

*Jackson*

Interview with Brad Dye, ~~Meridian~~ [?], Mississippi, March 28, 1974,  
by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.  
Dye is Mississippi state treasurer.

NOT FOR ATTRIBUTION

Bass: I guess what we're really interested in is where politics is in Mississippi and where it's going. We're also learning how it got where it is and are more or less familiar with the basic background. Your own background is what, politically?

Dye: My background. . . the whole thing?

Bass: Well, in summary. Go ahead.

Dye: I started out as a page in the House in Washington, as a kid, for a period of time for Rep. James Whitman. Then in 1954, when I was in college, I drove Jim Eastland, Senator Eastland, in the campaign. Traveled with him. That was back during the days where, before the advent of the airplane and you stayed in the car pretty much. Next summer I drove for unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate, Paul Johnson, who later was elected. In 59 I was elected, right out of law school, elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives. My opponent withdrew right soon after the race got started and I was elected without opposition and moved on in to Paul Johnson's campaign for lieutenant governor. From there I served in the House and also worked as an attorney for the Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington when the Mississippi House was not in session. I'd take a leave of absence from up there. I was up there during the Kennedy administration. In 63 I was elected to the state senate, served one year. Paul Johnson was elected governor same time I was elected to the senate, and after I served one year he appointed me as a commissioner on the workmen's

compensation commission in the state. I resigned from that in 67 and managed John Bell Williams' campaign, successful campaign for governor. Then served for three and a half years as director of our state's economic development agency--agricultural and industrial board--A&I board. Then I was elected treasurer in 1971 and have served as treasurer ever since.

De Vries: It's quite a varied background.

Bass: What are the basic changes you've seen?

Dye: Various changes. Certainly has been the advent of the black vote. That's been the first change. I would say the second most significant change is the election of some Republicans and the Republicans fielding candidates. Like when I first started back in 1954 and 55 in politics in Mississippi, there were no Republican candidates for anything. It was purely a one party state. That's been a significant change. Another significant change I think would be the relation of the Mississippi Democratic party with the national Democratic party. The problems we've had. And then there's been a great change in political campaign style. Television has just caused a change. When I started working in campaigns in 54 and 55 the old stump speeches were still in vogue. As you know, I'm sure this was true all over the country but it was especially true in the south. It was more than just the politicking. It was a source of entertainment for the people. Today you go to a political rally and the only thing you see are candidates for other offices--their supporters handing out stuff. Because you are competing with television now to entertain. I think it's really brought back, too, it's brought back more of what I call touch politics. More one on one politics. A man today can see more people walking up and down a small rural town, from store to store along the street, in the two hours that he might spend at a political rally, he

can see more people and request more people to vote for him than he can at a political gathering. Certainly he'll speak to more people that are uncommitted unfamiliar than at a political rally because most political animals, you know, running for lesser offices, they've pretty well made up their minds who they're going to vote for for others. That's certainly been a change I've seen in the style of politics.

Bass: Do you see this change continuing? That is, more black voters, more Republican candidates?

Dye: I don't know. I've seen this with the Republicans. Since 1960 we've elected three Republicans to the US House. One was elected on Goldwater's coattails back when he ran in 1964. Two were elected last year, two years ago. Their election was not so much on the coattails of Nixon and Agnew, although I think that had an effect. The Republicans always seem to do better during a presidential year because since 60 the Republican candidates have been more pleasing to the majority of white Mississippians. They've been more conservative. And it's really not been so much that the people were for the Republicans, presidential candidates as they were opposed to the Democratic. Most Mississippians, whether they're conservative or not. That's kind of misused down here. Lot of people, I think, equate conservatism to having ~~past~~ [?] racial feelings and being opposed to one worldism. I don't think Mississippi is economically that conservative.

De Vries: So you don't see more Republicans getting elected?

Dye: Well, the two Congressional candidates who got elected two years ago--Trent ~~on~~ Lott was elected down in our southern most district. He had been administrative assistant of Bill Carmel, congressman Bill Carmel, who was a longtime member of the US House of Representatives, chairman of the Rules Committee in the House. And he really got elected by Bill Carmel's Democratic organization, although Carmel himself stayed



out of it. Carmel's office in Trent, he left/Washington after he won the Democratic nomination. Carmel put him back on his staff in Washington where he worked until the general election came along.

Bass: After he won the Republican nomination.

Dye: Yeh, after he won the Republican<sup>nominations</sup> Then the other Republican, Thad Cockran, here in Jackson. Thad has very strong Democratic ties. Thad was my Hines county campaign chairman when I was elected treasurer. He and I were fraternity brothers at ole Miss in college. He was a little younger. We were very active in campus politics. I brought Thad along. John Bell Williams, who had served in Congress for some 23 years from this district that Thad and I represent, had had a falling out with Thad's Democratic opponent. When John Bell was governor. And Thad's opposition, Ellis [?] Bodron, had been chairman of the senate finance committee of the state senate. They had a falling out so John Bell threw his, all of his support, behind Thad. Which was significant. He'd been representing these people for 23 years out of the last 27. Think that was significant in the Republican victory.

Bass: Did he do it openly as an endorsement or just sort of quietly, passing the word.

Dye: In Mississippi there is very little open endorsement of the political leaders. He put a Watts line right in his office. He laid on the telephone. His office became a campaign headquarters for Thad. I would say the last three weeks of the campaign John Bell did little of anything other than stay on the telephone.

Bass: So you're saying that the Republicans that have been elected in the last ten years or so, basically relate to the fact of the coattails of Republican presidential candidates and personality politics.

Dye: Right.



Bass: You really can't explain it as the party getting that much stronger.

Dye: That's right. Now, that's on the higher level. We have had a number of Republicans elected in municipal elections. I say a number. It's still a small minority of our municipal offices are Republicans, but we have several mayors in the state who are Republican. I would say, too, generally, that was not because of party affiliation. That was a cult of individual. The person himself had more support in his local community than the Democratic candidate. We have had several members of the state legislature. Never have over two or three in there at one time. Now I don't know how much effect the mess in Washington is going to have on the Republican party in Mississippi. I did notice this. The people in Mississippi became defensive, defensive of the president in the Watergate mess. But I did notice when the income tax thing came along, I could see where a lot of people got off the band wagon.

Bass: Will the grand jury indictments further that effect?

Dye: I haven't anticipated--but when the people found out that he didn't pay any income tax, making the kind of money he made. That, in Mississippi, I think, from what I could hear, you know, people talking .  
Now when it all comes out in Washington. You know, when the committee, the House committee comes out with its finding or reports to the House with an impeachment resolution or else they vote not to impeach, I'm sure that other things will come out that haven't at this point that could change the people's feelings. But people still equate Kennedy to McGovern and they still say "By God, I'd rather have a crooked son of a bitch up there than have a communist." Now that's the way a lot of folks in Mississippi talk, you know. Which in both counts is

exaggeration.

De Vries: What do you think it's going to take to bring the loyalists and the regulars together or don't you think it's going to happen?

Dye: I think it will happen.

De Vries: Before 1976?

Dye: I don't know if it will before 1976. I think a lot's going to be what's going to happen this summer at the mid-term convention or whatever they call the thing. The ~~real~~ stumbling block right now is the Democratic committeemen. Well, not the Democratic committeemen, either. But I think Charlie Evers in a Democratic committeeman. But it's the party chairman, ~~Aron~~ Henry, and the national committeewoman, Pat ~~Derring~~ <sup>Dawson</sup> [?]. They don't have any swing in Mississippi. Certainly Aron has more than Pat ~~Derring~~ <sup>Dawson</sup>. She can't produce any votes for anybody. This is the only way she can hold on. This is giving her the seat of power. I felt the blacks, most black leaders in the state want to resolve the difference. The battle in Mississippi, the racial battle, is over. And now we're getting down to the nitty gritty things that blacks are interested in. Economic issues. Most blacks I talk to now, now that the war's over, they want the wounds to be healed and work out ways where they can become part of the society, part of the government, and can enjoy the fruits of a growing economy.

De Vries: But you're saying that the leadership of the loyalists right now prevents that.

Dye: Charlie Evers is ready to do it right--he'd do it tomorrow. From the information I have. I haven't talked to Charlie in a long time. But the information I have was that Charlie would do it tomorrow. He's a committeeman.

Bass: Where does Waller fit into it?

Dye: Waller's a strange bird. I approached Waller in, I guess, 1970, 71, after his election and in early 72, before the convention in 72. Approached him to sponsor legislation for us to elect our national committeeman and committeewoman. Alabama does it and other states. Put them on the ballot. It would have no effect at that convention because they'd have to go on the ballot the next general election. Also have a preferential primary. At the last convention even with a preferential primary I don't know if we would have been seated or not. I doubt if we would have. I think the loyalists, even if they'd gotten a small minority of the votes, would still have been seated. But I think at the next convention we would probably be seated if we would have a preferential primary. Waller, though, I don't know. Waller talks like he wants to do it and then he goes into federal court and files a suit against it, the party that try to get in. That's not the way to do it. You don't heal any wounds, you know, by going to court. And the court upheld the party.

De Vries: So you don't see it being done?

Dye: Oh I see it being done, yes.

De Vries: When?

Dye: I can't tell you. The threat of the Republicans in the state before Watergate came along were moving the two together. I don't know though what the Republicans are going to be able to do the next election.

Bass: Well Carmichael got 38% of the vote and wasn't Phillips, he also got 38% of the vote for governor state wide. So there's some kind of a Republican base out there.

~~Dye~~: No. With Phillips there'd been a hard fought Democratic primary. Phillips I think got that 38% you're talking about the first time he ran against Paul Johnson, didn't he. He got less than that when he ran in 67. I think in 63 he got 38%. But you had a very hard fought Democratic



primary between former governor J. P. Coleman, who now sits on the 5th circuit court of appeals, Charlie Sullivan, an aspiring politician who later served ~~is now serving~~ as lieutenant governor, Paul Johnson. Whole lot of scars. I think a lot of people went to the polls. They were not voting for Rub, they were just voting against Paul Johnson. Carmichael. The thing here again it was in a presidential election year. A lot of blacks did not vote for Jim Eastland. Normally they would vote Democratic, but they would not vote for Jim Eastland. Then, too, Jim Eastland waged a campaign. If ~~he had run~~ *a computer* individual had run Jim Eastland's campaign, I think you would have seen a significant increase in his vote. His campaign was a Democratic party campaign. Here he was running a Democratic party campaign in Mississippi when you had Bill Carmel as a member of the house supporting Trent Lott down there. You had John Bell Williams who had just gone out of the governor's office, a Democrat, supporting Thad Cockran here. You had Tom Abernathy who had just retired from Congress who despises the Democratic nominee, David Boyd, who's up there now. They didn't get along at all. You had McGovern and Shriver on the Democratic ticket. And at that time Nixon was extremely popular in Mississippi, second only probably to Agnew. Agnew was awfully popular down here. Had been in the state. Agnew came into the state during the campaign. I don't think that was a--that 38% Carmichael got I don't think was indicative of Republican strength.

Bass: But Agnew snubbed Carmichael, right?

Dye: He did snub Carmichael. I think though when he did it it probably helped Carmichael.

Bass: Sympathy?

Dye: Sympathy. Carmichael played on it.

Bass: You say Eastland tried to campaign on the Democratic ticket. From what I've read about that and talked to other people, most people would consider that a failure, as he was unable to help other people get elected. Is that a change in Mississippi politics? Hasn't it been traditional in the past in some elections, for the general election, to campaign as a ticket.

Dye: Yeh, in the general election when we--in our general election when we have elected from justice of the peace to supervisor in our state general election, it's very effective. You've got everybody all the way across. But in presidential elections, we only have the Congressional candidates. The supervisors, j.p.s, they haven't been through an election. They're not exposed. I'm not sure that the Republicans might not make great strides, but--the Republicans in Mississippi, the leadership of the Republicans in Mississippi has a kind of the tinge of the country club group to it. They only campaign with each other. Sort of social club. Most of them are economically wealthy. Some ~~of~~ ~~them~~ ~~for such things, and~~ have spoken publicly of the abolition of graduated income tax. Real crazy things. I can't see the people of Mississippi, who are voting on economic issues, I can't see them going along with the Republican leadership.

De Vries: What do you mean by voting on economic issues?

Dye: Welfare. It's hard to relate that to the Republicans in the state since really we've never had any real battles with them on economic issues.

De Vries: How about among Democrats?

Dye: If they become a dominant party we will get to some economic issues with them. Quiet frankly, I don't think the Republicans in this country have ever done a hell of a lot for those who can't help themselves.

I don't think they've ever initiated any new programs to help those who can't help themselves.

Bass: What kind of person do you think will be the next governor?

Dye: Hard to say. You know, Mississippi is--we deal so much in personalities here. In the last gubernatorial race there were really no real issues involved where the ~~two~~ candidates took issue. It was primarily who could do the best job, who had the less scars.

Bass: Well wasn't this running against the Capital Street Gang or whatever sort of at least an issue insofar as images was concerned.

Dye: That was a campaign issue. That's really not an issue as such but it was used effectively by Waller.

Bass: Basically that was an appeal to the old populist tradition as an economic issue and it proved--

Dye: Well, it was more than that. It was an appeal to the resentment people feel toward Jackson, out in the rural areas. Now Waller took it as being a populist movement.

De Vries: But you're saying that it was mostly a rural-urban sort of--

Dye: You had several things. You had--this fellow Charlie Sullivan who ran had made some former political leaders unhappy in the past.

Jim Eastland, former governor Paul Johnson, former governor Ross Barnett. Waller had no organization as such. They threw their organizations behind Waller. Waller's clean. But one of the biggest risks we have in our state right now that touches a lot of our areas, goes right down to the grass roots, is private schools vs public schools. In some of our communities we have some real hard feelings. The strange thing, Waller was able to get the majority of the black vote and get the klan vote, too. Crazy kind of thing.

Bass: Was it on that economic issue? I mean on the image of being--

Dye: No real economic issue involved.



Bass: Well, was it the populist image?

Dye: <sup>DeLoss</sup> ~~Dr.~~ Walker came in here, handled Waller's campaign. First time we had had the soft sell television approach. Waller never opened his mouth on television. It was the soft sell, Waller going through the crowd, real folksy, and a good pro voice in the background. It was a soft sell. He brought up some of the grievances of people yet never irritated anybody, you know. He ran against the former administration. I was part of it. Some of the mistakes that we had made or some of the mistakes people thought had been made were brought to light. For instance--little things hurt you, you know, in politics. They'd built a \$140,000 wall around the governor's mansion. Brick wall. Which people didn't like spending that kind of money for a wall around his house. Hell, most of the people in Mississippi don't even own a goddamn \$140,000 house, you know. And then about 3 months after they built the wall, John Bell moved out of the mansion, said the mansion was unsafe for he and his family to live in. Just happened to moved out about three weeks before the first primary. This hurt Sullivan. I thought it was going to hurt me. I was out campaigning. These are the little things that, you know, when you talk to people you never hear about, but I think this was a significant--

Bass: Was John Bell supporting Waller?

Dye: No, no. He supported Sullivan. He supported Sullivan. You asked about the next election. I can't tell you now what kind of governor we'll elect.

Bass: Is race apt to be a factor?

Dye: Race is a factor. It's not the factor it used to be. The people of Mississippi today, I don't think, want an extremist on either side of the race issue. They don't want race to become openly involved in the campaign. There are a lot of whites who still have segregationist

sentiments in this state. But their children are going to school with blacks, little black children. They don't want any more explosive situations because their children are right in the middle of it now. I don't think an extremist on either side will be elected next time. I think a man who is identified as going to promote the interest of the blacks to an extreme will not be elected. I think a man who tries to run on an anti-black--who has some anti-black, strong anti-black parts to his background is going to have a hard time.

De Vries: Let's assume that issue's out of there, at least as a visible issue, and everybody's fairly moderate. What becomes the issues then? Personality of the candidate?


Dye: Personality of the candidate.

De Vries: Like what? What characteristics do you think they're looking for?

Dye: It's a funny thing in Mississippi. I've just about come to the damn conclusion in our state that gubernatorial campaigns are like horse races. Folks just want to put their money on a winner. They want a winner. As soon as that race is over, hell, they start looking for the next race. And they approach it the same way a lot of folks bet on horses--without any logical reason. I don't see any issues right now--when I talk of issues, any issues that will be visible and that there will be strong disagreements between candidates. Because you're going to find everybody's going to be for motherhood, God and country.

De Vries: What about something like tax reform?

Dye: Tax reform could be. Tax reform could be. Although in Mississippi--the twenty years I've been around--somebody'll pick up an issue, like tax reforms, and if the other candidates see this catching they'll all jump on the bandwagon. And it really never becomes an issue that's in contest with the candidates. I can remember in 1951--the first gubernatorial

torial campaign I ever paid any attention to. Paul Johnson was running. At that time he was considered to be a moderate or liberal and he had advocated, at that time, I think old age assistance or something like \$18/mo. He advocated paying old age assistance at \$50 a month. His opponent, governor Hugh White, first said  couldn't be done. Before he knew it Hugh White was advocating \$60/mo.

I know when John Bell Williams was elected and I was managing his campaign, the big issues were education and highways. Everybody was for them. It was who was going to build the most roads and who was going to pay the teachers the highest salaries. If Charlie Evers should run for governor again, he might create some issues, on getting back in the Democratic party.

De Vries: You mean for the general election or for the nomination?

Dye: For the nomination. I would think if he ran next time he would run as a Democrat in the primary. When he ran before for governor he ran as an independent in the general election.

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That's what did it. After the Meredith incident at ole Miss.

De Vries: Let me rephrase it. Generally though, the so-called establishment candidate wins.

Dye: Well, no. That I disagree with. A front runner has not gotten elected in Mississippi in the last 20 years.

Bass: Wasn't John Bell a front runner?

Dye: No. He got into the campaign late. The front runner at that time was a fellow named Carroll Garden, who had served as lieutenant governor. He died in early December of 1966. The man who served as state treasurer then, William Winter, jumped into the campaign after Carroll died. William pretty well pulled in most of ~~Garden~~ [Garvin's?] visible support. The campaign looked like it was going to narrow down,



before Garden died to a rehash of the 1959 campaign between Carroll Garden and Ross Barnett. Carroll died and William Winter jumped into it. He came in in January. John Bell didn't get into it until March, kind of late. John Bell had a lot going for him.

De Vries: I guess what I meant to say was that most of them have been in government positions, state wide offices, or something like that. Except Waller. Waller now is a different animal. He comes out of nowhere.

Dye: You're right. They have all come from the so-called establishment, yes sir. I misunderstood your question.

De Vries: I didn't mean the business establishment. I meant people in the political--

Dye: The establishment in Mississippi is really a business/agriculture/industry coalition. Labor's always pretty well been on the outside of the establishment, although I can see labor moving on in closer now. Labor been on the outside in so many, some of your states--

Bass: What is happening with labor? Politically?

Dye: In Mississippi labor's split. It's split just like any other segment of our state. Political groupings, if you want to call them as such. Labor in Mississippi went through a pretty tough time on the racial issue. They were split on that pretty good in Mississippi. Some of your strongest klan support, when the klan was about to get started again, came right out of organized labor, out of unions. The two areas where we had the most trouble were in the Natchez area, southwest Mississippi, and around Laurel, Mississippi--were two of the areas we had our biggest problems. And both of those areas are two of the strongest union areas we have in the state. Down on the coast, in contrast, down in the *Pascagoula* area, that's your biggest labor area, I don't think the racial issue ever became a problem.

De Vries: But are they getting more and more important in terms of state wide politics?

Dye: They haven't gotten yet. Labor yes; organized labor no. We've got more people in Mississippi today deriving their primary source of income from construction work than we have on the farm. But we still have those people in manufacturing, ~~manufacturing~~ of agriculture, but those people who work in the factories still, a lot of them, think more in terms of agriculture than they do in terms of being a manufacturing--

De Vries: Yeh, we were surprized to find out that 7% of the state's income comes from agriculture and that's all.

Dye: 7% of the labor force. I think you'll find a little more of the income does. Income is up around 12 or more. But only about 7-8% of the labor force comes from agriculture.

De Vries: That was interesting because 50% are still--

Dye: You know, a lot of these people that work in these small factories around the state, they are first generation factory workers. They grew up on the farm. And they still have a lot of the beliefs and sentiments of their parents. And they still, lot of them still have a few cows and they'll have a little patch of turnip greens and a little field of corn. You know, these things. And although their income is coming from the factory, their sentiments are still there with the land. I think when you start getting your second, third and fourth generation factory worker it's going to be different. And that's going to be coming.

De Vries: You going to be a candidate for governor?

Dye: I don't know. I'm going to run for either governor or lieutenant governor. I'm not sure which. Don't plan to make up my mind until December or January.

De Vries: If you do, what would be your platform. Or doesn't one need

a platform?

Dye: You know, platforms in Mississippi are something you got to have--the absence of one would hurt you.

De Vries: I mean in terms of why should you be lieutenant governor, or governor? When they ask you that question what's your response?

Dye: Well, this would not be a campaign platform itself, but if you were asking the question why should I be I think I've had more experience or as much as most folks around here. My platform probably would be given primarily to economic growth and progress--doing those things necessary to promote economic progress. And then too, out and out pretty strong support of education--all phases of education--all along. I would continue that support. We still have got to pour more money into education.

Bass: How do you deal with the public/private school issue? I mean how does one deal with that politically?

Dye: Well, what I did is--I think each parent ought to decide where his child ought to go to school. But we've got to have public education. We've got to support public education as strong as possible for those who can't send their children to private schools. I send my children to private schools. But the private school they go to is integrated. But it's a good school. I've got little children. Three boys. 8, 6, and 1 year old. And the reason we started sending them to this school is because in Jackson, had I put my boys in public school when my first boy came along to go to school, he would have gone to either 7 or 8 different schools around this town from the first to twelfth grade. Never would have been at any school really long enough to identify with the school, had the pride of his school. That I wanted him to have. That I had when I grew up in a rural town in Mississippi. I had a lot of pride in my little public school. I think it's for each parent to decide. But I think we've got to continue upgrading public education.



De Vries: What about state support for private schools?

Dye: I would support it but you can't do it. You're fooling people when you tell them that there's anyway to do it. I would have no hesitation. For instance, I think that the courts were absolutely wrong in not allowing us to furnish textbooks to private schools. Our state has furnished textbooks to the school children--historically from the time when we first had free textbooks in our state--passed in the early 40s. We didn't have free textbooks until about 1941 or 42 in Mississippi.

Bass: Who was governor then?

Dye: Paul Johnson. That was one of the finest things--old man Paul Johnson did some fine things for the state. Paul did some fine things. But at that time, hell, he didn't distinguish between kids going to parochial school. We had parochial schools in the state back then. Those free textbooks went right to those kids as well as the ones in public school. But we can't do it. You know.

Bass: You said the school your kids go to is integrated. To what extent? How many blacks are in the school, do you know?

Dye: Percentage wise, oh hell, I wouldn't know. It's a small number. But the school has no racial policies. St Andrew's Episcopal School is where my kids go. It's an old school. Been a day school here in Jackson for a number of years. It's not one of the schools that came along after the integration deal. They just look at the kids. I know, my kids, in all their classes--and I've had my kids there in pre-school, you know--they all have blacks in the classes. I think a number of the professors at Toogaloo send their children to St Andrew's. I know my little boy went to a birthday party recently at a playground over close to where I live. His classmate. His parents teach at Toogaloo. He's a little black boy. It's not--but it's basically white.

De Vries: One of the things that intrigued us, and we asked everybody this--

Dye: But I want my children to get a good education. The public schools are fucked up, if you'll excuse my crudness, in Mississippi. They're getting a little better. For instance my maid, black. She's gotten in problems before and I've gotten her out of problems. She's been with my family since we've lived here and before any of my children were born. Laura Mae's like a member of my family. She and her sister live next door to each other. Each of them have two girls, that ranged at that time, when we had our first decree in this city reshuffling everything--they ranged in age I think from 8 to 12. Four girls. They'd all been going to the same school. Laura Mae took them in the morning and her sister picked them up in the afternoon. They ended up going to four different schools. They came to me and wanted to get the children back in the school. Hell, I told her I couldn't do it. She damn near quit me. She couldn't understand why I couldn't get her children back in the school because it was a real inconvenience for them. In talking to blacks, I can see that now that they've proved that you can't keep them from going. Somewhere down the road--where that point will be I don't know--I think they're going to be amenable to getting back to a neighborhood concept. I think the pressures going to be from their own people to do it.

Bass: What long range effect is that going to have if you do that and if the schools revert to being basically segregated to a large extent?

Dye: Here again, I don't think they will--you see, in the interim, in a few years, the neighborhood patterns in the city of Jackson have changed considerably. You've got a lot more blacks living in what used to be so-called white neighborhoods. The residential patterns have changed appreciably. I see more and more change.

Bass: Are these becoming integrated neighborhoods or blacks just moving into formerly white neighborhoods?

Dye: Well, you get both. But we've got integrated neighborhoods. We've got some of our real elite residential sections are getting blacks. Because they have the same economic level as these people. And I'm saying they accept it pretty well. I don't feel the threat of property values diminishing because of blacks moving into the neighborhood the way it was felt ten years ago. It's not that big a deal anymore down here.

Bass: Looking back ten years ago. Ross Barnett's administration. Johnson. You were involved.

Dye: Oh, that was colorful, Ross was.

Bass: Could you have predicted then that you'd have that kind of massive--

Dye: Hell no. No.

De Vries: Why do you think that it occurred so peacefully? The problem was, you know, pretty well adjusted.

Dye: You know, I really thought this thing would be in flames. And I was real proud the way our people accepted it. For one thing, I was a segregationist. And I can remember as a kid some things we did to blacks--I say we, whites--that I couldn't stomach. They were wrong on the face of it. I knew it. I wouldn't tell anybody else, but hell, I knew it. I told myself.

Bass: What would be the sort of thing?

Dye: Double standards of justice. That was the thing that bothered me, really bothered me.

Bass: Any incident that comes to mind?

Dye: I saw a black whipped. He ran a *pick-up* truck in my town into this big ditch. Evidently bent the front axle. And I saw the man who



owned the truck, a white man, one Saturday night, late Saturday afternoon whip him with a chain he pulled off of that truck. I guess I was 6, 7, 8, 9 years old. Never forgot it. I can picture it today. Blood coming out of that black's head. After seeing that that made me think of a lot of other things as I came along. Then, too, I think blacks, as they get more educated, are going to make more significant contributions to our society. The black vote has made a big difference. You got to go ask that black, by George, for something now. You're not only giving now, but you're asking too. He got something, by George, you got to ask him for.

De Vries: Yeh, but nobody thought in the late 60s that could be accomplished by '70. Now everybody looks back and says "We can't believe it." Did everybody misread--

Dye: I think basically it goes back--basically our people are law abiding people. And I think it's the same thing I talked about a while ago. I think several things happened in this state that were repulsive to people. Burning of black churches. That turned a lot of people. When it appeared that the klan was about to raise its head again. 1964, state legislature, we gave Paul Johnson, the governor, we gave the highway patrol general police powers. And you know the reason we did it? For it to be used against the klan. So the klan couldn't get re-entrenched. You know, it looked like it was about to. Then we had, you know, the killings over in Philadelphia. Three kids. On the surface people were saying "Hell, they didn't have no business being down here." Inside, people didn't like it. Killing. That was very distasteful to people in Mississippi. Hurt a lot of people inside.

Bass: What was the effect of the disruption at ole Miss?

Dye: Oh, that proved that you can't whip city hall. That had an effect. That proved that some of the old, legalistic cliches we've used in the

state, such as state's rights and, oh what's the old deal that Calhoun espoused back 100 years, imposition. You know, we thought the state would impose its sovereignty between the federal government and its people. John C. Calhoun's old theory. That proved--

Bass: That was taken very seriously at that time. State sovereignty commission and all that. That was really taken very seriously at that time. They believed it.

Dye: Serious as the devil. Yeh. When it came to the point--I know, hell, I was riding good ole Ross and his bandwagon. The thing that turned me was when we had a meeting in his office--I was a young member of the Mississippi House of Representatives. He called us into special session. He called a group of us into his office one night. Well, really the thing that turned me was that day I'd been with him--three members of the House went with him to Oxford when he got there too late to prevent Meredith from getting in and Paul Johnson stood at the gate and prevented Meredith from coming in. But Ross Barnett told his security people if any federal marshalls, any federal people tried to arrest him, he wanted them to resist. And I'll never forget it. Col. Birdsall, head of the highway patrol at that time, says--We were in bedroom with the biggest suite at the alumni house at ole Miss--three legislators, the governor, Paul Johnson, the lieutenant governor. We'd gone into the bedroom, closed the door, with the security people, the highway patrol. Col. Birdsall said "Well now governor, what if they use force?" He says "You use force to resist." "What if they start shooting?" "You shoot back." He turned to Gwen Cole, who was on the highway patrol, investigator who was in charge of the group who were guarding the lieutenant governor, Paul Johnson, and he says "Now Gwen, that goes for you, too." Gwen went through the same series of questions, wanted to make sure he got it right. And I thought to myself "My God, are we as Americans,

going to start shooting against other Americans?" We got back to Jackson and he called a meeting that night in his office. And he wanted to reactivate the state guard. Pass legislation creating the state guard. And some of us started asking questions: "Well, governor, what are they going to do?" He says "Well, we're going to have a *army* ." "You mean to fight?" And this kind of talk started making people think. Hell, we didn't want to go to war with the United States. It made me think and I know a lot of other people it made think. Then too, the quality of education that we had for blacks which had been--I put in figures I don't have, these are not accurate. But just to give you examples. For ole Miss, Mississippi State, Mississippi Southern, MSCW, Delta State, our white four year colleges. The state had spent \$300 per pupil per year. All going to A&M, Jackson State, Mississippi Valley College, our three black four year schools--state supported schools where we give \$300 per pupil we give \$30 per pupil to blacks. That's coming back to haunt us in our public schools. Because the quality of their teachers, black teachers, is hurting us now. But they just didn't get the basic education.

De Vries: But you were personally surprized by the rapidity of all that change? I mean the adjustment to it?

Dye: Well, no--

De Vries: You said the state would be in flames.

Dye: I was not surprized as it occurred. But at the front end, back in 1960, if you had ask me would I have thought: *yes* . On that front end. If you had told me in 1974 you're going to have all these changes I would have told you well the state would have been in flames doing it. But it didn't happen. One thing *it happened* a lot faster, my god. When you read history, when you read the account of 1910 to 1920, even though there was a world war, say 1910 to 1930. Hell



we have more advances in one year than they did in 20 then.

Bass: Going back to that ole Miss thing and Barnett wanted to bring out the guard and so forth.

De Vries: He wanted to activate the state militia. Every state has-- not the national guard but the state militia.

Dye: Prior to World War II, if you remember, we didn't have the national guard as we have it now. Each state had the state guard that could become nationalized in case of national emergency and was used by states when they had state emergencies. Most of them even had wooden guns that they *chilled* with. But they were state guard. But after World War II it never reverted back to state guard. It continued nationalized. The national guard. What he wanted to do was recreate the state guard. Enact legislation. We'd still have the national guard in the state. But we would be creating a state militia, as you say.

Bass: Would it be the same people?

Dye: No. Oh no!

Bass: Okay, what happened at that meeting? I wanted you to finish that story.

Dye: The reason prevailed. Rep. George Payne Cossick got up and said "Governor, if we do that"--this is before they'd moved into Oxford. We're still trying to prevent Meredith from going to school. George Payne Cossick got up and said "Well Governor, it seems to me that that would be like waving a red flag at a bull. If you want the United States government to come in here with arms, that's a good way to get them to do it."

De Vries: Plus couldn't the federal government nationalize the national guard and you'd have your own national guard fighting your state guard?

Dye: Hell yes. That was brought up by the speaker then, Walter *Sillars*. He said "Governor, if you plan to arm all these people, don't you realize

that all the arms in our state are controlled by the national guard<sup>and</sup>  
Owned by the central government." [laughter] ——— The more  
ridiculous it got.

Bass: Did this occur before or after that meeting in the hotel room?

Dye: This I believe was the night after the meeting at the  
hotel.

Bass: So what was the feeling in the legislature? That the governor hadn't  
thought things through?

Dye: Well. . . I don't think Ross Barnett ever wanted to go to war. I  
really don't. People were throwing things at him--I think he just threw  
it out. Somebody run in and said "I think we ought to have a state  
guard." He called in a bunch of legislative leaders--why I was along  
I don't know. I was just a freshman. He threw in, you know, about the  
state guard. Most people probably don't remember as much as I do be-  
cause, as I said, to me those two events happening in one day about  
shooting back and then the state guard left a deep imprint in my mind.

Bass: What did it mean to you?

Dye: It meant hell, we're about to go to war with other Americans.  
Scared the hell out of me. It frightened me.

Bass: So how did you feel then?

Dye: It frightened me.

Bass: So what did you want to do then?

Dye: What did I want to do? I wanted to go back to my hotel room and  
forget the whole damn thing. That's what I did. I no longer went with  
Ross anywhere. I no longer sat there and listened to him talk to Bobby  
Kennedy over the telephone, as I'd been doing for several days.

De Vries: Were you there with the great chicken story?

Dye: No. I've read it, I think in Sorensen's book. I've kind of got  
a unique <sup>slant</sup> on it. The only presidential candidate that I've ever

actively supported was Jack Kennedy.

I still think he's a fine man, a good person. Disagree with a lot of things. But I certainly would not want it put in the book that I campaigned for him because that would probably become an issue in my next campaign. Although I don't deny the fact. I thought he brought some leadership to the country.

Bass: What do you think would have to happen for the Democratic party to carry Mississippi again in a presidential election?

Dye: The black party get back the way it used to be where they had a big tent. They didn't *change* the philosophy so much. You know, the Democratic party. Basically in the past, if you believed that this country was founded on the premise that no child should go to bed at night without food, no people should go to bed at night without shelter, those who can't help themselves can best be helped by the government, we owe an obligation to society to help those that can't help themselves. That was the basic philosophy of the Democratic party that most everybody believed in. You could disagree on integration and segregation. You could disagree on foreign aid. You could disagree on the war here or there. But at the last party convention they asked too much. You had to be against the war in Vietnam, you had to be strong for human rights to the extent that you were opposed to property rights--I think when the tent gets bigger again we'll be able to *grow*.

The party start nominating people who are more moderate. As long as you nominate people like McGovern and the party espouses some of the causes it did at the last convention you're not going to get the people in this state back in the party.

Bass: We hear a lot of people mention Jackson if we ask about names. Do any other names come to mind?

Dye: The shame of it is, probably the best man who could get Mississippi



back in the Democratic party better than anybody else has left the party-- John Connally. I think Ted Kennedy would make votes in the south. I don't think he'll make too many votes in Mississippi. Still goes back to this Meredith thing, you know.

Bass: What do you see as the basis of his appeal in the south?

Dye: Well, for one thing, you have a change in your voter in the south. Young people today, black or white, aren't thinking along the same lines I was thinking when I was coming along going to college in the 50s.

Kids today, the old black and white bit has no meaning to them, most of them, any more. The scars that Kennedy had over the Meredith incident, for instance, or the Freedom Riders coming through. The image that Kennedy had in the south, you know, of pushing integration--that's not going to be a matter much to these young folks. You got a lot of black voters now you didn't have before. And then the Republicans--I can't see any real good leaders in the right. Too much in the Democratic party, real leaders. But I think the Republicans are in worse shape than we Democrats. I would like to see both parties going back to the state house. I think it's going to be difficult to do, though, because of television, exposure that the members of the senate get on television. Free exposure they get, name identification

(end of this side of tape)

I'm sure somewhere out there there's a governor who could make a very attractive candidate for the Democratic party.

De Vries: How about Senators who have been governors first?

Dye: I don't see any real attractive senators. You take Ted Kennedy, though, and George Wallace running as vice presidential candidate, if that should happen. It would be a strong ticket in the south. That ticket might take Mississippi. Take a Ronald Reagan or a Goldwater or Connally on the Republican ticket to whip that ticket in Mississippi.

Bass: And you think a Reagan ticket could beat a Kennedy-Wallace ticket? Even in Mississippi?

Dye: I think *so* . I think it would be a good race. Wallace is popular in this state. Talks the language of the folks of the state.

De Vries: What is the effect of reapportionment?

Dye: You'll see some real changes in the next election. Since reapportionment the agricultural industry don't have the big hammer they once had for legislation. Things like reappraisal of property came damn close--state wide reappraisal. Came damn close to passing this session. When I came to the legislature in 1960, hell it never would have gotten a second in committee.

[interruption]

De Vries: *Some say* the reason Waller won that thing, <sup>*was*</sup> because of Eastland's support and his contact with county supervisors his organization?

De Vries: *That support was the* critical factor and it wasn't all the bull-shit on television. Is that right?

Dye: I think that had a lot--he got on the telephone, quietly, and do more than any man I've seen in this state.

De Vries: What is the basis for that power? Because he's done so much for people in Washington or because--

Dye: He is a very loyal person to his friends. And his political philosophy is that a political favor is never repaid. I've heard him say some people who supported him first time he ran come back and back and back. Just little piddling favors. Didn't amount to anything. Write a letter to somebody for my son. Or do this. He always did. I remember one of his assistants saying one day "Jim, oh so and so is just driving us crazy. By God, you've paid that political favor." It was

Corey Pace [?], his administrative assistant. He said "God damn it, Cortney, a political debt is never paid. You go ahead and do whatever so and so wants done." He's been very loyal to his friends. As a result he's built up some strong loyalties toward him.

De Vries: Does that suggest to you that the man he may endorse quietly ~~or whatever~~ is going to be the next governor?

Dye: It's not going to hurt the man, I'll put it that way.

De Vries: That's not what I asked you. [laughter]

Bass: Has there been a governor elected in the last--how many of the recent governors who have been elected did not have his support?

Dye: The last one was Coleman in 1955.

Bass: So it's been 20 years.

Dye: He's had a friend in the governor's office since then.

De Vries: In 1955 Eastland--

Dye: Supported Paul Johnson.

Bass: And he was also nowhere near the power he is now. Am I correct? He didn't have, he had 20 years less seniority in the Senate and he was also no where near the power he is now.

Dye: And his support for Paul Johnson was open. He's learned to be quiet in his support.

De Vries: Is he the single most important Democratic officerholder in the state?

Dye: That's hard to say.

De Vries: In terms of that process of getting nominated--

Dye: See, he and John Stennis are so different. They're different personalities. Jim Eastland went to the Senate from being a lawyer, being an advocate and he also was a farmer. But his law practice with his father, they were damage suit lawyers. John Stennis went to the Senate from a judgeship, from being a circuit judge sitting on the bench.



This kind of carried through. Jim Eastland's more of a fighter.

John Stennis. John Stennis weighs things. Stennis, I would say, if you took a vote of the people of Mississippi and put all the politicians in there, a popularity contest vote for one, there is no question John Stennis would win it. But it's not his nature to motivate other people. It's not his nature to develop those loyalties Jim Eastland has. I had one of Stennis' closest friends tell me one time, said "I love Senator Stennis. Always manages the campaign in my county when he runs. But when I go to Washington to get something done with the federal government I go see Jim Eastland." Stennis does not involve himself in other people's races, except his own. One person he'll campaign openly for or get on the telephone for, that's Jim Eastland. I would say Jim Eastland, yes, in answer to your question.

De Vries: But there really isn't a Democratic party in this state, though. There are factions and of the factions, Eastland's is the most important, organizational faction.

Bass: Is there any Eastland faction, that's my question?

Dye: There are no anti-Eastland factions. There are some anti-Eastland votes.

Bass: Is the Carmichael vote basically an anti-Eastland vote? Plus some Republican--

Dye: *Let me tell you* about that race. Charlie Sullivan, four years ago--you could ask anybody in this state who was going to be the next governor--that was two years before the election--and they'd say Charlie Sullivan can't be beat. Lot of his supporters thought he counted his chickens before they hatched. They were thinking about what they were going to get themselves appointed to and all this kind of stuff. They were already enjoying the fruits of victory before they got the victory. Those people blame Jim Eastland for beating Sullivan. Jim Eastland had

to run the next year. And a lot of those voted against him because they was mad. Plus the blacks that I told you earlier. Plus Jim Eastland running on the Democratic ticket. His name was right under McGovern and Shriver. While on the other side, right under Nixon and Agnew was Carmichael. The anti-Eastland vote, a lot of the anti-Eastland vote in that election you'll never see again. I know some people who was mad at him for a year after Waller got elected, beat Sullivan, who are not mad at him anymore. Are going to Washington to pay homage now. A lot of young voters didn't vote for Jim Eastland.

Bass: Is Eastland the key figure in resolving the conflict between the regulars and the loyalists?

Dye: I don't think so. He could be. Or if he decided to put it together in the regular year, Jim Eastland would have a hard time going into the room and sitting down over there *with* *Clawson* Henry and talking. Henry would get up and leave. He wouldn't talk to Jim Eastland.

Bass: But doesn't that suggest to you, though, the difficulty of really putting that together? It would have to be done by a new governor or somebody outside.

Dye: I've seen so many things happen that I can't believe but by golly it's going to get back together. Now I can't tell you how. But I've seen things happen that I would have told you years before wasn't going to happen that's happened.

Bass: When it get's back together, though, then what is the Democratic party in Mississippi going to be? What are going to be the components?

Dye: Immediately after getting back together it's going to strengthen the Republican party in the short run. On the long run though, we're going to get back to being a damn near one party state, I think, so far as the label.

De Vries: You mean it's going to move some of the whites to the Republican party and then they'll go back the other way.

Dye: Yes, in the short run.

Bass: But not enough to get control of the state government?

Dye: Oh no.

Bass: Then you're going to end up with a Democratic party, you think, that wins elections?

Dye: Yep.

Bass: And that's going to stop the switch-overs.

Dye: I would think so. Get's back to this horse race bit. They want winners in this state. It's a funny thing.

Bass: It's not so funny. But then at that point what's going to be the components of the Democratic party? What's the coalition going to consist of? Are you going to have the court house Democrats?

Dye: You're going to have the so-called power structure as we've got it now, with the business, farming and office holders coalition with the blacks. And they will.

Bass: How about organized labor?

Dye: The head of organized labor in our state, Claude Ramsey, has trouble carrying his own people. They're split on him. He's a point of contention within the labor movement. He fought me, for instance. He really got after me. He's from Jackson county. That's past . That's down in our southeast corner. Fought me hard. I had some labor leaders down there call me. In fact they drew their attention to me. They had me come down. That's his home county. I carried the county by 65% of the vote. I stood out at the ship yard and shook hands with those boys as they came out. Stood there with some of their local labor leaders. So I whipped him by labor. And the state head of the AFL-CIO was fighting me. And I whipped him in his own county.



Bass: But do you see organized labor becoming more or less a component part of the Democratic--

Dye: That would depend on if these people out in these factories--I see labor, as we see it, labor, working people working in factories.

Bass: You see blue collar workers who basically in the past voted overwhelmingly for George Wallace in this state stand in a Democratic party that has blacks as a part of the coalition? Is that right?

De Vries: Second or third generation factory workers.

Bass: No, I'm talking about the first generation.

Dye: I think--I kind of misunderstood. These first generation, my god, they still vote in an agricultural mood. I see them voting. I can see some changes, though. They're more interested in working conditions, for instance in minimum wage. They're becoming more interested in these things.

Bass: In some ways you're going to have a problem on issues when you start talking about minimum wage legislation and you're talking about business and industry as part of this coalition.

De Vries: *Doesn't the* Republican party come from the business community? Whites are going to move into the Republican party. They're going to be disenchanted and they're going to be conservative. And won't lots of them also be business?

Dye: I think some will. But I don't think it will be that significant. I really don't. I could be all wet. Hell, I've been wrong so often in the last ten years. Crystal ball gazing.

De Vries: Doesn't the point of this discussion make it appear that everything is so volatile that a state that's perceived from the outside, or even from the inside, as really a stable kind of thing, you know, closed society--that's bull shit. What you've got is you've got things

shifting all over.

Dye: You've got all kind of shifts.

De Vries: Very volatile. But after this merger is achieved which you think is going to happen--

Dye: Will happen. No doubt in my mind on that.

[interrupted]

Bass: In South Carolina today you've got a Democratic party today that's basically a coalition of blacks, court house Democrats and local office holders, organized labor to the extent that it exists-- and it's still relatively weak--and the highest level business and financial communities. Not little management--is pretty much Republican. But the highest level. Your bank presidents and so forth. There's still basically a good element of financial support for the Democratic party. Do you see this same pattern developing in Mississippi down the road after merger of this loyalist-regular problem?

Dye: Well, I'm assuming when you say--you're saying that your small business man and your middle level management have moved to the Republican party in South Carolina.

Bass: Yeh, a strong suburban Republican element exists.

Dye: Well you see, one thing, we don't have a suburbia in Mississippi. Any such thing in Mississippi. [Interruption.] We don't have a suburbia in Mississippi. I don't think you'll see it. For one thing the public schools. We're still a rural state here. Black and whites are going to school together. The problem being on the part of the blacks not--I don't think it's going to be the problem it was in the past.

De Vries: You said that economic development would be one of the key positions of your platform. How do you view this R&D center out here which, as we see it, is sort of unique in the country?

Dye: I think it's one of the finest things this state's ever done. I support it wholeheartedly.

Bass:

Dye: Talk about that image of a closed society. I think those boys are doing more to disspell that image around the country than anything else we've got going. Who in the hell would think Mississippi, as a governmental institute, would have inner housing, research and development. Totally out of character with what you, sitting in Michigan working for Romney back in those days would think of Mississippi.

De Vries: That's right. Or that's what you'd think today.

Dye: I had the opportunity--I served as vice chairman of the R&D council under John Bell Williams. John Bell Williams stayed in a fuss with them all the time. This was the only one thing that he and I had a continuous disagreement on.

De Vries: Yeh, he harrassed them, didn't he, for the four years?

Dye: And I would lay with him--he and I oh we had some good damn arguments. John Bell and I are good close personal friends as well as political friends. This is the only one place where we really--and it didn't destroy our friendship or affect it, but we had some good arguments.

Bass: Anything else you wanted to add?

De Vries: You been in Mississippi politics 20 years. You have any regrets? Anything you'd do over?

Dye: Oh certainly. Plenty of things I'd do over. I made some votes when I was in the legislature I regret. Hindsight's always better than foresight.

De Vries: The question is do you have the hindsight?

Dye: I think I do. Sure. I made some. If I could go back and change



them I'd go back and change the record. Because I think I made the wrong votes.

De Vries: You going to stay in public life?

Dye: Well that, to a great degree, will depend on the people of Mississippi. [laughter]

De Vries: Do you intend to--

Dye: I would hope to and I intend to. I enjoy it. I don't know that I want my boys to get in it.

De Vries: Why not?

Dye: A lot of personal sacrifices. And you are subjected to a lot of things that, as a parent, I hate my kids to hear the things about me that they're going to hear. Mississippi, like every place, gets kind of dirty sometimes. Undercurrents in politics gets real messy. And I'd like them to have a more stable, secure existence. But I've enjoyed it. I grew up in a political family. My grandfather was a doctor, long time leaders of the Mississippi medical association. Mayor of Clarkdale, Mississippi, for three or four terms. The little community I grew up in, Tallahatchee county, Charleston--that was my paternal grandfather. My maternal grandfather was sheriff of the county. Had his younger brother on the west side of the county. They swapped back and forth because sheriffs couldn't succeed themselves. And the sheriff's office been in the family over 100 years. My mother's baby brother is sheriff now. He and his wife swapped it. He's had it--he or his wife--since my great uncle died. My granddaddy's younger brother he'd brought along. So I grew up, you know, in a court house politics. My father served in state legislature. When I was born my daddy was serving in the state legislature.

(end of interview)