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This is an interview with Mike Egan, Georgia house minority leader, conducted in Atlanta, Georgia on April 29, 1974 by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries. Transcribed by Sarah Geer.

Jack Bass: Our book will be published in the spring of '76 by Basic Books, which is a division of Harper and Row. I was saying the South had changed, and if it hadn't changed, you wouldn't likely be minority leader in the Georgia house of representatives, 'cause there probably would be no minority to lead.

Mike Egan: That's about right. Had two or three people over there, Republicans, before the 1960. . . well, about '60, '62, I think.

J.B.: How many Republicans are now in the legislature?

Egan: Well, there are 180 members, and we have twenty-five Republicans in the house. There are fifty-six members of the senate and there are eight Republicans there.

J.B.: Do you know what. . . . How long have you been in?

Egan: Since 1965.

J.B.: In the 1966 elections, how many Republicans were elected? Do you recall?

Egan: Gosh, I'm sorry. I can't remember. You see, at that time the size of the house was 205, and we had. . . . It has not changed substantially since 1965, '66, around in there. Roughly we've maintained about one

sixth of the membership.

J.B.: Why do you think there's not been more Republicans? I mean, more growth of the party, in the legislature?

Egan: Well, it's sort of hard to say, really. The . . . you know, the state has been Democratic for so long, most of our support is in the urban areas. We are. . . I think we're going to. . . we'd planned on an increase in the Republican numbers this year, because of some re-apportionments in single member districts. But with the large black population and the rural population, both rather consistently Democratic on the local level. You know, the sheriff's office, the county commissioners, things like that, are just. . . they've always been Democrats and. . . when the Republicans came on big in Georgia in 1964, there was some change in the rural areas. We picked up a few rural members in the house. But that was wiped out in '66 and since then it's been largely an urban representation among the Republicans.

J.B.: You are not a native of Georgia, am I correct on that?

Egan: I am.

J.B.: You are a native.

Egan: I'm a native of Savannah.

J.B.: You've lived in Atlanta for how long?

Egan: Since 1955. Came here right out of Harvard Law School.

J.B.: Were you a Republican when you arrived here?

Egan: Yeah, I would say. To the extent, you know, I'd never participated in anything except national elections, but I had voted for Dewey and the Republicans right on up the line. But I came. . . I became active in the

Republican party when I got here, largely because of the situation within the Democratic party at that time. It was very racially oriented, and it was what was. . . . We had the county unit system, which prevailed in primaries. And the only way I could see at that time, to undo the bad effects of that was in the general election. And that meant a strong two-party system. Of course, when we started working on that then the court came along and took away the county unit system, somewhere in the late fifties - I don't remember the dates - or the early sixties.

J.B.: We had sort of detected what we feel are sort of five basic kinds of Republicans in the South. Some overlap. Some people may fit into more than one category. I'll tell you what are, and I'd like for you just to give me just a very rough estimate, and it'd have to be rough, on where Georgia breaks down. I think you would probably fit into that class or group we classified as people who became Republicans more as a reform group, reacting to entrenched Democratic one-party control that they felt was, at the very least, not progressive.

Egan: Oh, yeah.

J.B.: Then you have another group that basically are transplanted Republicans from other parts of the country. Many of them came because of business transfers and so forth.

Egan: Yes.

J.B.: Then you gave a group of Goldwater. . . . Basically a large group of what I consider Goldwater Republicans, people who came in on the Goldwater movement, many for racial reasons but not all by any means.

Some for just plain economic conservative. . . . Then you've got a group of suburban Republicans who are native southerners, but sort of became. . . felt more attuned to the Republican party nationally. Many of whom also came in with that Goldwater group. Did I name five groups in that?

Egan: I don't know whether that's four or five. But that's about it. Then, of course, you omitted the area. . . . There was, and I'm not sure how much there is left of it. . . .

J.B.: Oh, there's one other group. Yeah. The one other group of mountain Republicans. What we refer to as mountain Republicans, that were very strong in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee. . .

Egan: That's right.

J.B.: . . . and really provided a solid base for a viable. . . .

Egan: Sort of a native born. And there were a lot of blacks within that group, also. What I consider the people who were Georgians who were born and bred Republicans.

J.B.: Not too many left.

Egan: Not too many blacks left, even in the mountain group. That's begun to. . . .

J.B.: Even in Georgia you had a very limited. . . only a couple of counties involved with these mountain Republicans, right? Not a large enough group to really form a base for a state party.

Egan: No, not a lot. Not such as in Tennessee. . .

J.B.: In North Carolina you can. . . .

Egan: . . . or in North Carolina, where you had all of the western part of the state and the eastern part of another that was much more than we had going. I think it was. . . the party here got its new



impetus from the first category you mentioned, in which I place myself in, back in the beginning, about 1948 through '52. The turnover really came in '52, when <sup>E</sup>Albert Tuttle and some others, Bob Snodgrass, Bill Shortzer, Randy Thrower, kind of moved in to take over the party on behalf of General Eisenhower in the '52 pre-convention pol<sup>ti</sup>icking. And that's when they threw out a lot of just the old courthouse crowd who sat around waiting for the Republicans to get elected nationally and get some patronage.

J.B.: How large would you say that group is of the Republican party in Georgia today?

Egan: Well, it's begun, the whole thing, over the past - since 1968, I noticed, sort of merged very much together. As far as that old group and its activity, well, I look at some of them... . some of them now are really ardent liberal Democrats, I would say. People who were active working Republicans back in 1955 and '56. Who got really run off in '64 and Goldwater years. So I guess I can't count them as being part of the group. That group is rather small and finds its origin going back to those years. At least they are Republicans. They're certainly not active within the party any more. Most of the people who are active would come within the latter three or four groups, the ones that came along with Goldwater, and then those that move in from other areas of the country to the metro area.

J.B.: How about in the legislature? How would it break down?

Egan: Well, it's hard. So many of those fellows we have in the legislature are so young they're not even able to be put in the earlier group. And they're more the suburban group. We have. . .

DeKalb County, as you probably know, is pretty solid Republican. A lot of our people from out there are not native born. Our legislators are not native born Georgians. Those that are find themselves living within communities in which most of the populace is perhaps not. And they get enough going there and have a base to sort of take over the county from the old entrenched crowd. But there're only two or three of us in the legislature who go back to the earlier group.

J.B.: There is a . . . well, there's obviously a Republican organization or you wouldn't have the title minority leader.

Egan: Yeah.

J.B.: How does the caucus work? Does it meet regularly?

Egan: Not really. You see, with only twenty-nine members, we have. . . I have an office there, and it's three rooms, it's sort of a suite over there in the capitol. And people come in and out, and we have a good bit of interchange. We meet. . . well, not in the '74 session, but in '73 we met once a week for lunch, those who could make it at that time. The meetings, if you try to call a meeting. . . you know, our sessions are very short, very busy. And it's very hard to find a time in which you can get everybody together. So we don't meet regularly, but we communicate, I think, very well.

J.B.: You discontinued the luncheon meetings?

Egan: We discontinued the luncheon meetings this year for two reasons. One, the church where we formally met / <sup>quit</sup> serving lunch, which is right across from the capitol. And two, even with twenty-nine or so members, at any luncheon we'd never have more than fifteen people who'd be able to make it because of committee meetings during lunch or constituents up

that you've got to do with.

J.B.: You say you communicate very well, though, but do the Republicans tend to stick together on issues, or sometimes, on issues?

Egan: I would think we stick together, perhaps, more than the Democrats, but that is really not so much because we're Republicans but because we're all urban. All of the Republicans are from the Atlanta metropolitan area or Columbus, Augusta, Macon, Savannah. Well, except for two. One's from Brunswick and one's from Warner Robins. But. . . and I don't, you know, as a leader I don't try to browbeat people into voting the way I'm going to vote. I suppose I vote with the minority of them as much as any other member of the caucus. But, for the most part, we're together on all the important issues. When I say together, out of twenty-nine I consider it really good if we get twenty-two to three. *[You always lose]* some people.

J.B.: Do the Republicans in the legislature generally also meet with the Urban Caucus?

Egan: Oh, yes. Well, not all of them. We do meet with the Urban Caucus. I'm one of the founders of the Urban Caucus, and I've met with them regularly.

J.B.: How big is the Urban Caucus?

Egan: Oh, well, it's hard to say. It could encompass almost half the members of the legislature. Probably not quite. I think we aimed at twelve of the largest counties in the state. It's very loosely organized. I think that it ought to have somewhat better organization. I would guess a couple of years ago we had some more rallying points. We could

turn, out of a hundred. . . we could count on about seventy votes most anytime. Which wasn't enough to pass anything, but if you get them solid it was enough to stop things from passing.

J.B.: So, why, because the other side, the non-urban legislators weren't that well organized?

Egan: They aren't. . . either they weren't there, or they weren't that well organized.

J.B.: So the Urban Caucus includes practically all the Republicans as well as practically all the blacks, right?

Egan: Yeah.

J.B.: And so on urban issues, blacks and Republicans tend to vote alike?

Egan: Well, sometimes, we're more like. . .

J.B.: Or is it the difference between city and suburban?

Egan: . . . more likely to vote for a local option sales tax than the blacks are. I'd say the Republicans are, than the blacks. But for the most part, we. . .

J.B.: What would be an example of that? The kind of issue where you do vote alike on, or have voted alike on.

Egan: Gosh, Jack, it's hard for me to think now.

J.B.: Was this Charter Commission one example?

Egan: Well, in the City of Atlanta Charter Commission we had a near unanimous vote on it, because there was an awful lot of work in compromising that went into it, but it was. . . well, the white Democrats who are here in this county where our representation is fractured between the Republicans, the blacks, and the white Democrats. But we all got together on that. There. . . it wasn't real easy to do that. Took

a good bit of work, but everybody came together and voted for it. In matters of re-apportionment, once we work these things out to accommodate the interests of everybody, we can get together on it. And they, you know, the blacks have developed some pretty competent leadership as the Republicans did, so we don't. . . on local matters we don't have too much problem working out things. And it's hard for me, you know, we get some issues on which we differ quite widely, such as this effort led by the DeKalb County Republicans to prevent the city of Atlanta from forcing resident's requirements on its policemen. The blacks are. . . the mayor of Atlanta, being a black, has more influence with them than he does anybody else in the city, and he is for doing that, and we were opposed to doing it. So we split on that. But most generally. . . .

J.B.: Did that fail to pass?

Egan: It did pass, but the governor vetoed it. I don't think he would have vetoed it last year or the year before, but he vetoed it this year.

J.B.: How do you assess Carter as governor?

Egan: I think he's a fine governor. . . he was, until this past year, when most of his attention. . . This is a problem any politically ambitious person will have in Georgia. You can be governor for just four years and that's it. Power goes downhill from the first year till the last, and a combination of looking around for something else to do and not having a great deal of political power within the legislature. . . . He could. . . I think he could have done better than he's done as governor, but he just seemed to have other things on his mind this year. I don't think he's doing as good as governor right now.

But I don't know how, you know, if he did. . . it's a bad system, this four year term, I think. One four year term, I think it's bad. I think we ought to change that one of these days to two four year terms.

Carter, I. . . my view of him, I was accused of being one of his many floor leaders over there, because so much of what he was for in his early years as governor I was for. And I helped him a lot. And he has been. . . he has said that on any, most issues, he could count number one, on the Republicans, and two on the Urban Caucus, to give him support. But he's been a good governor.

J.B.: Beyond his re-organization, what else has he accomplished?

Egan: Well, I think he's given some impetus to changes that have been brought about in our system of criminal justice, the innovations in the mental health area. I don't know if you consider that part of the re-organization, but he's brought in some good people into state government, I think, well-intended people, honest people. And I think the re-organization was a step in the right direction. That's the one he lavished so much effort on. He's been a leader in environmental legislation. I think that what we have done is Georgia is rather good, it's better than most states have been able to accomplish. And he's been for some things that haven't passed. The consumer protection legislation, which we didn't get around to till kind of late. That. . . the state Chamber of Commerce and that type managed to defeat that. But generally I just think he's been a good governor. It's hard for me to think back, when you get a. . . when you have a short term in the legislature and then you get back into practicing law, I can't even remember a lot of the things he's accomplished.

J.B.: How much effect do you think Watergate is having and will have on growth or retarding growth of the Republican party in the South?

Egan: Well, I've tried to think about it. I think it's going to prevent much significant growth. Just Watergate as such, I'm not sure that's really. . . but the whole mix of Watergate and the state of the economy and inflation, things of that sort, are going to make it pretty difficult for the Republicans this year in the South and anywhere else. I believe. . . I figure in my own district it'll. . . there'll be enough people that'll just go when they're mad and just vote straight Democrat. So it'll probably cost four to five per cent of the vote, I guess.

J.B.: Your name had been mentioned earlier this year and last year as a potential candidate for governor, at least by other people. Did you actually consider running for governor?

Egan: Yeah.

J.B.: Was Watergate a factor in your decision?

Egan: No. It was more of a personal decision than anything else. After spending a solid six or seven weeks over there, I just decided I really wouldn't be happy devoting my full time to politics, to government. It's just too much of a personal grind. I've got six children and a lot of commitments to them. They're. . . some are fairly young, with a lot of education ahead of them. A combination of financial factors and more of a. . . my wife says this year she was much more afraid that I might win than I might lose. If you lose, you're done with, you're done with everything, you go back to practicing law. But there's just more. . . so many aspects to being the governor other than just running



the state that are just not my cup of tea, so to speak. I decided I'd rather just do what I'm doing.

J.B.: How do you define the southern strategy, and what effect do you think it's had and will have on the Republican party developing in the South? What does the term mean to you?

Egan: Well, to me it means a term that. . . I don't know who coined it but I read it in the press and I really attribute it to. . . at least, if not its origin, its continued being to media. And we, among the southern Republicans, like to think of it as sort of an equal treatment policy of the federal government toward the South. I don't notice any great favoritism on the part of the Nixon administration toward the South. The whole thing is. . . as a matter of fact, we've certainly had a lot of complaints about things, but we found they're not unlike the complaints Republicans all over have about the operation of the government in Washington. But I just think it was something that a bunch of writers and liberals wanted to jump on to accuse Nixon of something. That's about all it's ever meant for me. I never paid much attention to it.

J.B.: Well, do you think it's had any. . . whatever the strategy is, do you think it's had any effect on the development of the party?

Egan: That's hard, you know. I'm not as close to party affairs as many Republicans that you've probably talked to. I don't know that it's had any effect on the development of the party. I really don't. I think that's something that comes from the local level, the grass-roots kind of effort. And until it comes from there, I don't know that there's a heck of a lot the president can do about it. I'm sure that



the idea, you know, of all the potential candidates for the presidency coming to Georgia, as they now do, which they certainly did not used to do. . . . but that's not a part of anything the Nixon administration had anything to do with. That started with Eisenhower. And there's been a continual trend to recognize the growth and the potential growth of the South as a real economic factor in the nation. I think that's really all it is. Growth in population. There are. . . you know, it's now, at least on the national scene, it's a two-party region. These states could go either way. And I think that's a good, healthy development. Whether it's had any effect on the growth of the party or not, I just don't know. You could ask Mr. Shaw about that.

J.B.: I have. Has industrial development, economic development, in the state been one of your interests in the legislature?

Egan: No, I haven't focussed much on that. Most of the. . . I had. . . my narrow interest over there is in the money field. I'm on the Appropriations Committee and the Ways and Means Committee. I used to be on the Judiciary Committee, but I got off of that to get on the Rules Committee, so I did spend a good bit of time, in the early days, I was in on matters pertaining to the judiciary and things that went through there. I've always had a big interest in this environmental type legislation. In that and tax measures in the appropriations bills are in my narrow range of interest, although as a minority leader I try to take an interest in all the important things that come on over there. Well, I did before I was the minority leader. Industrial growth and development, except to the extent that any other tax policy in the state would encourage it or discourage it, or the environmental policy

of the state would encourage it.

J.B.: That's really what I was driving at, in terms of public policy as it affects industrial development. Pretty much taxes and environmental issues.

Egan: Well, I've been pretty much allied with Governor Carter on that. I don't believe that it's a good thing in the long run to do anything to have easy environmental laws for industry, or to have tax gimmicks to attract industry.

J.B.: Are there any tax gimmicks? I understand that Georgia has certainly fewer than most southern states.

Egan: I don't know of any. I mean, you know, there are some things that we have that I suppose are. . . you know, there's no. . . there's an exemption in the sales tax law for purchasing machinery to expand, to new and expanding industry. And that, in a sense, is a kind of a gimmick. Georgia has very few. We really have not gone in for that.

J.B.: There's no exemption insofar as property tax, am I correct?

Egan: No. But I know, as a matter of fact, in many of our counties the property tax is moving from a local level situation to one where the state is exercising more and more control over it. There are still, however, a number of counties in which a major industry will get some tax break from the local government. I just know that's a fact.

J.B.: Is this in terms of assessment, or just applying a tax break?

Egan: In terms of assessment.

J.B.: Industry is assessed by local assessors in Georgia?

Egan: Everything is, except public utilities. They are assessed at the state level. But all the whole of the assessment function is at

the local level.

J.B.: Is that at the county level, then?

Egan: County level. And we've now got it where they've got to be. . . Since I've been in the legislature, where every city assesses the same as the county. They just have one assessment.

J.B.: But it's not a uniform rate statewide? Uniform assessment ratio.

Egan: No. Well, it's supposed to be. It is in theory. All property, except certain classes which have been by constitutional amendment made special, all property is supposed to be assessed at 40 per cent of its market value. And our revenue commissioner is moving, with the facilities available to him, to enforce that. And it's been quite traumatic in many areas of the state. But then, once it's set, the millage applied is up to the local unit, except for one quarter mill, which the state assesses.

J.B.: ;So the state does have a quarter mill statewide? Is that earmarked?

Egan: The only earmarked tax in Georgia is for gasoline taxes that are marked for highway bridge construction. That's the only one. And that's unlike a number of. . . unlike Florida, I know, and unlike some of these other southern states. We're trying to get rid of that one, but without much success.

J.B.: Is there any active move afoot, or is it merely a sense of frustration, in terms of county consolidation?

Egan: Well, it's more the latter. The moves afoot have been really at the local level. We've had some counties who've talked about it, but as a practical matter it's really not politically feasible any time soon, I don't think. It's very. . . I've often thought about how to

go about it, and it seems to me the only way, maybe, to get it done is to pass a constitutional amendment that says. . . you know, pass it, say, in '74 to say in 1984 there shall be no more than blank counties. And they can try to do it themselves in the meantime. If they don't, the legislature'll do it.

J.B.: Either that or some sort of minimum population.

Egan: Something of that sort. Oh, yeah. There are ways to do it. I mean, you can have guidelines for them to get together, and the state would have to come in and get some financial help, because the different financial make-ups of the counties can have powerful influences at work in different counties that. . . you know, I was on a. . . . I've always been one for removing the assessing power from the counties. I feel that that ought to be done on the state level. But that would get it then where I don't think one company could control, much as some of them do, the whole political and economic status of the county. And that's what's been happening in so many of our counties, if we could. . . . And that's what I think the last proposal to start moving on was between Irwin and Ben Hill County, down in south main Georgia. And I think that really fell apart when it got to the tax assessing problems. They just were reluctant to give up the fox hills they had so neatly gotten dug over the years.

J.B.: That was a bigger problem than resolving the county seat issue?

Egan: I believe so. I don't think most. . . now, in those small counties, I don't think there's over concern about where the county seat is. But that's one of the factors. You know, you've got a court-

house, you've got some old employees there, and just the problems of showing that it's. . . there's economy in what we've been doing as an alternate to county consolidation. We've just been removing more and more functions of the county government and passing them on up to the state.

J.B.: That was in the planning districts?

Egan: Yeah. APDC's and

J.B.: When was the last time that Georgia. . . . Is Georgia still using its old constitution, the one from the turn of the century?

Egan: No, we have a 1945 constitution.

J.B.: Is there any move afoot to update that?

Egan: Well, every four years somebody running for governor says it. And we've had some instances. . . we had a 1964 constitution which the courts would not let on the ballot because it had been done by a malapportioned legislature. That's the way I recall it. I was elected the year after that was done. I remember working for the committee that Governor Sanders appointed on that, and the house passed a new constitution in 1969, I believe, or the senate passed it. And then everybody recognized the need for it, but it's hard to get that done. We need a good strong governor who will make that his number one priority. That's the only way you can get it done.

J.B.: We've been given the impression that the election of Lester Maddox as governor, among other things, resulted in the legislature assuming considerably more power than it had before. And a much greater independence than it had before.

Egan: Well, a lot. . . a lot in the media and in the press is written

about that more currently, looking back on it. But I believed that that was going to come about. . . well, it was not only because it was Lester who was elected, but the method in which he was elected, which was by the legislature, certainly made it easier. But I think that had Beau Callaway been elected governor that year, the same thing would have happened, but for different reasons. Lester. . . had Lester been elected by the people in the November election, I don't believe he could have stopped it from happening, being just because of the type of person he was. And he didn't know any of the legislators, or very few. Didn't have the same kind of political base that governors have had in the past. And I know that the speaker of the house was determined that it would happen. Didn't make any difference who was nominated or who was elected, and that's when it was going to happen.

J.B.: That was George Smith?

Egan: George L. Smith.

J.B.: George L. Smith. And he. . . .

Egan: He wasn't speaker then, but he. . .

J.B.: Yeah, got elected.

Egan: He was determined he was going to be speaker. It didn't make any difference who was elected governor. Running then was the only person who might have been able to really exercise some control, I think it would have been Ellis Arnall, who's had. . . who was, you know, not nominated. But that was a force that had been building during the whole time that Carl Sanders was governor. He was the last one, and I think it didn't make any difference except for the way Lester was elected and the fact that it was Lester certainly didn't ease the pain

of it considerably.

J.B.: Do you share the perception of many that if Ellis Arnall had got the nomination that year that Callaway would have been elected?

Egan: Yeah, I think so. Think so. Yeah. Cause I think most of the Maddox people would have voted for Beau<sup>Bo</sup>, and that together with. . . . Well, a lot of them would have. Yeah. And Beau<sup>Bo</sup> would have been elected if it hadn't been for that write-in bit at the time. It was a painful period, that was. (Chuckles.) That would have been a real break-through for the Republicans; this idea of doing it from the local level, it's a slow, slow process.

J.B.: You were in the legislature at that time, and there's a story we hear, and we keep getting some conflicting reports on it. And one version - there're several versions. I think there were several things going on simultaneously, really. One version is that there were some Democratic legislators who felt you can't have Lester Maddox as governor, who then approached Callaway and entered into some sort of informal negotiations. Wanted to know how strong he was, and how much strength he had, and whether they could make some difference. And then they found out that his count was off, among other things, and felt that he was not. . . that among other things turned them off.

Egan: Well, I don't know. I would live through every minute of that, but my recollection. . . I don't. . . We did approach a number of Democrats, we did do that with Democrats. We knew those who had been elected from districts that had voted for Beau, and we started with those. And there were some who were very helpful to Beau. Now, whether there were some who started off for him and ended up against him before



we actually voted in the legislature, I imagine there were some of those, also. But whether there was any, you know, group of leading Democrats who called upon Beau. . . if there were, I don't know of that as. . . in those terms. I remember we had few rooms over at the Marriot and invited over the ones up there that we thought we could do something with, for one reason or another. But it just didn't work out.

J.B.: How close did it get?

Egan: I don't remember what the vote was. You could find that out pretty easily by looking at the Journal for that year. When was that, 1967? (Interruption in recording.)

J.B.: 182 to 66.

Egan: That was in a joint session of the house and the senate. There weren't very many Democrats voting for Beau. Those that did were largely from areas that had voted over-whelmingly for him in the election.

J.B.: How big a role did Sanders play in that?

Egan: I don't know that he played any. I really don't. He's accused of having been favorable to Maddox, and that they formed some alliance back then, but I don't know anything about it. The man who had been his floor leader, George <sup>Busbee,</sup> ~~Busby,~~ voted for Callaway with us on the grounds that the people in his district voted for Callaway. I don't really recall Carl having anything to do with it. I'm sure he did, but I didn't know anything about it. I wasn't the minority leader, I was just, you know, brand new. The first vote we had voted on in '66 when I first took my seat was on whether or not we were going to seat Julian Bond. First vote in '67 was to elect a governor. From then on



we haven't had any moments of high drama like that. Interestingly enough, when we voted on the Bond thing, to my recollection, was that the whites voting to seat him were numbered maybe ten, or something like that, and the majority of these were Republicans.

J.B.: How did you vote on that one?

Egan: I voted to seat him, and maybe there were only. . . I don't remember how many votes. All blacks voted to seat him, then we had a number of new blacks elected at the same time. And I think there were about six or seven whites. I can't remember.

J.B.: What kind of reaction did you get to that vote?

Egan: Initially, quite adverse, among people in my district. At least, those who bothered to make their wishes, their views, known. But over the years, one of the things I can recall with considerable pride, and I think the thinking of most people on that thing has changed. That was just a highly emotional. . . .

J.B.: What was your reasoning at the time?

Egan: Well, I just thought that the people in any district had the right to elect who they wanted to elect. And that was it, I think it's pretty simple. You know, as long as he met the qualifications to hold office. And that if they were to get rid of him they would have to do it, you know, when he came up for election again.

J.B.: Has the Georgia Republican party sort of at the moment. . . the word we keep getting is that their candidates for governor are not heavy-weights.

Egan: I would have to concur on that.

J.B.: Are they building towards '78, or is there any sort of conscious

thought given that at all?

Egan: That I don't know. We're always building towards some time, but you have to build around somebody for a statewide office, and I don't know of any building toward then. There was a thing this year, it was a lot of emphasis on me and Beau Callaway or Fletcher Thompson. Just the names of people, except for myself, who had run for statewide office before. And for one reason or another, Fletcher just having run in '72 and been defeated, he was started in a new law practice, and Beau being the secretary, or me. Just didn't have that much well-known talent to run. And I don't know, there certainly wasn't any conscious effort on the part of anybody to say, "Don't run this year. It's a bad year. We'll build towards '74." But I'm sure we'll be running somebody else. Somebody will be running as a Republican. I hope there'll be every time.

J.B.: Is there any dominant figure in the Republican party?

Egan: Well, I guess. . . (Interruption in recording. Side two.)

Beau had been instrumental in getting three or four statewide officers to switch parties in '68, after the '68 Democratic convention. And Bentley was one of those, along with the present secretary of agriculture and Jack Ray, who was in the treasury. And they switched. And then when the gubernatorial race came along, our party has had, to my mind, always a sort of a funny feeling which I've never understood and never supported, that the elected Republican officials, the national committeeman, district chairman, state executive, ought not to get involved in a primary. But Beau got involved, came out in favor of Jimmy Bentley. That got Fletcher Thompson and some others irritated.

Former state chairman Paul Jones. And I think almost without even knowing Hal Suit. They were a little irritated because Senator Oliver Bateman had made a play for the gubernatorial nomination that year. He didn't finally run for it, but his feelings were hurt that he didn't get the support, and he thought that was because of Bentley, and he was right. Because I was crazy about Oliver, and I would've supported him, but I just thought that Bentley was a fine guy, and I supported him. He had the support of all the elected Republican officials in the state, as far as I know, just about, except maybe for Fletcher. And just got the heck beat out of him. Because most of the grass-roots people just didn't like the idea of some switch-over Democrat coming in and taking over their party. That's about what it amounted to. And a lot of the party regulars and office holders were supporting Bentley, but the grass-roots folks just didn't buy him. They supported Suit, and he wasn't much.

J.B.: At that December meeting, there was a lot of talk about re-alignment and Democrats switching over. Do you think that's a viable policy for Republican growth in the South?

Egan: At the December meeting?

J.B.: The December meeting of southern Republicans  
Last December.

Egan: No, I never thought of it in terms of. . . it's always seemed to me to be a mistake. This was something that Beau always put a lot of emphasis on, trying to get big Democrats. I've never thought about that as being a viable way to grow. I just thought we ought to, you know, take a little longer at it and build it up as we went along. I don't

much favor that, but I knew Bentley and I'd worked in the state government with Jimmy when he was controller general. And I thought he was a good man. And that doesn't mean I wouldn't support somebody who switched over, but to go around and talk to people and try to make them switch, I don't believe in that. I welcome those who approach us and say they want to switch. They're not too many of those.

J.B.: Were you ever a delegate to a national convention?

Egan: Yeah, I was a delegate in '68.

J.B.: Were you part of that Georgia group. . . there was a group in the Georgia delegation who were sort of receptive, if not pushing, the idea of a Nixon-Brooke ticket.

Egan: Oh, no. I was a Rockefeller man all the way. Weren't, I think. . . ~~Floyd~~ <sup>Claude</sup> Kirk and I were the only white men south of the Mason-Dixon line who voted Rockefeller. (Laughter.) I hung in there. I didn't go with Nixon-Brooke or Nixon-anybody else, certainly not Nixon-Agnew, at that stage.

J.B.: Well, at least there was a group in Georgia who were talking about Senator Brooke on the ticket.

Egan: I never heard that. We, you know, there was no attention, as far as I can recall, given to who the vice-presidential nominee was going to be until after the nomination. And then late that. . . very late that night Callaway came back, or the next morning, from the Nixon headquarters, and told the Georgia delegation that he had left before the final decision was made, and he was almost sure it was going to be Volpe. So we went to bed and got up the next morning, next afternoon, whatever and found out it was Agnew. (End of interview.)