But it tends to be more personality oriented.

Reed: Oh, sure. Yeah, that's very definitely so. That part, right.

Because we haven't established a party system.

[Interruption]

--in areas like Jones county and some areas close to Jackson, sometimes here. It comes and goes.

[End of tape. End of interview.]