Interview with Hodding Carter, editor of the Democrat Times, Greenville, Mississippi, April 1, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Bass: How do you see Mississippi politics?

Carter: Mississippi politics right now are in a holding pattern. They have made tremendous procedural change, technique change since the middle 60s. The way you get elected and the way you are perceived by the electorate if you're going to get elected has changed completely since I came back here in 59.

Bass: From what to what?

Carter: Well, what was the all out massive resistance campaign, nigger, nigger, nigger, which prevailed on up through 67 and including even John Bell Williams ~~(interrupted by phone call)~~ Banal moderation being a total virtue in the way you run for office. The nearest thing to the old kind of a campaign was a little bit of stuff that ~~Chet~~ trem Lott stuck on Ben Style (?) down in the 5th district. And that was so far removed from the sex stuff that it was kind of silly. Only two years ago. But I don't think anybody has any clear notion about where it's going to go from here for the next ten years or how. . . . Everybody's moderate and talk about progress and they talk about the need for working things out together. But I don't think anybody really knows what that means in political terms. What kind of changes are going to be the result of it.

Bass: Was that change in technique a surface thing or was it a basic change in attitudes?

Carter: I think that what everybody always said is about correct. That you don't change anybody's hearts by changing the law. But, you sure as

hell change the way they act. And naturally that get's around to where it changes the way a lot of them feel. I mean, how do you measure--I know how you measure it, but how do you get any good measurements on it? I'd just say, though, that the less you whip up certain kinds of emotions, the more they subside, if not vanish. And a lot of people clearly were freed by the last ten years to quit being closet moderates and start being, you know, letting theppublic know that they really were let alone, free to be a liberal if you wanted to be. So that what might appear to be instant conversion or fast changes may just be that with that blanket demand for conformity gone and the necessity for appealing to a different kind of vote now on the surface, it's free .

Bass: But suppose the boycotts were not extended. Suppose the anti-bussing amendment passed in the Senate. Then what?

Carter: I think you would not go through a conventional second redemption as it is sometimes regarded. Ain't possible. I think, one, that the black Mississippians aren't the same as the ex-slaves of 100 years ago. And the second thing is that I think that the country as a whole, Mississippi not excepted, is a far different country from 100 years ago. Old Jim Silver, when he wasn't writing up Mississippi the closed society used to say that what everybody forgets is that there was no intellectual underpining to the notion that there might be--well, there was no intellectual underpining 100 years ago for the idea that equality really might by a physical and biological and anthropological fact. In fact most of the social scientists and all of the social anthropologists and what have you took it as a given that you were dealing with an inferior. Well now you've got this whole, you know, sweep of whether it's any more right or not doesn't matter. You've got a whole sweep of a century's worth of growing. Academic justification for the notion that

equality is a fact. So you got a lot of people, I think, who are simply not going to find it as easy to forceably hit the black on the head again and knock him back down. But, there is absolutely no question that if the nation--the nation's not going to move off the plateau it's on for a while, anyway. But if the nation allows certain pressure points in the south to be removed, certain kinds of pressure and the voting bill is one of them--I don't think it would take us a year to pass the first, or kind of series of voting restrictions, and that would begin to alter somewhat the way the poker game was played here. The only thing is that I think in this area, as in others, there are things that would not be as easy to destroy as it was in that very short time, 1870s to the 1890s in the south the last time. That's not really very op. . .I'm not extraordinarily optimistic about it because I'm not sure how the nation as a whole is going to go on this thing. But no matter how it all goes, I don't think you'll see a reversion to what it was when I came back here in 1959 or anything approaching it. It struck me, when I talked over at the University of Alabama the other day--I don't remember whether I talked to you about that or not-- talk to these kids

everything was just seared in my mind in blood, you know. Rioting at ole Miss in 62. Or for them, . That's history, that's something that happened to somebody else. These kids at Tuscaloosa right now, university of Alabama, sure as hell don't love their black brothers and all such as that. But on the other hand, it's just an issue that doesn't exist for them as to whether or not there ought to be blacks on the campus or whether or not blacks ought to vote or whether or not blacks ought to hold office or whether or not there ought to be a colored water fountain. They look at me like I'm something out of the Cro-Magnon ~~ear~~ era, you know, when I talk about some of that business. Just a decade ago. And these are the future, at least

potential leaders, in almost any sphere of life. And they start out with a bunch of given which, to my at any rate, it seemed so hard to establish.

Bass: How do you explain this that in the sixties, there was massive integration.

Carter: I had a history teacher up at Princeton who once infuriated all of us by saying that what was remarkable about people who believed as passionately in laws as we alleged that we did in 1861 that it suddenly collapsed with no guerrilla action and no holding action anywhere. In a set piece of a battle. And that thereafter discovered how many of our people were perfectly willing to cooperate with the hated order in the Reconstruction period. He'd go along that line. Well, he was mainly having fun with us, but the point really is, I think, that one of the reasons who there was such absolute deep demand for conformity in some of these deep southern states was that the leadership knew damn well that once they let up on the pressure at all that in fact everybody wasn't in agreement. I mean that there were in fact great numbers of people just sitting there waiting for some way to get out from under this really oppressive system. Whites, I'm talking about. And once the feds made it possible for you to say, well, I have to obey the law, there were an awful lot of people who wanted to obey the law because they in fact believed in it. My god, the energy that went in to it. Justice for a lot of people now, not to have to sit there and worry about it all the time.

Bass: Clark said at the beginning of the 60s that he thought massive integration was at least 30 years away, and he thought if it did come this would be the worst state in the union. Okay? Yet it turns out to be that there are fewer incidents and problems here than any place else. How do you explain that?

Carter: Well, of course that's also a matter of some perspective. Through 1965 I wouldn't have said this was the place with the fewest incidents.

Bass: Talking about 1970.

Carter: But from here on, with you mean that so called unitary education, whatever that funny phrase meant? Yeh, I just think that one of the reasons clearly was that there had been damn near ten years in which the business and professional issue of this state, because of all the blood that flowed, you know, had to face up to what the consequences were going to be. If they were realists, and didn't like the idea of change, they had to realize that three dead kids in a county in 64 plus one Selma bridge incident in 65 guaranteed two civil rights bills they wished to God they'd never seen. I mean, you know, just as a matter. . . for that type of guy. And for the other type of guy who just wanted to be free of what he couldn't justify anyway, all that blood and all that murder and there was just--and all that arson and everything else in the 60s, convinced them. And they were slow to come to it, but convinced the business and basic economic leadership in the state, that they, they simply could not afford to let happen not only what Bob Clark or anybody--you know, I predicted that it was going to be, before you'd have massive integration the schools would close. I was--1962, it was a flat statement I wrote in three different magazines: we'd never see the public school system stand up to it. But between 62 and 70 there were so many really scary things that happened that I just think a lot of people started to open their eyes. They were not going to allow it to happen again.

Bass: We had a couple of state senators told us that the real psychological impact of ole Miss when Kennedy sent 30,000 troops down, was the Mississippi National Guard going to meet the federal army. That this had a tremendous impact. That when the court orders came down, it was clear, there would be a sense of futility. That was one part of it. Another part was the part you mentioned, the economic part. It was a combination.

That you have one element that may respond more to the economic part; that you had another element that would have fought if it would have done any good, but it wouldn't do any good and they knew it wouldn't do any good.

Carter: I've always been a believer in the salutary effect of hitting somebody over the head hard, I mean, to get--

Bass: We had a clansman that told us pretty much the same thing.

Carter: An equally good effect was not being sure who his brother clansman was. You know, about 65 and 66. Which was another example of federal presence. What it is to suddenly become, what, somewhere in the top ten of the FBI enclaves in the country for that period. That had its effect. Well sure I believe in that. [ole Miss] was to make in every way you could make it the state more rigid. Right on through, you know, to 64. Elected a guy who said he was going to be more rigid. And destroyed what few little voices there were in the state in the election of 63 who had been vaguely moderate. You know, who just pretended that they thought the law ought to run and ought to be obeyed. Including even this county, you know, which it had not happened in before. (interrupted by phone call) And in the meantime, you know, as I say other things were sinking in. Scores and scores of churches burned in 64. The murders. And suddenly the whole focus came back down again on Mississippi. And you know, it wasn't until the winter, or let's say early 65, that the Mississippi Economic Council finally could get itself together to issue a statement saying you ought to obey the law, it's time for us to turn this thing around and obey the law. And that was after that whole series of burnings and murders. And that was when Kennedy was president. That was the first time that they, I think, just looked at each other in the board room and said

"You know, this is going to kill us. And we've got to quit it." And then the voting rights act of 65, just suddenly, Wham, added 100,000 votes over the next year and then more. Although 67 didn't exactly produce a model of new southern governors in John Bell Williams, it, with the absolute collapse of Ross Barnett, did prove something about, you know, what the attitude of the folks was going to be. But it shouldn't be forgotten that Ross and Jimmy Swan together got a hell of a lot of votes in 67. And John Bell Williams, clearly having been the spokesman for the Citizens Council since the day that they were born and an unrelenting segretationist, was not being perceived as a great moderate, either. He sort of posed as one in a lot of his tactics between a liberal William Winter and a buffoon who had brought us down to our knees, Ross Barnett. Which is why ~~Ghaffee~~ Colman threw in with because he was scared of Barnett.

Bass: Colman supported Williams against Winter.

Carter: Colman said that is the whole name of the game, is that J. P. Coleman sent his agent, now Attorney General, Judge Summer, over to the campaign for John Bell. And that is where Summer came from, is straight out of Coleman's camp. Al Summer was Coleman's right hand man and his old boy that, you know, he used for everything. And the whole deal was that Summer would--well, it gets all involved in--(static) And the whole thing was that Coleman insisted that he was doing it to save the state from Ross, who he said was otherwise going to get elected.

Bass: And things just moved further and faster than Coleman perceived?

Carter: I believe so. I believe J. P. was just sort of locked in a Mississippi that sort of gutted him when he was governor and some of his measures. Well, its like all of us. I mean, his vision just wasn't as expansive as what was going to happen.

Bass: Could Winter have won with Coleman's support?

Carter: I don't think that he could have. I don't think we'd moved that far under any circumstances.

Bass: Can you summarize very quickly James Eastland's background. Is there anything good written on him?

Carter: No. I mean what's his name just did a quick hatchet job on him which was erroneous to begin with in Gothic Politics. I mean that was just--and other than that--

Bass: What is Eastland?

Carter: Oh, basically immoral. A person whose major allegance is to the economic class he comes from. A person whose lack of belief in his words is matched only, I think, by fundamental belief in what the reality of those words are. I mean, I think he is a total racist. He is basically anti-democratic, with a small d, at heart. But he doesn't believe that stuff he says about anything. Reminds me of another time--on another politician, but I mean old Ross is a far more likeable guy in any way I can think of--Ross Barnett--than Jim Eastland. Once he said to daddy, they were on a platform back here in Greenville, 1961, 1962. He said "Hi, old Ross. I've been hearing some back things about you. But I want you to know I don't believe a one of them." Dad said "Will you say that publicly, Ross?" And he went [Carter imitates a rather malicious laugh]. Well, Eastland, you know, was always offering rides on his plane and doing all this and that and the other and he doesn't care about any of that. He likes power, which is what most politicians do. And he wants to advance the immediate interests of that handful of food and fiber folk. He represents best. In his later years he's sure become mighty intimate with the Bunker Company, which is where mostly his good running mates are now. But I haven't ever seen anything very good done on him because everybody slips into fancy, you know, cliches

about southern politicians.

Bass: Who are his real close supporters, the people he represents?

Carter: Basically, the big planters, the guys who are in the extractive industries generally. I mean whether it be oil or timber. He is a willing front man for the organized patriots, but I think that's, you know, nothing. I mean he just does it because it fits the image that he wants. If there was ever a guy whose basic guiding light as a senator was to make sure that he came out of this world a damn sight richer than he came in, it's Jim Eastland. I mean, you know, he's unabashed self-server in terms of legislation to deal with the fact that he's got oil holdings in Tennessee and this here and that there. But he's also a master cultivator of his important constituents and he's never been accused of forgetting how to do favors up and down the line.

Bass: So what happens to Eastland when suddenly his constituency broadens and starts including several hundred thousand blacks who are registered to vote?

Carter: Not very much because thus far he hasn't been challenged by anyone who could really appeal to that constituency--I mean that new vote--and at the same time grab hold of a middle ground on the white vote. There just hasn't been such a candidate come forward. And that must be because they can't see how the two can be linked together. Another thing is, ah, he basically--I mean, even those that really hate him. And for instance one of the guys that will be here tonight is Billy Percy. The Percy family probably thinks that the Eastlands--no he won't be here either, goddamn it. I'm sorry about that, too. At any rate, they can't stand them. On the other hand, Eastland on the agricultural committee has done too many favors up and down the line for cotton. So what are they going to do? They're not going to

oppose him. They just think he's a bum. But he's our bum, as the saying goes. There's nobody going to beat him now. Power is too much. The lack of a real viable alternative . Oh, Gil Carmichael came about as close as anybody's going to come. But there won't be a next time, anyway, so that doesn't matter.

Bass: You don't think he's going to run again?

Carter: Oh that or he won't be well enough or young enough. And then I always think of John Stennis, who's done everything he can to protect that seat. I think next time will be it. I don't think he'll take care of his liver any longer than that. That's what's known as libel. I think this is going to be it. How old is the senator, 69?

Bass: I think that's all.

Carter: He won't need it and he'll be so planked [?] out by then that it won't matter. Anyway, though, I don't see anybody taking him right now.

Bass: Why was there only one black elected to the legislature in Mississippi?

Carter: Magnificent delaying tactics in the courts on moves to get single member districts ordered. Some successful gerrymandering so far. And the most god awful factionalized black politics in America. You know, in those areas where there might be some chance. I think next year that's going to change. I mean there'll be more people in there.

Bass: You think blacks are coming together politically in this state?

Carter: No, not a hell of a lot. But there are just going to be some districts where its going to be impossible not to unless they just go crazy.

Bass: Without attributing it to you if you don't want to, how do you analyze the factions of the black politics. Who ~~are~~ has the real strength?

Carter: Well, starting on the left there's the ideological remnants of the Freedom Democratic Party Dream, who are basically centered around some of the people who are the paid employees and spin-offs of Delta Ministry and all its many involvements across the state. And anytime you come across black politics you've got to decide there's some Delta Ministry involved in it, ~~if it has to do with~~ .

Bass: How strong is that?

Carter: They are strong because they have about the last remaining tap, outside of Charlie Evers, on foundation and church funds. I mean, they are the conduits for do-good money in Mississippi still. Not the government's money, but the old left money that wanted to do good for Mississippi black people. And I don't see that as drying up tomorrow because if one foundation or group gets sort of disillusioned another one comes along and sees what looks like an old line group in here. Their greatest strength is in areas like, for example up in Madison county, Marshall, , and Sunflower county, south of here. Madison. All the eastern half of Barber county. I mean all of Mt Bayou and all of that is essentially theirs. The black mayor, you know, the superviser . But the main thing they have is they control resources and everytime a new organization forms to take advantage of a new federal program or law, you know, they have several people in it. But they have two things that's a problem for them in the long term. Most of the leadership is not native Mississppian. And they have been extremely ruthless in weeding out people who they couldn't control. So they have this whole level of enemies moving on over from the left of the spectrum. Then there are about 3 or 4 groups. There's Erin and what remains of the Loyalists. And that is the only thing which has any kind of state wide grouping in the black

community, which is political. I mean which in fact can find two or three counties here, two or three counties there, and five or ten counties there to send people to a meeting and call themselves. That's all that the Freedom Democrats wanted to be but gave up trying to be. But it's only skin deep. And it can saythat it puts forward a sure 125-150,000 votes but it's not really putting forward, they're just there. Then there's Charles Evers, who is just himself. I mean, got a few little southwest Mississippi counties and who has his own contacts on money and who right now is in such desperate trouble that anything you write about him may be wiped out by some tax court by early 75, who knows. But who, in any case, has gone about as far as he's going to go. In the state, as the black leader, because he is perceived by many blacks as totally selfish and not capable of sustained interest in the general needs of the people of the state. And then in almost every community there is a tiny handful of middle class blacks who have emerged over the last 10-15 years. A lot of them came into the old poverty programs and a lot of them came into the newer ones that were taken over by the supervisers and the local political subdivisions of one kind or another. And who represent, or are represented by, in their most refined form, the two black lawyers here who are Republicans. I mean, essentially saying "Look boys, we got to play the game the way the game is played and that means dealing with whoever we have to deal with." pr~~ofessional clas~~s as far removed from ~~ideology as you can~~ get.

Bass: Where does NAACP fit?

Carter: Well, the NAACP when it comes down at all is still basically--the frame is, in some ways interchangeable with the framework of the loyalists. I mean Erin is chairman of both. And when I look at the

people who come to the Lafayette meetings I've got to see a hell of a lot of NAAers. There's a great mass of blacks that are basically not touched by anything yet. Not organized or not registered. I mean, you know, about what, 40% aren't registered. And not organized are at least half of that 60%. They're there. Somebody took them down to the courthouse and got them registered during the ~~palmy days, you know~~, middle to late 60s. But nobody really has a touch on them now as far as getting them and getting them to the polls. All those things.

Bass: So how do you characterize the Evers strategy, 1971 strategy.

Carter: His endorsement of Swan. First of all he was running as an independent. I disagree with him on everything and so. . .

Bass: Advocacy of a boycott in the second primary.

Carter: I disagreed with him on every single one of those issues. Therefore I just, you know, I just say I think he was wrong. I think he made a lot of bad mistakes. But you know, assuming he wasn't ever going to win, which he wasn't. He knew that, too. So, starting with that I don't know what the hell he thought he was doing. You see, as a matter of ideological faith, by the Freedom Democrat folks, by the Delta ministry people that you can't run on the Democratic party process because it's too confusing to the black voter to have to vote then and then maybe have to vote again in the general election. You can only get them out once, and therefore get them--

Bass: And I've heard that. Is that a myth, or is that reality?

Carter: It's been tested both ways and there is convincing argument, evidence, for both propositions. You know, that they are right and that they are wrong.

Bass: We've been told that it's a one shot deal. If there are three elections, two primaries and a general, that you can only count on once.

Carter: Well, all I know is that here the woman who is the city council-

man now, you know, ran twice in one year. And her vote got bigger after her first defeat. It was bigger when she ran again and won. Which runs directly counter to the notion, particularly because the notion is based on this: that with each defeat the blacks grow more discouraged and less likely to vote. And so here's Helen--

Bass: I thought the hypothesis was based on interest. That you could only get them interested once, and that was all.

Carter: But you know, in some ways that's also an argument from thin resources and limited personnel. How much you can work up a cadre to go out and work the second time, more than the people. As I say, right here in Greenville, this woman ran in a special election, January or February of last year, this year, for city council. And got let's say 2,500 votes and got whipped in a special. Ran again in a general when that particular seat came up, or when a seat came up here this fall, last fall--~~my God this is~~ --and won. Got more votes out the second time, having just been crushed in the special election. Just really crushed. Which to me just proves the opposite, that running early helps you do a lot of things. In Charlie's case--God damn it, he might have had some appreciable effect on any number of things, including the election of other black office holders, that is to say state legislators, if he had gone in the Democratic primary. Where there was a run-off possibility, you know, and therefore something worth dealing with which was votes.

Bass: The thing that got to me was the idea of calling for a boycott in the second primary when you had two moderate candidates. Am I correct in assuming that blacks really had a chance to elect a governor?

Carter: Why of course.

Bass: And they would have been in a position to really wield some power, right?

Carter: It was a ridiculous thing, too, ~~that was running around dealing like a madman, of course~~. And Charlie Sullivan was running around handing out $10,000 packets wherever he could. And they were calling up loyalists and saying "Please take our money. If you'll just take--". You know. They understood there was a vote out there that meant something. And Charlie just thought, willingly piss it away. I don't know.

Bass: Was it a big ego trip, or what?

Carter: Read Jason's book. Jason Berry, Amazing Grace with Evers Campaign in Mississippi. Don't believe any of the facts in it because a lot of them are wrong. Just as a matter of fact. But he was a white guy who was in the campaign and he does all the rationalizations, you know, for what, the various points. ~~(Static. A time lag.)~~ I have difficulty with some of these discussions because at the time they were matters of really passionate concern to me. I was all involved and cared and screamed and yelled. They were decided, and now I just sit here and--

Bass: My reaction to black politics in Mississippi is that it reminds me of the Republican party in Louisiana. They're so hung up on ideology that they can't get around to winning elections.

Carter: I mean this just as much as I mean anything. The problem is almost entirely a hangover from the freedom summer, from the Freedom Democratic Party, from the notion of politics as cause. You know, politics as sweeping ideology, ~~and total~~ . The whole SNCC bit. . . and you know, for me to say that to any one of my friends and associates who holds that belief is not perceived by them as a criticism. You know. They say "You're damn right. The hell with politics as winning elections. We're in for politics as forming a vision around which people can coalesce

so that someday they'll bring about the kind of society we need."

Bass: But you're saying that next year it may start coalescing?

Carter: I think it's very probable that you've got. . . because you do have these black professional Guys, you know, who are thinking about the process and what you can win within the limits and means of the process. And you do have all over the state minor black political office holders who have discovered that it's nicer to win an election than to win an issue, anyway and who would like to see some other people win. And are willing to make deals. I mean, you know, how the governor's pet coon--what's his name, the lawyer over here--

Bass: Cleave?

Carter: Well Cleave, you know, has been used to a point that it is too bad. But what Cleave is proving, however, to a lot of people is that, you know, if you'll work with the various political forms, there are things that you can get done. And it is pointless not to do it. But Cleave is not buying himself any tickets into the future. But he has at least had the useful facility of--

Bass: What do you know about this guy who's the mayor of Bolton?

Carter: Who, Bennett? He's an original old Delta massacre, you know, ideologue of the old school.

Bass: He's gotten out of that bag?

Carter: Well, to some degree. I don't know how much. It used to be that the only way I knew to deal with Bennett was to feed him. Because, you know, he was impossible. He was a complete jerk. It may be that the mysteries of holding office have worked on him and he knows he's got to do a little something different.

Bass: Do you think the conflict between the regulars and the loyalists will be resolved before the 76 convention.

Carter: Yes, sure. But don't ask me how. It will be.

Bass: Before the convention?

Carter: Yeh. It will be.

Bass: Who's going to--will it be imposed from above?

Carter: No, they don't have the power to impose it. I expect that, given the rules which McClosky adopted and the party has now accepted, the obvious thing for them to do is pass the congressional district election procedure.

Bass: Can you summarize those rules?

Carter: Sure. In all states except those which have a primary system for the election of delegates, a primary system which allows for the election, by congressional district, of single delegates. In which you pit people against each other singly. In all other states than those you have to have proportional representation up and down the line above 15%. But in those states which have a primary system in which--for instance this Congressional district is entitled to three delegates to the national convention, you have people running head on for those three slots. There it's still winner take all. Now goddamn, you know, the legislature came within half an inch of passing such a bill this time. The Senate bill was that, and it died. They're going to come up with something.

Bass: How about if you do not have registration by party?

Carter: Well, not that way. That's what I'm saying. Now, they may be so stupid as not to do it. Which means the new government, which comes along in January of 76 will have to do it. You know, put in registration, because by then they'll be in court. I mean, they'll be probably attached to the ongoing suit. But somebody will go to court with them. The court being first the party itself. You know, get Strauss or the revise or review committee or somebody to say "Hey, that law won't do.

You've got a new law in effect and you did not meet one of our requirements. Which was that you try to get some kind of party registration in." And so they'll get the word down "You've made a good half-way start, don't be fools. That is to say, you passed the primary system which guarantees that you don't have to go to proportional representation. You can almost take the whole thing back if you'll just put in a little registration procedure." Which can be as simple as making everybody sign when they come in. You say "I'm a Democrat" and then you go votein the Democratic primary and that's your registration. And I just don't. . . . I mean the reason. . . my confidence maybe shouldn't be so high since they regularly prove they can be idiots consistantly. Never has a feather so successfully knocked over a statue as the loyalists knocking over the regulars twice.

Bass: Will you elect a Republican governer?

Carter: A Republican governer isn't going to get elected. But if we did he would just willingly stand there and let it all die. In which case, if we elected a Republican governer, the only way we would do it would be the most persuasive evidence for the regulars--those that were left--that it was time to make a deal anyway. Because as soon as Boudron got beat for [four] elections to the congress out of what's now the fourth congressional district. As soon as Thad Cochran won that because those 10,000 votes were taken out by that white, independent candidate, just that soon the regulars in the fourth congressional district started talking about "We aren't dealing every which way with the loyalists in that district." And if a Republican gets elected next year--and I cannot see who that would be right now--but if such a man got elected, those who are apt to call themselves regulars would fast enough make a deal with the loyalists. Because the only way I can see him get elected is massive defection not

only from conversatives but from an awful lot of black votes as well. Because I can't imagine the Republican's process a guy who was going to be less appealing to blacks than the Democrats put up. Only two possibilities I can see for governer on the Republican side, both are sort of moderate, talking people when it comes to that.

Bass: Which is who?

Carter: Oh, Gil Carmichael and a guy called X. I mean, you know, they're not going to throw anybody else out there.

Bass: How about recruiting some Democrat to Switch?

Carter: They've tried. . . you'll have to ask Clark about that. Clark's never been one to deal with the foe. I mean, he's happy to have them switch. But unlike your man in South Carolina, he doesn't want the people who switch to come over and take over his playpen. You know, it's his, and if they switch they come under--he still is the chairman and he still controls the party process. ~~Ithi~~ I think it's one reason why there haven't been more defections, really.

Bass: What's Jim Eastland's role in resolving the problem between the regulars and the loyalists?

Carter: Everybody's boasting all the time. It's something he clearly could do if he wanted to. It's always hard to say what Jim Eastland's role is in anything. Because Jim Eastland never says anything publicly. And since almost anybody who's a regular claims to be some kind of a friend of Jim Eastland's--there are always people running around wheeling and dealing, saying "The senater wants this and the senator wants that." You know, may or may not be speaking for him. And he never disavows anyone. He could. . . really the thing is going to have to be. . . really, getting together is going to have to be done by the next governer, just as Bill ~~Raleigh~~ Waller could have done it in November

of the year he was elected. This governer's going to have to do it right about then.

Bass: Who's going to be the next governer?

Carter: It could be a guy nobody would joke. Bill ~~Raleigh~~ Waller sure proved that. Speaking of that, I got a couple of [footnotes I've got to add?]. Chuck Stone, if you haven't read him already. Chuck Stone is a black journalist up in Philadelphia who came down and interviewed Wallace and went back and wrote a column and said in effect he's going to be a vice presidential candidate because Chuck used to be Adam Clayton Powell's AA. ~~and thinks southern whites generally~~

(end of side of tape) (counter started over)

De Vries: Conventional wisdom is that ~~the~~ Deloss Walker and the new politics media approach won it for ~~him~~ Governor Waller. The second is that Eastland, by seeing to it that large amounts of campaign money of which he had control were given to ~~Wallace [Wallich?]~~ Waller. And his ability to talk to supervisers and people on the bench in the state.

. The third is ~~what,~~ that he was seen as more conservative on the race issue than was Charlie Sullivan.

Bass: Combined with a populist appeal.

De Vries: Right, right.

Carter: Listen, I've heard all of this.

De Vries: By the way, did we miss one?

Carter: No, except that you don't really stress hard enough that business of running really hard against Capital Street gang.

. I mean the Eastland thing was muted. That was a power play but that was done by phone calls, saying, you know, this boy's a good boy, and all of that. It wasn't so much that he liked Bill ~~Raleigh~~ as he hated Charlie so much. But in attacking the people who had been

really running Mississippi as they understood it to be run all this time, he really gave him support there. You've also got to give Charlie some credit for losing that election. Sort of let himself--

--you know, he'd been around a long time. Wasn't a pressure race at all. He came off awfully bland there for a time when he thought he pretty much had it boxed up. [The presses are rolling in the background and transcriber can only pick out bits and pieces.] I mean he just wasn't doing much of anything, just going through the motions. And Waller ~~Raleigh~~ really started going strong. I don't think it's unfair, however, to say that the campaign techniques that Waller ~~Walker~~ used, which he simply picked up whole from Mr Bumper's ~~Bunkerts~~ campaign, and changed the pictures and the ads. And that's literally a fact because I'm sure you've seen the Jackson Daily News which took great delight in running all of Dale Bumper's ads side by side with all of Bill Waller's. And every single word was the same except for the name of the candidate. But I think the techniques that were used there were effective. And I just think to myself, you know, sitting there in the living room watching the different approaches on television, I mean, shit, Charlie bore me into a coma. Because he'd sit there and talk at you, for half hour at a lick sometimes and such as that. And Bill Waller, who's got enough sense to know he shouldn't talk too long on the stump had some pretty good stuff. And that was Walker, I'm sure. But God--

Bass: How do you assess Bill Waller as governor aside from your personal involvements with him.

Carter: Oh, I've always liked Bill. You know, to tell you the truth. We endorsed him in 55, 65 I mean. I'll get there yet, 67. We endorsed him in 67. While that was half way a game, nevertheless it wasn't a . I thought he was all right.

Bass: Is he a power mad man?

Carter: I don't see him that way. I didn't say he was power mad. I said he was power hungry. I'm sure I said that, but hell, ~~I don't believe~~ . I'm just trying to think what--the governor does not have a very well developed set of principles and he certainly doesn't have any kind of operative philosophy about anything. He thinks he's really slick as hell. He thinks he's just about as shrewd a political animal as ever walked. And what he is, he is an appealing candidate to this constituency. An appealing guy talking to the folks. He drawls. And operating like that. But he ain't just the brightest man that ever walked down the pike. ~~and he's not.~~ He's let himself get beat a lot of times because he misreads his appeal--which is real--and thinks that it sort of automatically ought to translate into power, which is doesn't. You know, with the legislature in particular. I thought he's been right about as much as he's been wrong. In most of his program and what he's--

Bass: Have you found him to be refreshing?

Carter: I'm not going to say your word for you, but I find him to be the best governor the state's had in my lifetime. That's all and that isn't saying a hell of a lot but it's saying that much, anyway. Better than J.P.

Bass: Would you rate J. P. second?

Carter: As a governor. Yeh.

Bass: Why?

Carter: Simply because he had enough sense to know that at some point the Constitution had to be, you know, jiggered around or changed up if we were going to get a government that was worth a damn. No race at all. I mean in a state where the governor's only power is limited patronage and in a state where the legislature is

run by one old man from Rosedale, Mississippi. Clearly time to change the grand divisions of power in the 1890 constitution, that's all. And he did go to bat very hard for that. And I thought that act alone--you know, he got beat on it, but it was worth giving. . . . Because all the other governors had done basically the same thing. Since Hugh White put in balance agriculture with industry in the middle of his term. That was back in 36-40. There's been nobody who's been any different. You know, you came in, you did a few tax bills--

Bass: Improved education. Everyone of them says they improved education.

Carter: Well, yeh, you do something about it. You either improve it or you make the safeguards for segregation even stronger. Whatever. But J.P. went a little further than that.

Bass: How do you evaluate John Bell and what significance John Bell's televised speech on the eve of the massive integration of the schools? Does that have any significant effect?

De Vries: Do you remember the speech?

Carter: I'm just trying to sit here and think that he said, because I wrote two editorials about it right afterward. Tell me what the line was, then I can tell you what my response was.

De Vries: He couldn't find a copy of the speech and we haven't found anybody that heard it.

Carter: What did he claim was the effect of it?

Bass: That it was a moderating influence.

Carter: No. I mean, it was a Nixon speech, was what it was. I mean it was one of those things saying we have to obey the law because we are law abiding people. But the law stinks. You know. . . . Paul Johnson gave a better moderating speech than John Bell did that night. I mean Paul, when he'd talk about--I mean Paul would talk about how we got to

cooperate with the highway patrol keeping order up in--oh goddamn, the town where all hell broke loose. Ask for law and order. And that was a far more moderate speech in its context than John Bell saying--

Bass: You mean Oxford?

Carter: No. It starts with a G. My mind's completely gone. There was all kinds of hell in the town, where Brad Die's from, who's the state treasurer. It will come to me. It doesn't matter. But John Bell undoubtedly, considering that he had to break with some of his people, knew it, sees it as a great moderating speech. I saw it as a sort of slimy, back door appeal to the worst instincts of the people at the time. I remember more and more now because I sat there in Washington. [interruption] Because actually Waller has some people who in some ways are a little swifter than he is. I can't make him lose any weight, but other than that, as far as his public image goes, he's got a pretty good notion of what he ought to be doing.

Bass: ~~Who~~ Was went to the press conference?

Carter: What did he handle that day?

Bass: Chickens.

Carter: That's right. MY GOD. That's right. He sure did. Among other things. That was the faults of the feds, as I recall.

Bass: What effect do you see reapportionment having in Mississippi?

Carter: Some. You know, not just one hell of a lot. The calibre of the legislature is going to improve--and it really is. I mean, it's a damn sight better body. They are ~~just about 20 members overhaul~~ ~~being~~ pretty good for the legislature, as legislations go. The general calibre of these guys over there, I guess, is 100 percent higher than it was 12 years ago. Yeh. It's hard, however, to say what it's done besides that because moderation of the times may have more to do with the way they operate.

Bass: Has that done more than any single thing to break the political strength of the Delta?

Carter: Reapportionment? It's done a fair amount simply because it gets down to those real populations. But also I think you're going to see some change anyway. The old man dies ~~[a great deal of static]~~ and it alters some of the power balances. But if you stop to think about it, the Delta is not exactly underprotected. It's power in the legislature is immense. ~~The acting temporary speaker [he goes through a run down of Delta power in the legislature? but it is impossible to hear it word for word]~~ I don't think the Delta controls in the sense that it can do anything it wants to anymore, but can't anybody do anything unless the Delta boys given them at least half their support. The big difference is that you can split them up more than you ever could before. I mean it used to be where it was a club where they all, ~~the Delta representatives~~ -- not a majority or anything--but ~~they were all like this [suggests that he crossed figures here] when they voted~~. And now you'll see the delegation splitting like crazy. And that has to do with the difference in the kind of people who are getting elected. It's just hard to convince them they all belong to the same club.

Bass: What sort of coalition do you see in the Democratic Party coming after the resolution of the differences between the regulars and the loyalists?

Carter: Oh, the black, northeast Mississippi, working white population.

The coast will provide a lot of strength but will become increasingly a Republican area. I mean the Gulf Coast will. But they'll have big enclaves of party strength and class of economic reasons over

in Jackson county. The Hill man who is still there in those damn, little underpopulated counties with no economic future and then whatever tiny strata of professionals may attach themselves to the party.

Bass: How about your court house Democrats? Are they going to stay in the Democratic Party or are they going to switch over?

Carter: They'll stay but, I mean, you got to figure that most of those boys are within ten years of being gone. I mean there's a big split in age between the guys that have been the powers forever in the state, I mean the court house, and then that whole crew of people who have come along. ~~And they said no seniority as a thesis worked everywhere [?].~~

Bass: But who's going to replace that group? Are they going to be Republican or Democrat?

Carter: No, not necessarily. Part of them will be Democrats. I started to say that a lot of the traditional sources for Mississippi leadership will remain Democrats. The young lawyers, you know, coming along and saying that--

Bass: How about your top level of your financial and business communities?

Carter: When Jim Eastland or John Stennis go out or die they are going to leave the Democratic Party.

Bass: Does it depend who gets elected to the US Senate whether they are Republicans or Democrats?

Carter: Doesn't make a good god damn.

De Vries: Who else is going to move into the Republican Party?

Carter: Yeh, they're going to move because, you see, whoever gets elected isn't going to be able to deliver the goodies anymore the way Stennis and Eastland can. A long road they've got to hoe to get up there. Other Republicans? Hell, almost anybody I know. I mean sort of--I'm now talking about the younger business people, the doctor, mason, the whole strata of college educated whites. Almost anybody--

Bass: So ten years down the road you'll see a new Republican party?

Carter: Almost anybody who went to ole Miss. I mean, that's only semi-facetious.

Bass: So, in the short run you don't see much of a growth? What's the political impact of the Citizens' Council/private school people?

Carter: They are of course the most conservative. They have strength out of all proportion to their numbers simply because they are already financially and politically influential in their community. I mean, shit, here there are twice as many whites in the public schools as there are in the county. Here in Greenville. You sure as hell couldn't tell it by talking to the first 50 white leaders . You'd think the whole goddamn town--whites-- were in private schools. That's the reason that the legislature, you know, acts as though those 60,000 kids--or 40, depending on how you look at the statistics--their parents, sometimes you would think, were the only power . Where is all that power coming from? The reason is the ~~y~~ most articulate and the most influential.

Bass: Do they tend to bankroll the Republican Party?

Carter: Not necessarily, not necessarily. A lot of them ~~[give Eastland support?]~~ Tonight a few Republicans will be there. Clark and Judy are original backers of the State Academy, which has had an unfortunate effect on how we get along. ~~[static]~~

[Three-sided discussion of enrollment in state academies]

Carter: Which, incidentally, you know, Bill Waller has pandered to like crazy.

Bass: In what way did he pander?

Carter: He made speeches echoing those predictions. 80,000 by this fall, 150,000 soon. You know, the whole business. Very carefully him-

self and very publicly pulled his kids out and put them into the academy.

Bass: Is that right?

Carter: Sure.

Bass: So Waller's kids are not in public schools?

Carter: They have not been.

De Vries: Why didn't they keep going?

Carter: One, we're too poor. I mean for a lot of parents to be able to afford 4-5-600 dollars a year for their kids is part of it. The second thing is that the reality is that when you get outside of the mythology and you leave the Delta and about ten other counties, whites are in a sizeable majority. And tilt points don't happen to occur at 20 or 30%. So that people discovered that blacks weren't really taking over the schools. Third, the public schools in many places were integrated from portal to portal but not from class to class and there's an awful lot of games like that being played right now. So that in effect you were preserving your children in what were basically white classes anyway. The third thing is, the public schools are mighty hard for Mississippians to abandon as it turns out. Daddy always used to say the reason they wouldn't be integrated in many of these communities was that they were so vital as community centers, as the focus for so much of the life. Well, that was a good argument. But once there was no question that they had to be integrated, they still remained vital and in the consciousness of many of the people they were still the center of the community and were not so easily abandoned as we had once thought they would be. Simply because they formed so much of the history and the vital uniting element of that community. It's hard to give up your old football team for a lot of people. And you know lots of things which I think had its effect. But you can't ignore just the simple effect of economics on this thing.

Bass: How much of a role did conscience play in that? You know, somewhere in there you had to make a decision.

Carter: I think a lot. But it sort of begs the basis of your question for me to say that. Which is, you know, a lot of conscience involved. How come it didn't express itself earlier? Or why would everybody have been so universal in their predictions that it wasn't there strong enough to prevent--And I don't have a handy-dandy answer for that. Just have to give you all these other--

De Vries: This brings me back to a point you mentioned earlier. You thought there was a lot of moderation out there earlier and it was kind of released when . . .

Carter: . . . a minority, which was released. Yes, I do.

De Vries: I have a little trouble understanding that.

Carter: Oh well, it's not too hard.

De Vries: Where was the power in this oppression?

Carter: The power of the oppression was in the conscious acts through history from Reconstruction on. And an entire rewriting of history and an absolute demand by those who reshaped society and the redemption. All built around one fundamental thing: that any white who didn't agree with the white majority was more than a dissenter, he was a traitor, and was to be treated as a traitor would be treated in wartime. Which is that economically he should be destroyed; physically intimidated. Those business council pamphlets back in 55 used to say it best. I mean, never said anybody ought to be killed, but said there were ways to deal with it which we in our Delta--where it started--had always known how to do. And there were just one hell of a lot of people who were just scared. I'll tell you the truth. I'll tell you who's really free in Mississippi for the first time. It's not the black man, who still is economically, you know, about as much in bondage as he ever was. By

God, the white Mississippian is free. The civil rights movement has, since 54, have freed up some people. You can't write Mississippi the closed society any more. And an awful lot of whites are never going to go back willingly. You talk about what would happen if the feds pull away. Well, more than what would happen to blacks, there are a hell of a lot of whites who aren't just going to lie down and let them roll over them again and let, you know, five guys sitting in a small room decide what's acceptable for the people to say publicly and what you're allowed to do in your home and what your children can do and who they're going to associate with. That's the hardest thing for me to remember now--how tiny a thing you could do ten years ago and be in desperate difficulty. You know, what few dissenting remarks could destroy you politically. Or make you fear for your job, or if you were a minister get you run the hell out of the state--as an awful lot of young ministers discovered in the early sixties. That just doesn't happen like that anymore.

Bass: But seriously, Hodding, in your opinion, how much was the question of having to make a moral judgment a factor in preserving the public school system on the part of whites who could afford to send their children to private schools?

Carter: It was, for many whites who could afford it, and is, a matter of most agonizing kind of moral choice. And one of the reasons why decisions among old friends on this subject has been so great, right here, is simply because it was perceived finally not as a, just a simple decision about where your children goes to school but a moral question. Which those who made on either side felt pretty damn strongly about. And an awful lot of people lost their battles with their consciences--and that's me talking, on my side of the line you understand. And I see it that way. And a lot of other people surprized themselves by standing and then

discovering, much to their fury, that people who they had always respected as being moderates or people who cared about the community first had suddenly deserted them. Here they decided to stay in the public schools and they look around and this person who they had always understood to be brighter, or more of a moderate, or whatever, is off to the state academy. And a lot of friendships have been ruptured around here just because of that. An awful lot. It may not be true all over the Delta, because in some of the communities the capitulation was just total--hardly any whites left. But it sure as hell is here.

Bass: But that decision is a function of money ?

Carter: I doubt it.

Bass: If you don't have the money there's no decision.

Carter: Oh, yeh, to a large degree. Except that there are a bunch of people that work for me who sure as hell don't make a lot of money but who put every damn penny they got into their kid going to state academy. I mean gals and their husbands who together aren't making enough to make the old index practically, but whose kids are there. But sure, sure, the on going thing for most of them is a function of social or economic class.

Bass: You think they're here to stay?

Carter: State academy? I think in any community of any size there will be one private school left ten years from now. Washington school here will still be here ten years from now. The Christian school will probably be gone. Jackson prep is there forever. It's just there. Assuming we are all going through the middle of a great depression, which maybe isn't a very good assumption, but assuming there is some economic base left, there'll be private schools left. Washington School, for instance--now this is something that's useful to remember--Washington School is at least partially the expression of social snobbery which has

not a goddamn thing to do with the blacks. A lot of its founders could care less whether they had 15% token blacks in there. What they want is a school which is an expression of their distinctiveness--socially, financially, you know--in this community. And a lot of the people who send their kids there now find it another way to prove that they have arrived. Like the wife getting elected to the Junior Auxiliary, which is our Junior League, and the husband getting to be president of Rotary--you know, having once worked for the president of Rotary. And going to Washington School--in a way what I really regret most about those kids at Washington School--which is where Clark's kids are--is that they are growing up with a whole goddamn scale of values which are completely topsy. They honest to god think that they are the chosen, not because of race alone. They think they're brighter, smarter, you know, the whole shmear. And they sneer as much at rednecks as they do at blacks. It's the rednecks and niggers who go to public schools. And they're going to get their little asses whipped. And what's really funny is, they go over here to ole Miss and the athletes who have had' their four years of glory at Washington School, they have to compete with blacks there. You know, they're dead. I must say I hate it for them cause it's not the kids' fault, you know.

Bass: Let me ask you about one other thing, the R&D Center. How significant is that in the future of Mississippi?

Carter: I think what it stands for and what it tries to do is very important. You know, I don't think it's always successful. And I think that sometimes Its downright wrongheaded. But--let's put it this way. Mississippi is not going to get itself out of being last relatively by doing, you know, standard, conventional things in any area. I mean there's just no way. We don't have enough self generated capital. So

any ways we can find shortcuts, any ways we can find more efficient ways to operate, whether it be in education, industry or whatever, those ways are important to us.

Bass: If you look at what has happened the last 25 years in terms of moving into a modern society, in terms of modernization--I'm not going to define the term, but look at it from that perspective--is there any single force in the state that has more impact than the R&D Center, institutionally?

Carter: The cotton picker. It's completely changed the face of the state. We're no longer an agricultural based state simply because our labor force is no longer on the farm.

Bass: Is no longer needed on the farm.

Carter: That's what I mean. It's not on the farm and I'm being facetious when I say the cotton picker. I should say automation on the farm. The picker, pesticides, herbicides.

Bass: Hasn't automation on the farm had the effect of removing that aspect of public policy dominated traditionally by the Delta, that it forced upon the state to adopt a public policy to protect farm labor?

Carter: Yes, of course. I was being serious. What I'm saying is that almost all changes are a consequence of the state no longer being a purely agricultural economy. And also the consequence of literally thousands and thousands of blacks faced with being released from very close bondage . . Now, in so far as an institution goes, if that's what you're asking me, made up of some human beings, the R&D Center has had a tremendous effect. I'm not sure that I would give it the preeminent role that you're suggesting. One thing is it hasn't been here long enough. I mean it was Paul Johnson's real baby--the fact that it had its genesis elsewhere is irrelevant. I mean it's only as new as Paul Johnson himself and it didn't have enough money for some of

that time to really do anything.

Bass: I guess my real question should have been, does it potentially?

Carter: My God, that's what I say. It is absolutely--what it represents is essential and fundamental if we're ever going to move. I'm talking now in terms of economics and community development.

Bass: In predicting the future coalition that would form the Democratic Party you said you believed the top level business and financial community would move into the Republican Party. Do you see any chance of it remaining in the Democratic Party in coalition with blacks because they'd have the same common interest in developing this state into a modern industrial society?

Carter: Well, I can't answer that yes because that assumes that the guys who are now the top leadership of the economic and other can't find plenty of people in the Republican Party who want to develop it. I mean, you know, economically and bring it into a kind of modern society.

Bass: To go into the Republican Party, then you're saying you're going to end up with a basically moderate Republican Party.

Carter: I'd say there's as much potential for that as not. Look, there's never any escaping race in Mississippi. And therefore there's no escaping the implications of your earliest question to me about, you know, what if certain things happen. Assuming, at any rate, that there's no great reversal and that we stay at least on the plateau we're on now in terms of the way races deal with each other, then the Republican Party, despite it's catering often to disenchanted Dixiecrats, can damn well construct itself as a moderate party on race. And certainly has enough little tentative starts in that direction already to suggest that it's not going to be destructive to them. I mean, God knows, it's all Christmas trimming. But Thad Cockran, you know, gets himself a black field guy.

And that may be trimming, but it's more than Jim Eastland's done. And it's more than John Stennis has done. And Clark Reed very carefully gets himself a black lawyer to be on the state exec--you know, whatever he is, I can't remember what those guys are. Another one was a delegate from his own home county and that's, you know, clearly very conscious tokenism, buton the other hand, it's being done. And I don't see--. The national bit on busing is just that. I don't think it's going to have a goddamn thing to do with what people have to do politically in Mississippi, you know, to become politically dominant. Which is to get a good chunk of the black vote.

Bass: If the White House had supported Carmichael wholeheartedly against Eastland, could Carmichael have won?

Carter: No, he would have scared the shit--he would have scared them so bad it would have been terrible. He just had money. You know, my God, he gets what, 41% or something.

Bass: 40 percent of the major party vote.

Carter: With no money, no money whatsoever. He has no media whatsoever. He's terrible. He could have done a lot better, but he couldn't have beat him. Could not have beat him. But he could have come very, very close. Which should have more implications for future political campaigns. It's an amazing thing, Nixon had his good reasons for it, but they screwed up so bad in 64--the Republicans did. They had a chance to take every goddamn thing that was up there. And he ~~let that~~

. And this time they just didn't do what they should have done.

Bass: When Agnew had come down and, you know, made this great speech, endorsing two Republican candidates for Congress, both of whom won. If he'd given an equally large bearhug to Carmichael do you think it would have had any. . .

Carter: I say it would have made it a scary, scary election. But you have to go further than that. Also, Kleindinst couldn't have come down and kissed Eastland's butt, and Butz couldn't have kissed his butt. And you know, all the rest of them. There would have had to have been a kind of across the board commitment which was reverse English entirely of what was done. But more than all that, it had to be something that would free up a lot more money, because he just didn't have it.

(end of tape)