

Interview with Robert Vance, Democratic state chairman of Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama, July 16, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter de Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Vance: A structured interview or do you ramble?

Jack Bass: We ramble. Let's talk about your re-election first.

A good take off point. so far as what that means to George Wallace?

Vance: You have to [ask/answer?] that sort of in fragments.

[Unclear.] Probably doesn't mean a whole heck of a lot to him. Didn't need to mean anything to him. The only thing that was of any significance was, as I saw it, that he tried and failed. And that apparently cost him a little something, at least judging from the press that I've seen.

J.B.: He said afterwards. . . his version afterwards, was that you promised to support him in 1976. Could you tell us about. . . what did you say to him?

Vance: You know, a little bit of a curious twist is being given to this thing.

J.B.: That's why I wanted to get it from you.

Vance: He's been suggesting that there was actually some sort of deal. Here you're on a collision course and you have a knock down drag out and one guy wins and the one that didn't win says "Well, we had a deal to start with." I don't know whether he's suggesting that that's why he lost, but it just didn't make any difference. I told him in January of this year, when he was complaining about my not having voted for him. I didn't vote for him for a very simple reason. That I was

Interview number A-0023 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

not at the '72 convention as party chairman. I was there as the elected delegate from a specific numbered district. In '72 the party chairman didn't have a place as such. In '68 I had been there as party chairman. I was given an automatic seat and I voted, in '68, the way I think the party chairman is supposed to vote. (Is there fresh coffee? Bring me some.) And that is, the way the majority of the popularly elected delegates voted. And I said I'll do the same thing in '76. And in my judgment the majority of them are going to vote for you. Now that isn't any hell of a big concession and it doesn't really have any news value, for one very simple reason if for no other. The rules of the party now require it. The proportional representation system is applicable to elected delegates, is applicable to delegates elected by the state committee. And they must also reflect the same popular will as do the elected. It would be unlikely that I would be selected as one of the representatives of the black community; in my judgment, the white delegates, for the most part if not unanimously, will support the governor. I was the only white delegate elected last time who [didn't vote for him?]

[Interruption on tape.]

It's perhaps more academic than real, because what he cares about is who I vote for when I get to the convention. I care about why I do what I do. And I haven't gone and jumped across the fence from one side to the other. I've maintained a course of action which I think is not only consistent but required. It's required for me to discharge my duties because of the standards I try to maintain for myself and it's required by party rules at the present time.

Walter de Vries: Why all the significance attached to this election? We talked to Gov Patterson. He went through the same thing and he

said that the fight that he went through and the promises that he had to make and the patronage he had to come through with just weren't worth the fight. But he was told he had to go through with the fight and he had to win the chairmanship. Why all the significance attached to it? I mean is the chairman that important in this state?

Vance: I don't think so.

W.D.V.: Why would a governor, just renominated with 60% of the vote, take on something like that if he didn't know he was going to win it?

Vance: Didn't you ask him?

W.D.V.: We asked him.

Vance: What did he say?

W.D.V.: Well, I'm asking you.

Vance: I don't know. He's the one that has to answer. I couldn't do anything more than speculate. I'd speculate that he had bad advice. I speculate that perhaps it rankled him a little more than some of us thought it should. . . when he went over the United States in 1968 and 1972. . . that people in other states pointed out "Well, he doesn't have his own party behind him in Alabama. He doesn't have the black people behind him in Alabama. He doesn't have labor behind him in Alabama." Of course because those are three areas where .

W.D.V.: Is that what that vote meant? Was it a pro Wallace vote and anti Wallace vote?

Vance: The chairmanship? Sure. It wasn't pro me or anti me. No, wait a minute. The votes that were not for me were pro Wallace votes. I don't know that the votes that were for me were necessarily anti Wallace votes. The votes for Burt ^{Holton} ~~Hoffton~~, with the exception of two or three that were purely personal, were people on the state committee who said

first and foremost my allegiance it to George Wallace. I don't think really that there's. . . you can't ever tell. . . but I don't really think there's any significant number of people who said "I think Bob Vance is a dirty son of a bitch and I just want to get rid of him, regardless who the chairman is." There may be some around. But I think primarily the people who voted for Burt were voting the way George wanted them to vote because he wanted them to vote that way. And some of them didn't agree with it as the wise course of action. The press here has suggested all along that that wasn't the smart thing for him to do. He should have worked toward mutual accommodation from the beginning, shouldn't have tried to up end me. Because I was of more value to him than any one else would be if I were cooperating with him and I apparently was.

J.B.: You say that since '72, though, that he's been making a fairly conscious effort to overcome past antipathies with blacks and organized labor in so far as his national image is concerned.

Vance: Yeah.

J.B.: And he's been fairly successful at that, is that right?

Vance: He has had a significant measure of success, yes. I don't mean to say that more than a small minority of blacks support him. I think it's under ten percent. But the projection that's being made to the country is most significant.

J.B.: Have you done or had anyone on your staff do any sort of analysis of the election returns this year to determine just what percent of the black vote did go for Wallace?

Vance: I have not nor has any member of my staff nor has any ~~xxxxx~~ reason to. I have been advised by a good many people that have done it what the divisions were and the consensus seems to be around 7%.

J.B.: We have heard 12.

Vance: I'm not going to testify about who's right and who's wrong. I think that. . . my gut feeling would be that the 7 would be better than the 12.

W.D.V.: I don't want to dwell on that chairmanship fight, but does the state executive committee. . . is it fairly representative of the Democratic party organization, whatever that is, in the state?

Vance: What is it in the state?

W.D.V.: That's what I'm asking. Is it fairly representative of everybody who holds county offices. . .

Vance: No.

W.D.V.: . . . and would it be representative of the rank and file Democratic voter?

Vance: It is to the latter and it is not to the former. County officials tend to be more conservative than people and the county political organizations tend to be more conservative than the people. I'm using conservative in the bizarre sense that it is used in this environment, not in any sort of reasonable sense.

W.D.V.: Okay, but if they reflect rank and file then how come he loses.

Vance: They don't. The county organizations reflect rank and file.

W.D.V.: I thought you had it the other way around, I misunderstood you.

Vance: The state committee is pretty representative of the people of the state. One elected from each legislative district.

W.D.V.: Out of the county organizations.

Vance: No, no, hell no. The difference is just that. The county

organizations are volunteers. It's the activists.

W.D.V.: The courthouse bunch.

Vance: Yes. And they tend to be more Wallace oriented than people generally. The larger percentage of county chairmen are pro Wallace than people are pro Wallace. 65% of the people are pro Wallace, or whatever the figure is this year. When the figure was 50-50 between Wallace and Brewer, 80% of the county chairmen were pro Wallace. The explanation for that is something we could speculate about, but I. . . it is a fact.

W.D.V.: What is the basis of the anti Wallace feeling as it was reflected in that vote?

Vance: I thought after I corrected myself that I said there wasn't an anti Wallace feeling.

J.B.: He's talking about the governor's race now, aren't you.

W.D.V.: Yes

J.B.: The vote in the governor's race.

Vance: Oh, okay.

W.D.V.: You've got a third of the Democrats who voted in that primary opposed to Wallace.

Vance: At least a third of the people just don't like him.

W.D.V.: Is that a hard core kind of a vote that's been there. . . .

Vance: I think it's pretty well there. I had predicted last year, in talking to him and his central advisers, that he had about 35% of the people that wouldn't vote for him. They'd vote for or whoever ran against him. But that he'd get the rest. And there wasn't any active opposition this year. . . no formidable figure on the horizon. It was a sort of curious phenomenon. His personality so dominates the

scene that I don't think a strong candidate would have gotten a heck of a lot bigger vote than the aggregate of that number. For example, had Brewer run in this go around, I doubt Brewer would have gotten more than 42 or 43% of the vote.

W.D.V.: How do you explain that. He's one of the . . . he's the only one left in an executive office since 1962 that's got that kind of support anywhere in the South or even in the country. Generally politicians, you know, tend to go downhill. And here he is with almost two thirds of the vote.

Vance: [George?] has always gone up hill on the end of his term. He hasn't made the same mistakes that politicians do that go down hill on the end of their term. I don't know. . . it has something to do with his style and then there are two or three other things to be added to it. One is his getting shot. A tremendous number of people like him or are sympathetic toward him by reason of his being wounded. And that's a natural thing. It's no reflection against him. Another thing is that he has become a heck of a lot more respectable on the national scene. And we have in Alabama that curious Baptist mentality that we've got to be number one at whatever we do. We've got a pig headed ass over here that calls himself a university president at Sanford University and he is determined that he's going to have the largest law school in the South. No matter that some of the faculty can't read or write. That's not a matter of concern. It's a Baptist school, incidentally. The important thing is that we have the biggest building and the most students of anyplace in the South. Got to be number one. And there's a lot to that. It's partially a defensive reaction. But it's part of the psychology of the region, I think. When George starts becoming number one in other areas, he wins a terrific following down here. He's showing those people

something and it has a very beneficial effect at home. During the '72 delegates race he wasn't really a very formidable candidate in Alabama until he won in Florida. And when he won in Florida these other guys who had come in here and started organizing campaigns looked around and they just dissolved. If he could go outside of the state and win acceptance, not for himself but for us at home, then we could do little else but be behind him.

W.D.V.: In the South, though, he is unique in that regard. Nobody else has that kind of--

Vance: Hell, George Wallace is unique in every regard in the United States. You don't have to yourself in literally doesn't approach politics exactly like anybody else.

I don't think you can except to a very limited degree.

W.D.V.: Can you speak to that uniqueness?

Vance: I don't know what it is. I really don't know the why of it. Just a combination of the forces of the times and his chemistry. He has a reasonably accurate antennae in so far as gaging the mood of the people. He's a charismatic man. And he has been willing to set his course in accordance with what his antennae told him the course ought to be. He's just a very skilled craftsman and has the charisma to pull it off. I think he's a very accomplished political figure. His antennae isn't as infallible as Jim Allen's, who has the ultimate antennae. But the personality is very different and follow through is very different.

J.B.: Where does Allen fit into the picture?

Vance: Into what picture?

J.B.: The picture of Democratic politics in Alabama or politics in Alabama.

Vance: He's at the top of every poll that anybody's taken in the last five years. Number one.

W.D.V.: But does he do anything in the party in terms of helping other candidates or raising money, that sort of thing? Any party activities?

Vance: Yeah, he has made. . . . I wouldn't say that he goes overboard but he's been helpful to the party.

W.D.V.: How about Sparkman?

Vance: He was helpful to Sparkman. He was helpful to individual candidates the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner. Been very helpful to me personally. One of the most accommodating people you'll ever want to meet on political party matters. I think I get along with him perhaps as well as I do because I do not try to put him in a position that I perceive would be an uncomfortable position for him to be in. I think that's what the party chairman is supposed to do with all office holders. Never force anybody into a position that is not their position. And I believe I pretty well understand his position. I hope and I think that he probably has confidence that I'm not going to embarrass him, not going to maneuver him into a spot that he has difficulty with. I'm not going to ask him to do something that he can't do. Or if I do, I'll put it to him in that way. You feel like you could do so and so? And if he doesn't, he'll tell me. Have excellent relationship with him. Disagree with him on a great many votes. But as a human being he's just a great guy. Wonderful political craftsman. He'd be the last person in the world to tell you that he has a strong personality or oratorical ability or if you just looked at his raw material you'd say that guy'll never make it. But he's got a beautiful political

instinct. And he enjoys it unlike his predecessor. Hill disliked politics. Looked at people with disdain. Hated asking people to vote for him. Wouldn't ask for money. Never asked anybody for money. Either wrote a check himself or some of his supporters had to raise it without telling him what they were doing. Allen loves people, loves politics. His offices are in this building. If he has time on his hands he'll just wander down on the street and shake hands with people. And he thoroughly enjoys it. He campaigns the first year of his new term just like it was the last. Goes into all 67 counties every year and holds what his staff refers to as their meeting, eating and greeting parties. And usually by June or July he's been in every county. Mending fences everywhere he goes. Just beautiful to watch. He does everything at home that a United States Senator ought to do to stay out of trouble. And his voting record, although I disagree with it much of the time, is a mirror of the attitudes of the people of Alabama, which he apparently perceives as the responsibility of a Senator. Sparkman approaches it differently. He doesn't try to ascertain what the Alabama consensus is on a given vote because he has a different notion of leadership and thinks that he's given advantage of a lot more information than the people back home and he tries to vote what he conceives to be the best interest of the state or the country. Allen generally feels like a representative should vote like the people want him to vote. And by George he does.

W.D.V.: What do you think of the assertion that Wallace has sort of arrested the political development of the Democratic and Republican parties?

Vance: You talking about nationally?

W.D.V.: No, state. The Democratic party, for example, in that it's almost impossible for new leadership to rise up in the party because he dominates the scene. The Republicans, they don't want to field anybody against him because it's hopeless. So in a sense everything sort of stands still until he leaves the scene.

Vance: I don't think you can blame Gov Wallace with the failures of the Republican party. They are failures because they are doomed to be failures regardless of who the Democratic governor is. They don't want to succeed. Never have. And with the exception of a brief period in the early '60s when they had a few aggressive people in from outside that were running the party. But aside from that, during my lifetime, we've had the attitude of what my father used to call post office Republicans. And he was a Republican. That it dominated the party. Hell, if you've got too many of them, you've got to cut the melon in too many pieces! And that's the last thing in the world you want to do if you're a Republican office holder or patronage chief, chairman. Oh, they would like to sit around and dream about having a Republican governor and a Republican Senator, but they're not willing to do what it takes to have one. They're not willing to move power centers away from the country club down here to where the folks are. And there's no inclination whatever on their part to change. I can drive you to within three miles of my home and we would have crossed the entire power center of the Republican party for at least this third of the state. And anybody worth seeing, we would have passed their house. And they wouldn't have it any other way. It's just. . . not interested. I don't think you can blame Gov Wallace on that. He's just been a highly successful. . . not the most popular leader of all times in the Democratic party in Alabama percentage wise. But intensity of feeling among his supporters may be

higher or. . . Big Jim had rather intense supporters, too. So far as the Democratic party is concerned I don't believe that you can blame the governor for arresting its development. It's probably developed more in the last 20 years than it had up to that time. And he's been on the scene in the last 20 years. It's developing more now than it has at any time in the past. We don't have a one party tradition. We have a no party tradition. And whatever development we have has come about fairly recently.

W.D.V.: What's going to happen when he leaves? Either for Washington or whatever?

Vance: I think that everything will probably come out very nicely from my point of view. Had he left the scene in the mid '60s and had the Republicans been interested in taking a cold, pragmatic view of political development in Alabama, they could have torn this state apart. We could have flopped over into the Republican column very quickly. But I am inclined to believe that that opportunity is passed. I don't think they can do it now under any circumstances and I doubt that the opportunity will again be comparable to that. I think that we were very nearly in a position in the middle '60s where the Republicans, if they had been real gut cutters, could have painted the Democratic party as the party of the black people and the Republican party as the party of the white people. At least south of Birmingham.

J.B.: You mean if Wallace hadn't been on the scene?

Vance: Yes. And with him on the scene it got a little shaky around '68. Exactly where we were going. But I just don't think that exists any more. I don't think it exists most particularly right now, that opportunity. We may even start using words differently again. I've always

been sort of intrigued by the fact that we were conservatives. I'm a moderate conservative. Some people are middle of the road conservatives and some of them are right wing conservatives and some of them are extreme right wing conservatives. But nobody's a liberal except a real son of a bitch. It's something you call somebody. And I think probably when the people of Alabama begin using that particular code word--which meant that you were opposed to the position of the federal government with respect to race--that they didn't have any appreciation at all as to any sort of classical connotation of the word. But the longer we start using it, the longer we kept using it, I think the more genuinely conservative we've become. So we may be in the funny position that our gamesmanship of vocabulary is leading us down the conservative path away from our traditional populism. I'm not sure. But at any rate the pressure there doesn't seem to be as intense as it was in the past.

J.B.: Do you see a return to that tradition of populism after Wallace?

W.D.V.: Or if you take race out of the thing, do you see populism re-emerging?

Vance: I see a good bit more genuine something other than populism. It's sort of a mixed bag. The best thing that populism has going for it is a bunch of thieves around Nixon. The excesses of the corrupt, corporate element is probably doing more for the return of populism than anything else. In the absence of that, I don't think it would have done that way. This may be more a national phenomena. I think that we were beginning to think more and more conservatively on issues that didn't have any emotional impact at all.

W.D.V.: You mean economically?

Vance: Yeah, economic issues and a variety of issues which were not directly in the social stream. I do think that since all of the things that have been happening in the last few years, that probably it's sort of given the populist view a boost. And I do think that Wallace has a very strong populist strain.

W.D.V.: How? We hear that and we don't see it.

Vance: I'm not talking about programs. I'm talking about what he articulates. I asked one of the political leaders in the northern part of the state why Gov Wallace carried ^{Jackson} ~~Tallen~~ county. Which is up in the northeast corner and has no significant black population. He said for the same reason Big Jim carried it. Same people voted for him. Now a writer for the New York Times would never understand that. But it's really a very elementary thing which I'm sure you understand. They identify with him. We little people. And he's going to kick 'them'-- whoever they are--in the butt. Those big and powerful people who are giving us a hard time. Whoever it may be at the moment. In Big Jim's time it might have been a big corporate interest. In George Wallace's time it might be a big governmental interest. I don't think you can take populism and carry it into welfarism.

W.D.V.: Are you talking about a we against them kind of thing?

Vance: It's really against big.

W.D.V.: Yeah, all right.

Vance: Us little folks against them big ^{mules} ~~xxxxx~~. They use various expressions.

J.B.: Is that expression still used?

Vance: Yeah, more ~~about~~ [by?] newspaper writers than [about/by?] people. But I see a good bit of populist strain in his rhetoric.

W.D.V.: Yeah, we do too. But when you look at where rehtoric becomes reality. . . . You take that tax reform, for example.

Vance: You have to be from outside Alabama, though, to understand that though. You have no standard of comparison if you're looking around on the inside.

J.B.: Explain that.

Vance: Well, they had a license tag out some years ago, it was before George, that said Alabama the tax happy state. And it was, you know, pretty well received. And the fact that it was well received indicated that ~~that~~ ^{a good} many people felt like this state had a fairly oppressive level of taxes, as states went. That simply meant that they had no basis of comparison because Alabama is 50th in level of taxation and has been. And you can't point to anybody that has a lower level of taxes. It was a manifestly inapt slogan. If you don't know that, it's not hard to convince you that maybe that might be correct, though. You recent paying taxes, so you think that we have high taxes. As the state goes. If George says that he's going to do a progressive thing, and he does anything, you really don't understand how much he does unless you compare it to what maybe Oregon did or what maybe North Carolina did. ^{Whether} When a particular accomplishment excels or not, really is viewed from a qualitative standpoint as a matter of comparison with something, either another standard or some ideal. The easiest thing is a comparison with some other existing fact.

W.D.V.: No, but within the system, there could be efforts to reform the tax structure. You could take off the sales tax on food and drugs. You could raise the, get a constitutional amendment to raise the 7% to whatever income tax. . . . Within the system, you could make it more progressive, whatever the hell that means, and less regressive. That

would be populist, would it not?

Vance: Uhhuh.

J.B.: It would certainly be tax reform.

W.D.V.: Now here's a guy that's institutionally got one of the most powerful offices in the country in terms of his political power, popularity, his relationship with the legislature, ability to call the shoots, but really no significant efforts to do that sort of thing.

Vance: He's learned that he doesn't have to do that sort of thing. If you can keep the masses of people happy with rhetoric and with your position on the emotional issues, and you keep special interests happy with your substantive program, then viewing it from a level of success purely as a political precedent, you've done fairly well.

J.B.: That's a very succinct analysis of exactly what George Wallace has done.

Vance: I never disputed it.

W.D.V.: He doesn't either. He says, for example, why should. . . . He says the people voted for a 7% ceiling--

J.B.: 5%

W.D.V.: 5%, I'm sorry. They wanted that, they voted for it. Why should I tinker with it?

Vance: I never have known. . . . I may be wrong about this and I might not be fair to him, but I don't recall his ever having taken a position on something just because it was right.

W.D.V.: That was what I was going to ask you next. Can you think of any position on an issue or a program where it may have differed slightly from the bias and the prejudice and so on of the people out there that he's leading? Where he took some position other than reenforcing what they already believe?

Vance: I never knew him to take a position that he didn't have some interest in taking other than the inherent merit of the position. Most legislation he doesn't care about, he doesn't fool with. The administration has no position on the great majority of the voted legislation.

W.D.V.: Has he ever taken a position on anything where there was some difference between what he thought and what he believes to be his people thought?

Vance: I never knew him to have that difference. He never discloses a difference like that. I don't think that the judge is firmly committed to a separate set of ideas or principles or standards that just exist in his mind. I think he's more flexible than that. He's firmly committed to doing what his people agree with. I think he's a totally political animal.

J.B.: You became chairman of the party when?

Vance: '66.

J.B.: Compare your relationship with Wallace at that time with what it is now. And how it evolved.

Vance: In 1966 he didn't know me from that fish. I'd met him several times. I knew him. But he didn't know who I was. I was just one of those people. And the so-called loyalists won a small majority of the state committee. Sparkman was up for re-election, as was Mrs Wallace up for election, in the general election. This was between the primary and the general election. He felt like number one he should have the right to name the chairman, because governors had named chairman in the past, uniformly. And it is an advantage to a governor to have the chairman, because it makes things a lot neater. Things like filling vacancies and nominations when you have a death or something of that sort. Just get a governor's man every time. And we don't fill a heck

of a lot of vacancies but we did fill a supreme court place in the last four years and two or three senators and several representatives. And some odds and ends that he was unhappy about. But he felt that he ought to have the chairman and he was particularly concerned about this, looking at it in retrospect, because of his '68 posture. If we had done in '66 what we did in '70, he could never have run in '68 as a third party candidate. So that was a matter of some concern to him.

J.B.: Meaning what?

Vance: Well, we withdrew from popular vote the nomination of presidential electors. They are now by persons who are committed to vote for the national party nominee. If Wallace never left the party in Alabama. He just took the party with him out on a jaunt and came back in. It was a wierd excursion, but we knew what we were doing when we let him do it. Just didn't have the support to do anything else other than that and what we were trying to do was hold the pieces together until we got past that point. We were successful in doing it. But at any rate, in '66 he wanted the chairman and he didn't have the votes. It was, as I recall 44 to 29. That doesn't add up to the right numbers. Adds up to 73 and there are only 72, so either 43 to 29 or 44 to 28. He tried to put the muscle on Sparkman because he felt Sparkman could make the state committee do what he wanted done. And Sparkman just wouldn't acknowledge that he had anything to do with it, which he didn't really. . . . I wasn't his candidate. He wasn't pushing me at all. His people boycotted the meeting. They just didn't show. I was elected unanimously. And then we had sort of a wierd existance through that year, where I was going around pretending that we had a unified party. And Mrs Wallace and Sparkman wouldn't appear on the same platform with each other. And I was going telling county chairman. . . .

They said "We want to have a big barbeque and get both Wallace and Sparkman down here for it." And I said "Gee, I sure will help you. I'll see if we can work it." But we never could work it out schedule-wise. You know, it was a wild scene. But at any rate, we got through that year. And I said only good things about him and tried to act like all was sweetness and light. And then from '66 to '68 I got along reasonably well with him, while his wife was governor. I went down and made overtures to him and. . . . I don't mean to suggest that I had any close relationship. But I had a relationship. . . . When mechanical things came up where the chairman needs to coordinate with the governor, or vice versa, it was very easy to do. No problems. He lectured me an awful lot. About how the people of Alabama would never go along with anybody like LBJ or the Kennedys or Rockefeller or people like that. And I listened a lot. But he was revving up his third party thing. Well, we worked out this sort of schizophrenic way that we could straddle the '68 presidential election. And he really didn't give us much trouble in '68. He didn't make an all out effort to fool with us. He sort of looked with disdain on what the party was doing. And then after his wife died, Brewer was in office for several years. And Brewer and I are close friends. He had been a big Wallace supporter and we had not been politically close, but we'd gone to college together. Then when Brewer and Wallace ran against each other, I did something that made him mad. I don't really understand what it is. But he injected me in the running. I had not really gotten committed to the idea of running for re-election until he started making speeches in which I was frequently mentioned. And we beat the hell out of his people. $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 1. At the same time he was beating Brewer. But that was by a very close vote. We really beat him in the first go around. And so from '70 up until this

time, we had about a $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 edge on the state committee. And he didn't act like he liked me at all for about the first couple of years. You know, it's just like I needed a passport to get into Montgomery. And starting about a year ago I started making overtures to some of his people to see if we couldn't get along a little better. And he was acting like we were getting along better until the state committee race came up this time. And within his organization there are two factions. And one of them felt like that what he should do is sort of try to build better relations with the group in the Democratic party that I'm representative of. And the other faction felt that he ought to kill that son of a bitch dead. And he vacillated for a long time about what he was going to do and finally he went with the faction that's headed by his brother Jerald. Has Snyder and Mickey Griffin and the hoodlum element attached to it rather than what I consider to be the more responsible faction. And they took out after me and they missed. I don't know where we are now. I'm going to continue to say nice things about him and probably. . . . As long as he stays in the party I'm going to show him respect and deference. I'm trying to look beyond this four years and it's not going to do the party any good for me to be sniping at him. So I'll not be doing it. And I think if he runs for president in '76 that the people of Alabama will endorse his effort. I'm not really guessing about that. I perhaps pay more attention to polls than I should, but in '72 the people of Alabama were not sold on the idea that he should make a presidential race when it started out. A minority of them, about 40%, felt like that was the thing he ought to do. As of this year a fairly good majority think that's fine. There's been a shift in public opinion favoring his national efforts. And that causes me to think that

he probably would have pretty universal support within the state in his presidential campaign. And I won't give him any trouble on that. I'll go out and act like a party chairman's supposed to act when he's got a candidate from his home state. Do nothing to embarrass him. Be supportive in so far as mechanical arrangements are concerned. And if I'm an automatic delegate I'll vote for him.

J.B.: What's going to be the significance of this mini-convention?

Vance: Not much. It's sort of been watered down.

J.B.: The procedural changes within the Democratic party in so far as what they will mean in selecting a presidential candidate in 1976. Can you summarize that for us and just what that's going to mean and what those changes are? How it's going to effect George Wallace?

Vance: Yeah. There are two that are probably most significant as far as Wallace is concerned. One is that state parties are allowed to select up to 25% of the delegates. The other is the so-called proportional representation. Wallace has never understood the game in so far as the hunt for delegates. I don't have a bit of sympathy with any of the candidates, whether it's Wallace or Humphrey or any of the rest of them crying about McGovern. McGovern didn't rig the rules. He just read them.

[End of side of tape.]

--from day one to the end of the race. But notwithstanding the fact that he came close to destroying us as a political party, he didn't do anything in so far as the rules are concerned that was .
He just read the damn things and played according to the rules. And that's the way you're supposed to operate when you're a pro. And people like Hubert Humphrey, whom I dearly love, may have comprehended the rules as an intellectual matter, but they never really absorbed what was being said.

And they didn't act on it. They just some how or another felt like they could do business as usual. LBJ thought he could run for president by having friends from all the states in the South. And he got up there and found out that the damn Senators hadn't delivered delegates. Had other things to do when it came time to select delegates. Well, Humphrey some how or another felt that he could go around and pat governors on the head and win. And that wasn't the way it was. Now Wallace felt like that he could go out and stir up big crowds and win. And that wasn't the way it was either. Goddamn it, you had to go out and do the technical things that were required. If the delegates in Pennsylvania were elected individually, you had to have a candidate in every one of those individual precincts. And Wallace went to Pennsylvania and came out second in number of votes and he came out with two delegates. McGovern, who came out third, came out with some god awful number, 30 or 40 something like that. And it was just a matter of not paying attention to the rules of the game. This time the rules are cast in a different way that should help Wallace. Everywhere outside the South. He can now go anywhere in the United States in his quest for delegates and come out with something. The proportional representation concept indicates that if he's got 15% of the vote, he's supposed to get 15% of the delegates or a proportionate number of the delegates.

J.B.: That's in states with primaries?

Vance: That's in states with anything. Conventions or anything else. It's more applicable in convention states than it is in primary states. You have a precinct meeting with 100 people there and you're naming five delegates to the county convention. If ²⁰~~20~~ of those people are Wallace people, they're supposed to have one of the delegates. Goes

all the way down to the precinct level. Which means that in Orange county, California, Wallace can go in, zero in, target that area and come out with some delegates out of California. Means that instead of getting two delegates out of Pennsylvania he ought to get 50. It also means he gives up some in the South. But it gives him the entire United States to play with. So if he can afford now, to go into Indiana and campaign Gary and come out with a satchel full of delegates from Gary, Indiana. Or go into. . . well, he took the whole state of Michigan. But he can also hit all of the industrial states and go into areas where he can come out with delegates.

J.B.: But isn't he still going to have to. . .

Vance: He's still got to put the pieces together.

J.B.: He's got to have somebody down there doing the organizational work, right?

Vance: Yeah, he'll a little light on staff, too. That's what got him in trouble on the state committee race.

J.B.: By extension the state committee race also raises strong question about competence in his staff.

Vance: Yeah, it might have been the best thing that happened to him. I mean by that it might have opened his eyes about the incompetence of his staff. He doesn't have Abe Ewing, he doesn't have Turnipseed and he doesn't have Bill Jones and he doesn't have Cecil Jackson or Seymour ^{Trammel} ~~Trimble~~ or the people that put all that complex stuff together in '67 for his '68 race. He's got Snyder who. . . I don't know anything much about his competence. He's just a name so far as I've been able to tell. And that's it.

J.B.: Where does ^Gerald Wallace fit into the picture?

Vance: He seems to be the leader of the faction, the outside faction.

There's been an inside and an outside. One inside state government and one outside. And he comes and goes. And I think he's in favor and out of favor periodically. But Snyder has [name], Frank Long, Whitey Whitesall, various others in the government have looked to Gerald sort of as their spiritual leader. And Red Bamberg and Pinnington [?] and a few others that look to Gen. Hardin. They're very different. I think Hardin is as straight as a dime. Not only do I think he would not make any deals, but I don't think he would allow anybody else to make any deals and he seems to have, as his only wish, that the governor have a successful administration. I respect him a good bit. He'd cut my throat if he thought it would be in the governor's interest to do it, but he is a high calibre person. All of the habitual bag men that have been running around Montgomery all my life, the guys that have got asphalt to sell and want to build a whiskey store or something--

[Interruption on tape.]

J.B.: They're all opposed to Hardin.

Vance: Yeah, they like that other goat. And that's the goat that wanted to do me in, maybe my judgment of him is a little harsher for that reason. I don't claim objectivity. It got pretty tough down in Miami. I don't know what was going on because I wasn't in the inside of it. But I do know that the two factions got in such a fuss that one of them wouldn't let the other one on the floor where the governor was staying in the Ambassador Hotel. And they, at that time. . . of course the governor wasn't very strong. . . and the Snyder group was in the saddle. Because it was down there at the national convention, which is their area of operation. I assume that when they got back to Montgomery that sort of the tide shifted a bit.

[Interruption on tape.]

A lot of my information about that is hearsay.

J.B.: What do you see is the role of the party? In Alabama.

Vance: The role of the party is to mind the store. That is to say, is to conduct elections and to maintain all of our traditional processes as institutions that will allow a majority of the people to select their governmental officials. And to maintain some sort of reasonable relationship with the national party and to conduct its affairs within the state and hopefully to promote it within the state. And it is to reach out and try to involve people in the government and open doors and do innovative things in so far as new people in the political processes.

J.B.: That include candidate recruitment?

Vance: I don't recruit candidates except people from habitually unrepresented groups. And maybe we will in the future. It just hasn't been done.

J.B.: Does that mean you do recruit black candidates?

Vance: Yes. And young candidates and women.

[interruption.]

Of the older ones passing from the scene. . . not necessarily passing from the scene.

J.B.: You think U. W. Clemons is the guy?

Vance: He's the comer, yeah. If you want another view, completely non-institutional view, Tony Harrison's a young tiger that's been elected to the state house of representatives. And he came out of nowhere. Slap out of the. . . you know, he's a Kennedy type of guy that just swung in on his own. Arthur Shores and Judge Peter Hall are two that were here throughout all the period of evolution, that have been able to see it

from the beginning to the end. Arthur Shores was the head black in this community for 23 years. And he voluntarily relinquished it three or four years ago to somebody else. It's the office of the local group that delivers the black vote. And he is really an outstanding guy. His home's been blown up lots of times. You know, he was the original civil rights lawyer here. One that got university when they tried to tear it up back 20 years ago. And Peter Hall was right along with him in so far as time is concerned. They were the ones Bull Connor would always go and try to put in jail first. Now Arthur is president pro tem of the city council and Peter Hall is city judge. And they are both still very active in state wide black affairs. Pete is vice president of the Alabama Democratic Conference. Arthur is on the state Democratic executive committee and a real power. Another guy in Birmingham that you will find will have a fresh non-institutional view of things because he's from outside the black hierarchy is Richard Arrington. Dr Richard Arrington, who is an educator. He's on the city council and he gets elected to things just on his own. And he wins in white districts. So does Arthur Shores. But those are some that you can get. . . five in Birmingham that would be. . . between the five of them . . . be representative of several different points of view and very knowledgeable.

La Floor

J.B.: How does John ~~Paul~~ fit in?

Vance: He's an old whore down in Mobile that's been making money for lots of years by selling out the black people. You buy a place on what's called the pink ticket and he puts you on the ballot.

J.B.: Question on that. Do you buy a place or do you pay for the place after you get on there?

Vance: You buy it going in, the front end. Green money.

J.B.: How about in Birmingham?

Vance: Ain't none of that ever gone on.

J.B.: How is the financing of getting out the black vote done in Birmingham?

Vance: Depends on what the race is.

J.B.: Say its a state wide election. You got all kind of races going on. Got legislative races. . .

Vance: You're not talking about a lot of money. You're talking about \$1,000 to get the ballots printed up, maybe.

J.B.: How about carpooling and this sort of thing? Any of that?

Vance: They don't hit you up. There's one area out in ~~Beisemer~~ **Bessemer** where. . . .

J.B.: Do they do that sort of thing? Organize car pools?

Vance: Oh yes. There's one area out in ~~Beisemer~~ **Bessemer** where they'll hit up candidates for some expense money. But it actually goes for expenses. There's one little group out there that's a separate organization. Under Asbury Howard. But so far as I've been able to tell. . . I don't have close relations with him. . . but so far as I've been able to tell, scrupulously honest. They'll get up \$500 or \$1,000 in expense money and they'll have cars out on the road using up that much or more gasoline. But the local. . . Jefferson county Progressive Council has resources. It has rather wealthy backers.

J.B.: The money comes from within the black community?

Vance: Yeah, I think the great portion of it. . . . I make contributions on get out the vote campaigns and general elections. And in complicated situations. Every once in a while the party would make a contribution. But that would be for printing costs or something of that sort and it's usually been a relatively small item. But they generate

most. . . . They don't come around with their hand out. And that's been the thing that I've been so teed off about that Mobile crowd for. I think they're giving. . . in Mobile. . . they're giving black leaders a bad name because their hand's been out all the time and they've put people on the ticket who were no damn good from the black point of view simply because they could make a deal with them. I'm not as disturbed about it as other black leaders are. But it's disturbed me that we had a big section of votes going, being bartered away that way. It's never existed in Birmingham. . . so far as I know. . .

J.B.: How about Montgomery?

Vance: So far as I know, Montgomery does not have that problem to any significant degree. It's got a pretty clean leadership. I've disagreed with a lot of stuff that's gone on in Montgomery, but I haven't detected that sort of activity.

J.B.: Where does John ^{Cashin}~~Cashion~~ fit in?

Vance: Not at all at the moment. He fit in for a good while because he just saw some pretty good opportunities and cashed in on them. Cashion was a guy that couldn't make it on his own because he's basically an ^{Oreo.}~~[Oreo?]~~ He resists very much being a black man. Jay Cooper's a little bit like John Cashion. One of the members of the state executive committee, a remarkable black woman, was talking to Jay a couple of weeks ago and he was trying to talk her into doing something she wasn't going to do. And she said "Well, Jay, you know what the folk say"--they say it in the singular. He said "What's that?" "Well, it looks like Jay's finally decided that he's black after all." Now that implies a lot more than you. . . . It implies that up til now Jay didn't know. Both of them were born into affluent, financial secure families. They went off and

had a good education. They chose for their friends in the early part of their adult life white people and moved in white communities. And when they came back into the black community it was with the idea of assuming specific leadership roles. And both of them had difficulty in that they couldn't go through and therefore undertook to go around the existing black hierarchy. And John's opportunity was much greater than Jay's because it was in the era when white people were acting like damn fools in a lot of states. And to be a militant black leader just opened up all kind of possibilities. And put together. . . . He's just bright as he can be. A little bit nutty. But he's just as smart as a damn whip. And he put together some pretty good stuff and he had some good people backing him and he moved in Green county when the white people wouldn't make reasonable accommodation. And moved in two or three other counties. He was able to grandstand it from there. Now they've decided in Green county they don't need him and in Lowndes, they've returned pretty much to the party.

J.B.: How about in Green, are they still running on. . . ?

Vance: Yeah, they're still running on a third party, on a splinter party ticket there. And I think we'll work that out eventually. There's a problem. . . . There's no reason that it can't be worked out now except one, as far as I can see. They have enough black incumbents so they don't like the idea of running in primaries. It's not in the interest of an incumbent to have an open primary.

J.B.: What do they do, nominate by convention?

Vance: They go out in the field and have a mass meeting. And it's pretty easy to get renominated. And from then on its black versus white and you outnumber six or eight to one. It makes the whole process simpler.

You start having a primary, some other black person is liable to run against you.

J.B.: When you're out of Alabama how often do you hear the question has George Wallace really changed?

Vance: Fairly frequently.

W.D.V.: How do you answer it?

Vance: I think all of us have changed. I'm not the guardian of his conscience. I don't know how his attitudes have changed. I know that his manner of presentation and the things that he says have changed a great deal.

W.D.V.: How about the attitudes towards you, the Alabama Democratic party and Wallace? Have they changed in the last 8-10 years?

Vance: Attitudes by people. . .?

W.D.V.: People in the Democratic party. Say like a state chairman last week. Can you detect changes?

Vance: Yeah, they've changed toward Wallace. I was sort of a curiosity at first. I've enjoyed a pretty wide acceptance since I first got involved in national affairs. It's grown over a period of time, but at first I was just sort of, you know, a freak. Who is this young fellow that got elected down there from Wallace's state? My hair was black eight years ago and I was a young fellow. And then I started getting elected to various things, taking part in various things, and I've not had any real problems. . . personally. By reason of the challenges against the state, I began trying to make, build bridges with the more liberal elements of the party. Because they don't understand anything about what's going on down here and they were casting stupid votes on the basis of bad information. And over a period of time I guess I've gotten

into sort of a unique position among southern white leaders. I get along with the southern white leaders and I get along with the more liberal element. Helpful.

W.D.V.: Well, when people raise the question like Jack asked, you know, has Wallace really changed, and you say yes, do they believe you?

Vance: I don't know.

J.B.: Why do you think he's changed? There are two possibilities. One, he's changed because it's in his self interest to change and gives him a better national image, more respectability and that the reading of election returns elsewhere in the South shows that very little will be gained by continuing the old rhetoric. The other explanation for it is that he's been shot, he's a man who has faced death--that term is used--and this can have an effect on somebody.

Vance: Well, there's a third alternative that's immediately apparent and that is that the conditions in the world and in the United States have changed and that all of us adapt to them to some degree. The attitudes of the people of Alabama have changed. The most appropriate action if you were looking solely from the point of view of what is best for the people probably would be an entirely different course than it was in 1962. Is that when he said segregation forever?

W.D.V.: '63.

Vance: January '63.

J.B.: change since '72, though.

Vance: I don't think he's changed much since '72 except that he's . . . matter of personality. It's a personality change he's gone through. I would attribute to his injury. But from '72 to '74 I don't see that great change. . . . My perception of change is between '63 and '74.

J.B.: What is the personality change?

Vance: Well, George is always a very fiesty, aggressive type fellow in one to one dealings. And now he's a very soft spoken--except when he gets excited about an idea--quiet talking sort of fellow. That I would attribute to his physical difficulties. He doesn't lecture you now. Doesn't strut around. Very. . . in some respects almost humble in quiet conversation. At least gives that appearance. Now you get him revved up every once in a while and he'll revert to his old style to some degree. But I think he's been through enough so that anybody would have some sort of personality alterations. I'm sure I would if I were in his position.

W.D.V.: Would you like to see him president or vice president?

Vance: I'm getting very philosophical about the word like. I'd like to see a Democrat elected and aside from that I'm not going to get involved in likes and dislikes at this stage.

W.D.V.: How would you feel if he were?

Vance: I don't know. I'm going to have to think about that a while. I'm not persuaded that he is less competent than the likes of what we've had, particularly in most recent years. And I wouldn't apologize for his competence at that level. His style and his attitudes about an awful lot of things are not the same as mine. And I think when you say what do you want in the presidential level, you always have to say what's my other choices. Compared to what? If you ask me would I prefer to have him as president to Richard Nixon I'd say yes to that question. I think the country would be better off with him president than Richard Nixon. I just don't like the crooks in the White House. Bothers me, somehow. And I don't think George is a crook. He never has done anything

so far as I know that was the least bit shady. That's one criticism I've never found justified in him. Some of the other ones, I've participated in. I have criticized him.

J.B.: When other state chairmen meet and the subject of George Wallace comes up, do they discuss him, do you get a feeling they think of him in terms of him seriously being on the Democratic ticket in 1976?

Vance: No. Not until recently and I can't really say recently whether that's true or not. They're looking more and more at that Harris poll and whoever's poll they've got. Keep scratching their head and wondering how does he keep hanging in there in second place? They received him rather well last week. And the discussion afterwards was an admiration. Some of them sort of begrudging admiration. Some a dislike. But most found something good to say about his appearance.

J.B.: Is there any feeling on the committee that there should be a southerner on the ticket? Not on the committee, but among the chairmen, you know, top people in the--

Vance: I have not heard that articulated a great deal. Chairmen are about as close as anybody we have to being party pros. They're not very. But they don't go around two years ahead of an election, two and a half years of an election, doing a lot of rash speculating. Out of 55 chairmen, when the nominees are all set, 48 will claim that it was really who they were for to start with. That's just the nature of chairmen.

W.D.V.: And yet the past indicates that whenever you take a vote of the state chairmen or the county chairmen long in advance of the convention, probably 8 chances out of 10 they'll be wrong.

Vance: That's not surprising.

W.D.V.: That's a comment you could make about any body involved in

a political organization.

Vance: They're going to vote the ones they're closest to, where their personal interest lies, who would look after my interest best, rather than other things.

J.B.: What would it take for the Democratic party to carry the South again in a presidential election?

Vance: You can't say what one thing. It could be any one of several things. It could be George Wallace heading the ticket. Would carry every state in the South. It could be George Wallace in number two position on the ticket, with somebody that's not just totally unacceptable. It could be a slightly offensive candidate from the southern point of view with another southerner on the ticket and a tip of the hat, George. It could be a sort of middle of the road candidate and another southerner on the ticket. It could be people from completely out of the South and nothing to the South, provided the Republicans mess up enough. So, you know, there's no single answer to that. I don't know who the Republican nominees are going to be. I assume Ford. He doesn't have any built in support here. Reagan would be the only contender that would have built in support, I would think. Rockefeller would make it easy. A guy like Percy would make it easy. Rockefeller might put a fellow like Baker on the ticket. It would not do really much but make it a little more difficult.

J.B.: What would Kennedy do?

Vance: Kennedy causes the, probably the most problems in this area. I don't suggest that he causes most problems nationally. I don't really know. But in this area there's probably less Kennedy support than there would be for Jackson, for example.

J.B.: Have you seen any state polls on that?

Vance: They've taken some.

J.B.: They reflect that?

Vance: Yes.

[Interruption on tape.]

--consider themselves to be liberal. 49% consider themselves to be moderate. 38% consider themselves to be conservative. Richard Nixon was considered to be more liberal than the average Alabama voter. He was perceived by the Alabama voters to be more liberal at that time. 24% perceived him to be liberal, 43 moderate, and 33 conservative. John Connally was considered to be more liberal than Richard Nixon-- which is an interesting fact. 27% perceived him to be liberal; 43% moderate; 30% conservative. Edward Kennedy was perceived by 66% of the Alabama voters to be liberal; 24% moderate and 10% conservative. So you have, according to the perception of the Alabama voter, less identity with Sen Kennedy than with any of those persons that I've mentioned. I did not do a great deal of polling with respect to other national figures. The purpose of the polling which I did in December and January had nothing whatever to do with the presidential election. And the polling that was done was merely for the purpose of setting the stage and establishing the mood of the voter.

J.B.: Did it show self-perception in terms of party identity?

Vance: Yeah, I think so. I think we're going to find that it's. . . I can give you an approximation. About 46% Democratic, 15-16% Republican, and the rest independent. There's been virtually no change in the Republican identity since I was born. But there's been a steady decline in the Democratic identity, a fairly steady decline. Ever since 1944, I guess. The drain has been out of the Democratic column into the in-

dependent column. The Republican did go up a little in the late Eisenhower years and early '60s. But it came back down. The people of this state were not at all interested in the president being impeached or resigning. I've got some job ratings, if I can find them. People in Alabama didn't particularly believe Nixon at that time but they didn't think anything should be done about it. Gov Wallace's job rating in December of '73 was 37% excellent, 38% pretty good, 19% fair, 5% poor and 1% unsure. It nets out at 75% favorable, 25% unfavorable. Which sounds extraordinarily high gaged by comparisons with other officials in other states. But a peculiarity of Alabama is that it rates all of its officials very high.

J.B.: Have anything in there on Sparkman and Allen?

Vance: Yeah. The trust index, the next one that I was going to give you. Just a minute and I'll find job ratings on. . . . Job ratings on Allen were 79% favorable, 21% unfavorable. Sparkman, 73% favorable, 27% unfavorable. I don't understand dip. It had gone up as high as 81% in his case.

J.B.: How about Nixon at that time?

W.D.V.: Is that built into your poll? [?]

Vance: I'll look for you.

W.D.V.: There's something strange about that. I've been in the polling business for a long--

[Interruption on tape.]

--61% unfavorable, in December. And that was a switch. In May it had been 60% favorable, 40% unfavorable. The trust index was Wallace and Allen 76% a piece, Sparkman 74, Brewer 71, Walter Cronkite 70, some lesser known characters in between, Richard Nixon 51--which was down from 62 in May. Edward Kennedy 49.

W.D.V.: That's interesting. Cronkite usually is number one in every other state nationally.

J.B.: How was the question phrased?

Vance: I think it is "Who do you trust?" or "Do you trust these people?" Wait a minute. . . no it isn't. I'm sorry. "On a scale rating from one to six with number one score signifies trust wholeheartedly and number six signifies don't trust at all." And I don't know how they went about tabulating. . . they applied a weight which they explain in here which is fairly complicated. That's sort of the mood of the voter and I don't have anything else, and I'm not sure that I will ever have anything else which will relate to other nominees. I did not suggest that there be any polling concerning Sen Kennedy. They were just doing that like Walter Cronkite. . . throw it in to see where we stood.

J.B.: Does most of the party financing here come from filing fees?

Vance: About 60% of it. When I went into office, 100% did. But we've generated other sources of revenue now.

J.B.: Through what means?

Vance: We have reinstituted the fund raising dinners, which they hadn't had for ten years when I first became chairman. And they're profitable.

J.B.: How many do you have?

Vance: One a year now.

J.B.: Where is it, in Birmingham?

Vance: Yeah, Birmingham. We have a Democratic club, which I told my staff would never work, and they took in over \$20,000 this year. We sent out a direct mailing and asked them for \$24 bucks a year, for which we get almost nothing. But at a cost of about \$3,000 they've taken in \$24,000 I think. Which is a damn sight better than anybody else I know has done on direct mailing. And we've made money on the telethons.

Made a net profit on this one recently of about \$17,000. And we made about 9 or 10 on the first one.

J.B.: What's your budget?

Vance: Well, in round figures I'd say \$40,000 in an off year and \$60,000 in an election year. About \$200,000 in a four year span.

J.B.: Do you provide any candidate services?

Vance: Very little. We target some. We provide prime candidates with specific services but it's usually just an indirect way of furnishing financial aid. We're getting, starting into that this year. Going to start setting up a service center and try to do something like Florida has undertaken.

J.B.: Is Florida ahead of anybody in the South on that?

Vance: Yeah. Florida is ahead of everybody in the country on what they're trying to do. I haven't been able to judge how far along they are. But the program they've got is the most sophisticated program in the country, I think, with the exception maybe of Minnesota.

J.B.: How are filing fees set? By the state?

Vance: State committee subject to a national maximum, which is what we apply.

J.B.: Which is how much?

Vance: 2%. That's another ^{advantage} ~~thing~~ that Florida has. It charges 5 for a bigger state. Bigger salaries. They have a hell of a built in filing fee fund.

J.B.: But the state absorbs the full cost of the election.

Vance: That's right. We take an absolute free ride, which is almost unique. We keep all the filing fees except county offices, which the county committees keep. And we get all the filing fees. The campaign

service that we have been able to perform in sort of a unique way in the past, which has been particularly beneficial since the '60s. Has been the promotion of a straight ticket campaign, which has saved people a good bit of money. And nobody can do it but the party, because people were breaking out of a tradition where everybody ran their own race and nobody really trusted anybody else. We've been able to do that very successfully in some areas. For example, in Jefferson county in all of the general elections, where we had any significant opposition, been able to run a straight ticket campaigns where all of the legislative candidates and all of the state wide candidates, everybody threw money in a hat and we collected it and bought advertising. They ran their own races, too, but we were able to absorb [unclear] of the funds [?] by doing that.

J.B.: There is a Republican position that we hear repeatedly that if they had only run one candidate in 1966 against Sparkman, regardless of whether it had been Martin or Grennier, and not run a candidate for governor, that they would have won. How do you respond to that?

Vance: I think it's horseshit. They can tell you 15 different ways of if they hadn't done this or that. And I just don't believe it. I don't think what they did was too bright, but there was a lot of cross over voting in those two races. And Sparkman didn't appear to be in that much trouble.

J.B.: Why did Red Blount fare so poorly?

Vance: Two reasons. [Sparkman] was a pretty decent candidate but Blount's an awful one.

J.B.: As a campaigner?

Vance: As a candidate. As candidate material. He doesn't identify with the people of Alabama. You go out there to the mill and ask

somebody "What do you think of Red Blount?" Blount doesn't know how to identify with a working man. He thought taking his coat off and having his shirt sleeve picture put on the billboard would do it. Hell, that just made a funny looking billboard. He tried to do it in a superficial way. He's not a redneck. Or if he is, he's forgotten how to act like one. He doesn't know how to get on the common man's level. He doesn't want to. He's an arrogant prig. And you know, some people got enough self control, if they know how to play the game they can be an arrogant prick and maybe act like something else. Well, Red's an arrogant prick that ain't smart enough to know what he ought to do different. And he just acts like himself.

J.B.: What was the second reason?

Vance: Sparkman's a good candidate. Sparkman. . . there wasn't . . .

J.B.: The two reasons are Sparkman's a good candidate and. . .

Vance: Red's a bad one. Yeah. They couldn't have beat Sparkman with anybody. He just never was in any trouble.

J.B.: Polls show that?

Vance: Yeah. Sparkman was in trouble in the early years of his service because he was thought to be too liberal. How in hell can you make a man out to be too liberal when all the bankers in the country, according to Jack Anderson, are frothing at the mouth for fear he's going to get beat. Things go in funny cycles, but there just wasn't any way to get at Sparkman. He's sort of become an institution and nobody's mad at him and he's doing a pretty good job and they don't. . . . He doesn't work at it like Allen does, but he just hasn't gotten into any trouble, not within the last ten years or so. What's the big issue to get at Sparkman? The guy that was giving us the most trouble was the man that ran third in that primary. Young fellow named Nettles.

J.B.: Bert ?

Vance: Yeah. And Bert could have run on one issue only and that's age. If he'd had sense enough to run on age alone. And vigorous. . . all the things that are connected with that. That would probably have given us more trouble than anything else. Because Sparkman is getting along a little bit, you know. I think he was 73 during that race. Gives you a twinge every once in a while worrying about whether they're going to come at you on that issue. And they did such dumb things. God almighty! They got caught fabricating a tape about four days before the election and the thing just blew sky high. I don't really know how it blew sky high. Because ordinarily when somebody comes out with something scurrulous you would think the truth. . . you'd never catch up with it. But this just boomeranged like crazy and they were just caught red handed. They asked Sparkman on some interview program "What do you think of busing?" And he said he was against it and so on and so on and so on. They asked him several other questions and then they said "What about so and so?" "Yes, I'm very much for that." And they just whacked out the center portion, spliced it together: "What do you think of busing?" "I'm very much for that." And put it on a paid political advertisement. Those people didn't know the difference between right and wrong. They're just like those crooks up there in the White House.

J.B.: How do you assess the press in this state? In terms of political reporting.

Vance: Mobile is incompetent and maybe a little corrupt. I'm not sure. I sort of have had the impression from time to time that some folks down there are on somebody's payroll. I think they have had a few people that supplemented their income as consultants to the state docks or something like that. In Montgomery we have usually had better political

reporters for the Montgomery papers than you would think that a paper that size could sustain. There are a few really top flight reporters on the . In Birmingham we've had some excellent individual reporters. It's been spotty. We have one or two pros here that--

[End of side of tape.]

--papers have cost the state very much by being unwilling to take positions of integrity on tough issues. In Mobile you'd think you were in another world. They don't have any newspapers at all.

J.B.: Think of anything else?

Vance: You run out?

W.D.V.: Think so.

J.B.: Ran out or ran down.

Vance: I don't know how any of this will be useful for a book.

J.B.: Why not?

Vance: How many interviews do you collect before you get to a book?

W.D.V.: Oh, between four and five hundred.

[Interruption on tape.]

J.B.: You see this sort of cleavage returning after Wallace, between north Alabama and south Alabama?

Vance: I think the era of potential division has past. I look at it as a situation that ought to go up from here.

J.B.: So what sort of coalitions do you see forming in the future?

Vance: The natural ones. And by natural I mean not in the sense of Alabama's history but the ones that are natural nation wide. I see coalitions forming of working people against vested interest, whether they're black or white, farm or mill, whatever they are. Along economic lines. You know better than I do the historical background. How race

has been the whipping boy that textile mill owners and everybody else used to keep down the radical labor unions and keep the rabble in line. And it just seems to me that that era is past. Past or passing, one or the other.

J.B.: What is the role of organized labor politically in Alabama?

Vance: Not much. It may be more, though, as time goes on. There have been several things that have been bothersome as you look back. One is there've been more members of organized labor have been followers of George Wallace than have been followers of labor leaders. And Number two, largely by reason I think of the rather perilous situation that they were in, walking a tightrope with part black members and part white members, all this upheaval. . . . Labor leaders haven't tried to take a very outfront role at most times. So that we don't find them out 365 days a year beating a drum on issues. They have a soft position on things that didn't directly deal with their responsibilities in the collective bargaining process. If I'm correct, that era is passed. They're going to have a little more freedom of action.

J.B.: Is ~~Barnie~~ Weeks COPE director as well as AFL-CIO president?

Vance: No, I think somebody else is COPE director. I'm not sure. The only COPE meeting I went to last year was a steelworker COPE meeting. They have their own segment. Barnie's the boss, if he's not of the AFL-CIO exclusively. . . all these separate international unions. If there is a separate COPE chairman under Barnie it will be one of his friends. By boss, I don't mean that in any unsavory sense. I mean that he does not have a divided leadership over there.

J.B.: Are there any of the unaffiliated unions that are particularly strong in Alabama?

Vance: Well, there are several unions that are not wholly affiliated

yet. They split up here some time ago. For example, all of the steel-worker locals are not back in the labor council now. Steelworkers are the biggest union. After the steelworkers you have. . . I can't give you the order. . . the garment workers, mechinists, teamsters are big, communications workers, maybe paper workers. The teamsters are not a factor. They haven't bothered anybody in an election. The ones that are taking the most active role I think are the building trade. And they're usually not taking. . . I mean a separatist role. They're usually a pro Wallace role.

J.B.: Someone, I think it might have been Bill Baxley, said that for races below that of governor, labor's endorsement is very meaningful.

Vance: Yes. Same thing's true of any endorsement. You start getting down to legislative races and things of that sort, it's very important. Slates.

J.B.: He was meaning it even in state wide races.

Vance: Well, he's in a better position to know than I am. I wouldn't. . . it is meaningful in the lieutenant governor's race or attorney general's race. The time's sneaked up on us and I've got to go.

[End of interview.]