

Interview with John Patterson, former governor of Alabama, July 12, 1974, Montgomery, Alabama, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: There's no planning agency in the state?

Patterson: Oh, there'll be some that tell you that there is, but there isn't. There's nobody giving any real thought to the overall picture of state government. In other words, where are we, where have we been, where are we going, where should we go, is this program good, should we have it, should we change it, is it doing what it's supposed to be doing? It's. . . it's like a ship at sea without a rudder or without a pilot. Occasionally it blows up on a reef and they call the legislature into special session to get it afloat again. And it takes. . . it's just more money to get it afloat again. That's about the way it's run. The last governmental reorganization in Alabama. . . I think this is generally true everywhere. Maybe New York is an exception. The last governmental reorganization here was 1939. And they did do a good job then.

J.B.: So how many state agencies and departments are there now?

Patterson: Oh God. Here's a book of all of them. There are over 120 separate boards and commissions.

J.B.: Are these all appointed by the governor?

Patterson: Oh no, no. Some of them are elected and some of them are appointed by the governor. Some are appointed by people other than the governor. Every state's faced with the same problem. Of course the federal government is faced with the same problem, too. Just so big.

in trouble. But it's not complicated. It's just voluminous and not very well organized.

J.B.: Do you think this new legislature. . . having a new legislature in as the result of reapportionment creates any potential for reorganization in state government, modernization?

Patterson: I haven't thought about that much, but my judgment is right now that it probably won't make any difference. I don't see any real change in the reapportionment of the legislature along the line of the one man one vote formula. There are a few studies that have been made of this. And I haven't seen them, but Dr Bolling down at Troy told me that he had seen some of them. There are a few, where other states have already done this. And that they had concluded that there was no change. We're going to have an unusual legislature next time, no question about that. We're going to have only about 20% of the house are going to be back. So you're going to have a relatively inexperienced house of representatives. Now you're going to have a little bit more experienced senate. A good many people from the house are going over to the senate. So I figure half the senate will be new and probably 80% of the house. But you know, when they are new and green like that they're easier to manipulate. An inexperienced house or inexperienced legislature. . . then the governor, indeed, even the interested groups that lobby the legislature, will have a better opportunity to influence. We're going to have a lot of young guys in the legislature just out of college. And these don't necessarily make good legislators.

J.B.: There's no cadre of veteran reform types?

Patterson: That are going to be in the legislature? If there are, I don't know about it. The major changes, of course, are going to be the

fact that you're going to have more people in there from the industrial

areas of the state. Heavily populated industrial areas. I don't know what this will mean, really. In Alabama. . . you see, you take the black belt section of Alabama, which lies just. . . from Montgomery south of here across the state. It's black because of the soil. You're familiar with that?

J.B.: Right.

Patterson: This is the area that was really effected by the voting rights act, when prior to that and throughout the entire history of Alabama except during the Reconstruction period, this was controlled dominantly by the whites, the wealthy land owners and simply the whites. Even when I was governor I had to contend with this. You had a county like Lowndes down here with less than 10,000 people with two house members and a senator, see. Had almost the same representation that Birmingham had, you see. In every showdown vote in the legislature over a controversial issue. . . and one would be anything dealing with taxes. . . the black belt rural legislators would invariably line up with the Birmingham legislators, the big city legislators. So the guy you get from the big city in the legislature, chances are, is going to be industry oriented or business oriented. This has been my experience with them. The people in the big cities just really don't take a big interest in who they send to the legislature. And they usually only send. . . . They send new ones every time. You don't get re-elected many times in Alabama if you come from a big city. But that rural legislator gets sent back over and over and over again. And he has tremendous influence in the legislature. The biggest major change is the blacks. I don't know how many yet is going to be there, but I figure there'll be about 19 or 20 blacks. Three senators out of 35. ^{That'll} There'll be possibly be

black and there'll be something like 17 or 18 house members, out of 105, will be black. Now what this means I have no idea. I just don't know what this will mean. It's interesting that most of the blacks will come from the black belt.

J.B.: So there will be a number of rural blacks?

Patterson: That's right.

J.B.: Georgia has about that number, but all of them come from urban areas. There's not a single black in the Georgia legislature from a rural area.

Patterson: They'll be about equally divided. They'll be about evenly divided in Alabama from the rural areas. . . . You see, take Macon county, where Tuskegee institute is. That's 85% black, see. Now they'll have two house members this time. They'll be black, of course. Green county will have a house member that will be black. Some of those counties, you know, have as much as 85% black. And up until the voting rights act, most of them couldn't vote, you see, and all of a sudden, just overnight, as a result of that mass registration with federal registrars, the whole power, political power has changed hands in those counties. And now in most of those counties now there are practically all blacks in the courthouse. Green county is a typical example of that.

J.B.: How significant is this defeat that Gov Wallace suffered in naming a new chairman of the Democratic party?

Patterson: Well, of course, this means, as far as his, you know, ability to perform, nothing.

J.B.: Right, yeah.

Patterson: When I got elected governor, I didn't fool with that

thing until the last minute. And somebody said well, now, the governor is the titular head of the party and he ought to control the committee. And the chairman controls the committee. The chairman at that time had more power than he has now. But the chairman can call meetings or not call meetings. And he has the gavel, you know, and all that. And he also controls the money, see. So I never had any reason to want to control it. And even if you've got the chairman in your pocket, you still might not control the thing. I said, well, if the governor is supposed to have the chairman in his pocket, man the chairman and control the committee, then we sure ought to do it because we want to do whatever the governor's supposed to do. So I began to look to see who all was elected to that committee. And I found that a lot of them were people who were engaged in businesses that are very sensitive to the state. Asphalt business, concrete pipe business, insurance business, things like that. So I set about to try to influence them as much as I could to get them to elect the chairman that I wanted. And man, I had a knock down drag out fight about that thing and finally won it by one vote. And the patronage and appointments that we had to make as a result of getting that thing done was tremendous and we never recovered from it. And then after I got the chairman elected, it didn't do me one bit of good. As far as I know I never needed the committee and the committee could never have done anything for me and I don't even know whether I controlled it or not, to tell you the truth. It was a worthless thing to have engaged in that fight, for me. And I see it the same way for him. I mean why in the world they wanted to get involved in that thing, I don't know. Because even if he'd of won, he wouldn't have had anything. It would have been of no value to him whatsoever. They're not going to decide who's going to go to that convention. They got to be elected

separately, you see. So I thought it was. . . without winning it, it was a mistake to fool with it. And to have won it, he could have had to pay the price. And it wouldn't have been worth it, see. I don't mean to cast any aspersions on anybody, but there are people on that committee that you could get their vote, but it would cost you. It would cost you state business and things of this kind. Now George has never done that kind of thing. He's just not prone. . . thinking that way. He could have won it, but I'm satisfied he wasn't willing to pay the price to win.

J.B.: He apparently thought he was going to win it, didn't he?

Patterson: Yeah, I think he was misled by some of his people who are rather naive about some things.

J.B.: Does that suggest he's got a weak staff?

Patterson: No, no. I don't think George has ever really fooled with the committee. He's gone his separate way and he's sort of left that thing alone. And it never has really been a friendly committee with him, that is, the leadership on the committee. When he went the third party route, he just completely left it alone, see, and he's got some enemies on the committee. No question about that. The committee is divided between the loyal, national Democratic bunch--the old Sparkman people, you know--and then on the other end of that thing, you've got the old Dixiecrats, the conservative, rural, citizens council type on the other end of that thing. And George just never has fooled with it. He never has. Not since the 1958 convention in Chicago has George fooled with that committee. And I think he just sort of let some of his people tinker without any real direction from him. This is my guess. They asked me to check out one person. And I called this person and then I called this person's close relative, who's a friend of mine, and I was

advised that no way would this person vote for Mr Wallace's choice. That this person was going to vote for Mr Vance. That no way would this person stay away from the meeting and not go at all, but would be there. And that there was some resentment that this person was asked in the ninth inning, at the last out in the ninth inning, to consider changing the vote. [laughter.] And so I reported back exactly that. I said "You can't count that vote. That vote's against you. That vote's going to be there and there ain't nothing you can do. Too late." I believe, though, that they had some people that were reporting back to them and giving them information that was not correct. I think they were misled. That's what I think. A lot of people, you know, will make you think that they're going to vote for you in hopes of in the last minute, work out some accommodation. Why does a person serve on a committee like that? Where there's no money, no pay, and really no honor. Nobody even really knows who they are outside of Mr Vance, the chairman.

W.D.V.: And no function.

Patterson: That's right. Why? Now some of them do it simply because they like to dabble in politics. Some of them have money and some of them like to go to these meetings. They take their family and their kids and they go to these meetings and like to go to Washington and like to just be in it. But there are a lot of them on that thing that aren't in it for that purpose. You take a list of them and you see what they do and you can pretty well tell what it would take to control it. I'm talking to you frankly now. I'm telling you what I think the truth is. And I had a fight with it one time and I won, by one vote, and after I won I found out I didn't have a damn thing. Nothing. And I went to the 1960 convention and supported John Kennedy and worked like hell for him

out there and I got no help at all out of the state Democratic committee. All of Alabama's Senators and Congressmen found business elsewhere. The Senators went overseas. Sparkman went to Japan. And they wouldn't come no where near Los Angeles. And they were all perfectly willing for John to be the titular head of the party and have all the responsibility when they were trying to nominate a Catholic for president. [Chuckle.] To go back and complete this matter. Did it hurt George Wallace to have got the blame by some people for having lost that fight with the committee? Probably in the eyes of the press and some people who are not knowledgeable, you know, yes. But as far as having hurt him in any way or hindered him in any way, no, I wouldn't think so. He better concern himself, though, with the delegates to the convention. But that race is yet to be run.

J.B.: You talking about the mid-term convention or the '76 convention?

Patterson: No, I'm talking about the '76 convention. If he goes to the '76 convention as a serious contender. And I think he will. Then I think he ought to have the solid backing of the Alabama delegation. Pledged right to the end of the line until he personally relieves them. And he can get it, but he'll have to work at it some. It won't be easy. And not because they're against him politically, but simply because a lot of them are just looking to feather their nests some way.

J.B.: Will he be able to do that with black delegates to the convention?

Patterson: I would think so from Alabama. Yeah, I would think so. George is very much of a liberal. The Negroes don't dislike George. He's never really done anything against them. I would figure they'd probably dislike me more than they would him.

Walter De Vries: Why's that?

Patterson: Well, I was the attorney general of the state during the integration battles and I fought the NAACP and others to uphold the constitutionality of Alabama's segregation laws. And they won't ever forget that. All you have to do is go back and pull out the clippings of those days. See Gov Altman, Gov Altman of Virginia was attorney general at that time, too, and Altman and I teamed up and worked together. And the big legal battle, you know, was fought in Virginia, really, but we had a fight here. A considerable battle here. And it fell my lot to represent the state and public agencies in those fights. And our policy was one of nonconfrontation and decentralization of control, to force them to take us on on a broad front rather than just foresighting [?] on us with just single litigation. And we were able to get the NAACP put out of business in Alabama for a violation of our corporate domestication statutes. And for seven years we kept the NAACP completely out of business in Alabama. And they went to the United States Supreme Court finally and got admitted to Alabama again. And it was a bitter battle. For this reason their leadership would not like me and it's a different feeling toward me than toward a fellow like George who has never done anything against them at all. In fact, he's really done a lot for them. In fact, you know, I ran against George Wallace in '58 and beat him. And the primary reason I beat him was because he was considered soft on the race question at that time. That's the primary reason. That's hard to believe, isn't it?

J.B.: What's he done for blacks?

Patterson: Oh lord! Well, of course, he gets the credit or the blame, being governor, for whatever happens. And during the time that

he has served as governor of Alabama we have come from almost no integration to full integration of everything.

J.B.: But that's not because of George Wallace, is it?

W.D.V.: Isn't that because of the federal courts?

Patterson: Well, you can't really say whether it was because of George Wallace. He really didn't lay down any real impediments to it.

W.D.V.: Could he have?

Patterson: Yeah, I think so.

W.D.V.: Against the courts?

Patterson: He could have delayed it. I think it probably could have been delayed. However, I think it ultimately would have happened, you understand. And I'm not saying that I could have done any better than he did. The same thing would have probably happened to me and probably worse. But what I'm saying is that in '63 there was a change of policy from one of nonconfrontation--talking about legally now--and of decentralization of control to one of confrontation and centralization of control. Which resulted in the Justice Department and the various Negro organizations being able to bring about integration state wide with a very few law suits. And prior to that our policy was. . . . We knew we could never win legally. So, rather than go to court and get decisions that you didn't want, the best thing to do was to avoid decisions altogether. So we went to every extreme to avoid getting involved in litigation with them. And it worked for a long time. It worked for eight years. Simply a delay, though. But in '63, if you remember, the policy became one of drawing the line and confrontation. And when the governor got involved in the actual administration of the schools in Macon county, it brought on one law suit where by one stroke of the pen

the federal judge integrated every school in Alabama. Brought it to an end, see. I'm not saying the same thing wouldn't have happened if I'd been governor at that time. I just don't know, I don't know. But, honestly, I believe that the people, the Negro citizens of the state, have a different view of him than they would a fellow like me, simply because every program that he can take credit for, and with some pride, has benefited the blacks. His school program, his trade school program, the junior college program, the so-called Wallace act where they sell municipal bonds for the construction of plants for new industries has created tremendous employment for the blacks. Outside of the Selma bridge incident and the Birmingham riots, really. . . and of course that door stand in Tuscaloosa was purely an act of course, as you well know. It was a foregone conclusion what was going to happen over there that day. I don't believe the average Negro holds that against George Wallace. I don't think so. I think he could get the Negro delegates from Alabama and I think he got a pretty good Negro vote last time. He probably got 15 or 20% of them the last election. What makes a fellow like Johnny Ford in Tuskegee endorse him? Of course it don't help George everywhere to have that fellow endorse him. But he did. You've got to put some weight to that, you know.

W.D.V.: Why do you think he endorsed him?

Patterson: I think he's just a practical politician. You know, the Negroes are no better and no worse than the whites when it comes to politics. They're all the same, really. I mean I think the Negro citizens of the state are going to play their politics just about like the whites play theirs. I think he did it because he thought that that was the winner and he wanted to be with the winning side. And he has no real reason to be against him, really. George Wallace is not a racist,

in my opinion. Absolutely not. I could never buy that. Very much of a liberal.

J.B.: We keep hearing that he's a liberal, but what in his record reflects that?

Patterson: Of course, you've got to separate your racial thing out of your economic--

J.B.: All right, separating the racial thing from it. His tax programs haven't been liberal. I mean they've been pretty regressive. Increased the sales tax. And. . . I understand he did put a little utility tax--

Patterson: Oh, he increased the taxes. You increase the taxes to get more money for schools and welfare programs and various public assistance programs. Isn't that a sort of populist approach, don't you think?

J.B.: Would depend on where the taxes come from wouldn't it? I mean, you know, Bumpers in Arkansas increased the income tax and made it more progressive. Went from 5% to 7%. Asquew in Florida put on a corporate income tax.

Patterson: Of course George only increased the sales tax one time, from 3 to 4%. Of course nearly everybody at that time was up to 4%. But he took that one cent increase and put it in education and exclusively built these junior colleges with it. I think. . . of course, I agree with you that Alabama's tax system is not fair today. And the reason it's not fair is that the sales type taxes are out of line, to some extent, with the income taxes and property taxes. But I don't think you can blame George Wallace for that. I really don't believe you can blame George Wallace for that.

J.B.: I'm not thinking of blaming him--

Patterson: I do believe. . . of course I know how hard it is to try to increase the income tax and to do anything with the property tax. It's a very difficult thing to do, as you well know, with a legislature that is oriented toward business. Which ours has been. You know the federal court. . . . We are now under a federal court order to reassess our property for tax purposes. And if that is done, and done in accordance with the present formula, then Alabama, in my judgment, will have a fair tax structure. It will increase the property taxes by about \$100 million a year, which will make the property type taxes about equal to the sales type taxes. And I think that's a pretty good test of what a reasonable tax structure would be. George has always had a reputation of being a liberal. You know. I consider the Wallace Act, which is the municipal bond law for the construction of industries, plants and things--

J.B.: What does that do? Just provide the state bonding authority?

Patterson: It provides that a municipality can float a bond issue for the purpose of acquiring property and building a plant and leasing it to a private company to operate an industry. And the company would pay the rent, which would amortize the cost of the bond. And at the end of the period the plant would belong to the industry, you see.

W.D.V.: Is the full faith and credit of the state behind the bond?

Patterson: No. The municipality creates a municipal bonding authority and of course the only pledge behind the bond, of course, would be the rents from the--

J.B.: A revenue bond.

Patterson: So it's a revenue type bond, yeah. But they sell very well and this has been a great boon in Alabama to industry. And it's

interesting that George Wallace introduced that into the legislature in 1945 when he was a freshman legislator and just back from the Air Force. He's always had a reputation for being a liberal.

J.B.: Doesn't that act though, in effect, remove the burden from industry for having to pay property tax until the bond's retired?

Patterson: It doesn't relieve them from having to pay property tax but they can get. . . . Our statutes provide that the governor and the revenue commissioner, who's appointed by the governor, can give a new industry a ten year exemption from ad valorem property taxes. And as a routine matter they do that. That's true. Of course the municipal bonds are tax free bonds.

J.B.: But how about. . . if a municipality builds a plant, floats a bond, buys the land, builds the plant. What are the life of these bonds usually?

Patterson: Usually about 15 or 20 years.

J.B.: Say it runs 15 years. The plant in effect is paying off. . . amortizes the bond issue. But during that 15 year period the plant is actually owned by the municipality.

Patterson: That's correct.

J.B.: The industry during that 15 years is not paying any taxes, either.

Patterson: That's correct. They would be given an exemption even if they owned it. Yeah, that's true. You're right about that.

W.D.V.: You say he's not a racist, but today we're hearing the comment that he's changing from being a racist.

Patterson: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Because of a whole series of incidents and what not. The

fact that race was not used as a campaign issue in '74. . . .

Patterson: Yeah. . . . The reason I say that is that I don't think that George Wallace in his entire life has ever had any strong feelings about the race question. And I think he would just as soon. . . . Of course, I put myself in the same category. I'd just as soon that we never had the problem in the first place. I've never had any trouble associating with blacks. In any capacity. In the army. I put ten years in the service. I never had any trouble anywhere. Where ever I am, I live by the customs and traditions of the people where I am. You know, I never have any problems. I think George Wallace is the same way. George Wallace never was a segregationist simply because he thought that that was the right thing to be, you know. I think he supported segregation in his campaigns simply because had he not there would have been no way to have gotten elected at the time. I think it's purely political. I really believe that. When he was circuit judge down there, he was quite lenient with Negroes. He really was. And this was used against him in our campaign. No question about it. I think George is mighty glad, probably mighty glad, to see this fight coming to an end. And it is, it is. And so I am. I'm glad it's over, too. I think if the black citizen now really participates and pulls his load and everything, then he'll have substantial improvement in the near future. Even more. Of course it worries me sometimes that you get splitter organizations like ^{Cashen's} ~~Cashen's~~ outfit in Huntsville and Reed's Alabama Democratic Conference. And what they're trying to do is have their own political organization in the state and be in the Democratic party at the same time. You know, got one foot in the party and one foot out. I don't think this helps the Negro cause at all, politically. I think these guys hurt it, really, rather than help it.

W.D.V.: Do you think race as an issue has been removed from state wide politics?

Patterson: No. No, I don't mean that, now. I think that's still an issue. But I don't think it is the issue that it used to be.

W.D.V.: How is it still an issue. Open, overt sort of thing?

Patterson: I think the race issue became an issue in the Wallace-Brewer runn off. Rumors spread around that as soon as Brewer was elected governor, that the reason Joe Reed was supporting Brewer for governor against Wallace was that as soon as Brewer got in office he was going to appoint Reed to president of Livingston State College, and this kind of stuff. And in certain parts of the state this would have a great effect. There are still certain parts of Alabama where there is a feeling of hostility between the races. No question about it. And if a candidate wants to take advantage of that and he can in some way, then we'll continue to have this racial problem.

W.D.V.: Will he still continue to do it out in the open?

Patterson: No.

W.D.V.: Or will he use code--

Patterson: I don't think he'll do it in the open anymore. No sir. I think it would hurt a fellow to do it in the open. I really do.

W.D.V.: Why is that? Because attitudes have changed?

Patterson: Yeah, I think so. Now you take a county like Tallathusa county. The reason I know Tallathusa, I came from there and I have a farm there and I spend every weekend there. It's about 40% black. Now when the integration of the schools came in Tallathusa county, everybody just raised hell right up to the last hour, you know. Threatened all kinds of dire consequences. When the morning came and everybody

had to integrate the schools, they just went ahead and did it. Never

said another word about it. Since that time, it has worked very well. There have been practically no incidences of difficulty or trouble. In fact people are mighty glad that the battle is over. They don't have to put up with all that anymore. You don't always have to concern yourself or be on edge about some black sitting in a cafe somewhere. All this has just come about almost over night in Alabama. If you go to lunch today. . . pick any restaurant you want to go in. You go in there and you'll find about 15-20% or maybe more blacks sitting around in there eating just like everybody else. Nobody pays any attention to it anymore.

W.D.V.: Did you anticipate that change would occur that rapidly?

Patterson: No, I didn't. I sure didn't. I sure didn't.

W.D.V.: How do you explain that?

Patterson: I explain it this way. That deep down inside, the average white person really likes the Negro and did not like the customs he was living under. But from a political point of view you understand that politicians. . . did what the people probably really and truly wanted to do, they would have voted against him. He couldn't have gotten elected. I think that's why. . . . You take the legislature. The legislature won't reapportion. The tax assessors won't reassess the property. The public officials would not bring about integration of schools. They had rather the federal courts do it than do it themselves because they can then cuss the courts for doing. The job will be done. They won't get any of the blame for it. And when it's all over the people are satisfied with it anyway. And probably what they wanted all the time. Except in some counties. Now you take the counties where it's 85% black. Now that's a serious problem. There's no solution to the

problem there. I don't see it. Not any time soon. White people are fleeing Macon county. They're selling out and fleeing. Because they are worried about not having good law enforcement and not having protection. You have a lot of absentee ownership of land in those counties. People just flat getting out. Because they're afraid. But in a county like Tallathusa where you have 40%. . . . Montgomery has 40% black. This thing has taken place without any real difficulty. And I think that deep down inside the average fellow probably is glad the thing's over. I know I'm glad it's over. At least to that extent. Of course I understand the problem in a place where, say, you've got 85 or 90% blacks in school. Now a lot of folk don't want to send their kids over there.

W.D.V.: Would you go back if you could? Turn it back?

Patterson: No, no. Oh no. I think that would be a mistake. The first year I was attorney general a group of us met in Birmingham. Joe Johnston. Prominent folks. Lieutenant governor Battle. We met in Birmingham and I had us a little strategy meeting to try to, you know, sort of plot a course. And this was 1955. And everybody there agreed that there was no way by which you could justify a segregated system under our constitution and ultimately we would lose the legal battle. But that the thing to do to get the people to adjust to the thing gradually, without violence and difficulties, was to fight a delaying action in the courts. Which is what we did. And we did it and we did it for eight years and we did it fairly successfully. But this had to happen. And it's better that it's over. It had to happen.

J.B.: What was the political effect, back in 1958, of the whole Little Rock situation?

thing in Little Rock, Faubus was the governor out there.

J.B.: Right. And you were attorney general here. This was in '57 and the next year you were running for governor. What did that do in so far as. . . how did that effect political attitudes in this state?

Patterson: This became the major issue. The forced integration, by the federal courts, became the major issue in that campaign. No question about it. That was it. And that Little Rock thing played right into our hands. We used that Little Rock thing as a perfect example of what we had to fight here in Alabama. And being the attorney general and being in the thick of the fight, and having control of the headlines every day, I just had the issue. That was it.

J.B.: You know, this is speculative, but what would have happened if. . . you know, at Little Rock, if they'd just desegregated there in '57--

Patterson: Voluntarily?

J.B.: Voluntarily or at least, under court order, but you know, without the federal troops coming in, without the confrontation. If Faubus had said "Okay, I'm going to bring up the national guard. I fear we might have some violence. But we're just going to keep the schools open and see that there's no violence. We want to keep the peace." And if they had pulled it off that way.

Patterson: I think this would probably have weakened our struggle to some extent but not enough to have made any great difference at that time, I don't think. Because this was a real issue here. Of course, you take Faubus and ^{Barnett} ~~Barnhead~~, Patterson and Allman, some of us, we sort of worked, informally, together. You know. Sort of looked upon as the

folks that were fighting the battle. And then later, Wallace. Wallace, you see, after. . . he realized what ^{beat him} ~~[the feeling?]~~ and he changed his tune a little bit after that '58 race. As you know.

J.B.: But the Little Rock--

W.D.V.: Changed his tune a whole lot.

J.B.: But the Little Rock thing then just had the effect of greatly intensifying emotions?

Patterson: Yeah, no question about it. Yeah, it really did. I sent a man over there. I sent an assistant attorney general over there.

J.B.: At what stage?

Patterson: When they were getting ready to send the troops in there, while the troops were there. I sent a man over there simply to observe. Because we anticipated facing the same thing [here] and wanted to learn, see.

J.B.: This was not before Faubus actually called out the guard?

Patterson: No, it was after. It was after. Or simultaneously. And I remember when he came back we held a press conference. This was a headline, you know, of what was happening in Arkansas. A big thing. No question about it. Big thing. Of course I knew all the time that ultimately, down the road, that we were going to get in deep trouble with this thing. But at all times it was my policy and the policy of those around me and those I sought advice from that it would always be legal, that it would always be on top of the table and it would be done in the courts. And that we would never be a party to anything that was illegal. And if ultimately we could not avoid a United States Supreme Court decision that we would comply with it. This was always in our thinking. Never did we vary from that. I think probably I would have

gone as far as Gov Wallace in standing in the door. I think I would have gone that far. Or issue an order closing it up. Locked the place up and forced them to open it over my objection. Because then I could blame the federal court for it and get the onus off of me politically. After all, the minute you get in the office you start thinking about re-election. This is not good, but this is usually the way people are. And you want to try to keep your public image good so that you'll have a chance to be re-elected.

J.B.: All right. How about today? What's the effect if you were to run again for governor? Would that record be an asset or a liability?

Patterson: It would be a liability because I would go in with a solid Negro bloc of vote against me. A vote which we did not have, to that extent, at that time. You see they are all registered now. Just about all of them are registered. And many of them are registered, you know, in the black belt areas particularly, that can't read and write. Under that voting rights act. Makes no difference. And the black leadership would [raise] up that opposition to me. And it would be formidable. So you see, I would be going in with having to have all the blacks, I mean having to have all the whites to win to have any chance to win. And this is hard to do. But my biggest liability today politically, as far as making a come back is concerned, is because of what I did and what I had to do. Had no choice, I had to do it.

J.B.: I understand that you recently attended a dinner for a Republican Congressman here.

Patterson: Yeah, but strictly personal.

J.B.: If you were to run again would you consider running as a Republican?

Patterson: No, no. I'm a Democrat. That's purely personal. Bill

Dickerson is a close personal friend of mine. A man of which I admire tremendously. And he's responsible for getting my son into West Point. You just can't forget these things. [Laughter from someone.] I am a member of the Democratic party. I always have been. I've never been a Republican. However, in the case of Bill Dickerson I vote a split ticket. I have and will again. I would vote a split ticket there.

J.B.: What do you think is going to happen politically in Alabama after George Wallace leaves the state scene? Let's assume he runs for the Senate in 1978, for example.

Patterson: It would be a wide open affair. It'll be just a wide open thing with a multitude of candidates. You know, one of the unfortunate things in Alabama is we are a one party state. And we still are.

J.B.: You see it remaining that way?

Patterson: I don't see any real signs at the present time that the Republican party is going to get much stronger than it is right now. This is unfortunate. I know you all, being in you all's field, will agree with me on that. We need to be a two party state. A real, viable, two party state. But I don't see any change on the horizon in the immediate future. Alabamans are just prone to be Democrats. But it will be a knock down drag out affair. And you know it's a popularity contest in Alabama. I think Mr Key says that in his book. In Alabama it's not a party fight for governor, it's a personality thing. So you'll have as many as 15 candidates running for governor to take George Wallace's place if something were to happen. And it's hard to say who that might be. It might not be anybody that's presently being considered. It might be somebody completely new. More than likely would be.

J.B.: How significant is the fact that. . . we keep [hearing] that Wallace has more or less made his peace with what is loosely referred to as the Birmingham establishment.

Patterson: Well, I don't know whether George has ever been with those folks. George has some close friends and supporters in the banking circles of Birmingham, and always has had.

J.B.: [Something about liberal newspapers over there to endorse him.]

Patterson: Yeah, several of us have discussed that. As to why the Birmingham News has endorsed George Wallace. [Laughter.] I guess finally they figured if you can't win you join them. I can't understand that. Although the Birmingham News is the mouthpiece of big business and industry, no question about that. And I never had their support myself. I've never been able to get. . . . But who are you talking about? You're talking about the insurance, certain insurance people, Liberty National Life people, people like that, that's the [a name]. You're talking about the Associated Industries of Alabama, the Alabama mining institute people, really. The mining people, the big industrialists, the banking people and the insurance people. That's who you're talking about. George has always had considerable support amongst that group. Considerable support. I know that they've been having some meetings up there. I mean prior to the election. And got some substantial contributions I think out of there. But lately George has been doing a lot for them. In the first place, a good bit of the state funds are going into Birmingham for improvement, particularly in the interstate system, which is giving them a network of express ways which they didn't have and which they need very badly. Of course Albert Brewer had a lot to do with letting all those contracts before he went out. But still, I'm satisfied

George Wallace will get some credit for that. I don't see that they were ever really down on him too much. Do you think they were?

J.B.: I don't know. I've just heard. . . .

Patterson: I have trouble lumping them all together and saying, you know, the big business, the big . I don't think this means a great deal any more. George, there's no question about it, he's got inroads into that crowd.

J.B.: Doesn't that sort of raise questions about his. . .

Patterson: Liberalism?

J.B.: --liberalism?

Patterson: Yeah, yeah. [Chuckle.] Well, he's got the image of a liberal down here and he's been able to carry it off real well.

W.D.V.: How do you explain his hold on the state? Most politicians have been in office four years or eight years--

[End of side of tape.]

J.B.: Talking about--

Patterson: Laurleen.

J.B.: Right.

Patterson: Laurleen won that thing on her own. She really did. She became very, very popular. And you had old women, 80, 90 years old, going and registering to vote that never voted in their life. Just so they could vote for her. A lot of people misjudged that thing. Lot of people thought people wouldn't elect a woman governor. That was bad thinking.

J.B.: But if she had been Mrs Laurleen Smith she wouldn't have had much success would she?

Patterson: Oh, that's right, that's right. The fact that she was--

This was unusual. This was peculiar and unusual and different, you know, and this is really what you need in politics to get people interested. They were interested.

J.B.: If de Graffenreid had lived, would he have been elected?

Patterson: In my opinion, and now this is just my opinion, if Laurleen had run, whether de Graffenreid had lived or not. . . . Now the Wallaces made like the only reason Laurleen got in the race was because de Graffenreid was killed. And they sort of did this to get the support of the de Graffenreid people to support Laurleen. But in my judgment it wouldn't have made no difference whether he lived or not. George would have run his wife. That's my opinion.

J.B.: Would she have gotten elected?

Patterson: Yeah. Yeah. Two weeks after she kicked off that campaign there wasn't no way in the world of beating her. I think she got about 70% of the vote. Oh hell, man. I was in that campaign. I ran for re-election that time. I tell you, that was rough. Two weeks after she started everybody knew it was over. You couldn't say this, you know, but everybody knew it was over. I had, of course, been given some credit for beating his succession bill in the senate. And I might have had a little bit to do with it. De Graffenreid. Myself and de Graffenreid sort of teamed up to fight that succession bill in the senate so he couldn't succeed himself. This was a bad mistake.

J.B.: You were in what capacity?

Patterson: I was out. I was practicing law, see. But I was going to run. See, I couldn't run for re-election. I laid out four years and [decided] I'm going to run for re-election.

J.B.: Your role was more or less in lobbying against the bill?

Patterson: That's right. I didn't go up there, of course, because that would have been a bad thing to do, but I worked undercover. I worked through my former floor leader who was in the senate at the time. Broyhill Robinson. And de Graffenreid came to town. Stayed at the Albert Pick Motel up here. And we sort of collaborated our forces. And Jim ^{Folsom}~~Folsome~~ told us "You're making a mistake." Old Jim, you know, is right many times. He's a smart fellow. He said "You're making a mistake. You ought to get behind that thing and pass it. Then the people will have to vote on it, you see, before the election." Because it would be a constitutional amendment. "And then you just simply watch that vote. If the people vote overwhelmingly for that thing, don't you run. It will be a good indication for you to stay out. It will be a good barometer to tell you what to do." Shit, he was right as hell. He sure was. Hell no, we had to kill that thing. Course, when we killed it. . . he made an issue out of the fact that we were keeping the people from making a decision, see. "They're afraid to let you decide whether or not I should be able to run again or not." You see, and just for that, by god, I'm going to run my wife. This was what he did. This was the issue. And hell, the average guy, I tell you, he buys that kind of stuff. "Yeah, by god, he's right." And it sure worked. Now in the Brewer race. . . . By the time he got around to running. . . after his wife died and by the time he got around to running again, Brewer nearly beat him. If it hadn't of been for that run off and probably that race issue, then Brewer would have beat him. So to that extent, what you say is not exactly right. What you say. . . . He has not maintained a continuous popularity all the time. There's been some rough places in it.

W.D.V.: Even in 1972, his popularity before the injury, was not great.

Patterson: That's right. And the reason, of course. . . I think that there are several reasons for that. One is, the longer you're in office the more decisions you have to make the more enemies you make. And George has always been the kind of fellow, you know, that. . . he takes a fellow's contributions, you know, when he's running and everything and then when the fellow comes around to get state business he don't go to a lot of trouble or make his people go to a lot of trouble, you know, to give him the business. Many people who supported his campaigns in the past grumble like hell because they've never been able to get any business out of the administration. Good or bad, they've never been able to get much out of it. And once he gets elected he gets up there and runs it the way he wants to and ignores everybody. In a way that's good. Of course in a political sense it's not. And I think George has made a lot of enemies along the way. And two, I think when you sit down and analyze the whole thing on performance, then you can see where Brewer made some inroads to him just on simply on performance.

W.D.V.: So how do you explain the popularity today?

Patterson: Yeah. Here's the way I explain that. Right or wrong, here's my thinking. My thinking is that even. . . of course. . . being shot. No question about the sympathy vote that that would get. Now what that is I have no idea. I can't analyze it. But even with being shot, without one other factor and a real candidate against him, he would have had a tough race. But the real factor that makes the difference, that caused the big turn out of vote in his favor and scared all the others out, is the fact that the average guy out there on the street honestly believes that George Wallace can be president of the United States. And he wants to give him that chance. And he feels like that by

George Wallace being elected governor again, that this will help make George Wallace president. Or at least give him a chance to be president. And he wants to see him president.

W.D.V.: Do you want to see him president?

Patterson: You put a hard one on me there.

J.B.: Let me rephrase that. How would you feel if he became president?

W.D.V.: I want him to answer that one, then he can get to yours.

J.B.: Okay.

Patterson: Well, I don't know whether I know you fellows well enough to answer those. [Laughter.]

W.D.V.: This book isn't going to be published until the spring of '76.

Patterson: If George Wallace runs for president, I'm going to support him. I'm going to support him and do whatever I can to help him. I think the chances of George getting the nomination or getting on the ticket as a vice presidential nominee are extremely slim. I could be completely wrong about that.

W.D.V.: Why? Everybody else is saying that they're getting better because of his relationship with Kennedy and so on.

Patterson: Shoot. I don't put any stock in that at all.

W.D.V.: I mean today's paper's got a piece that says that.

Patterson: The New York Times.

W.D.V.: The support of Johnny Ford and Evers and Cooper and so on that they call a Kennedy Wallace cabal.

Patterson: Well, George is going to have a hard time getting that citizens council and getting that Ku Klux tag and all that. . . . You

all being Kluxers and everything. And although I know George Wallace has never had no part in nothing like that, still his stand on that race question is something that will be with him a long time. And the leadership in the Democratic party, that is, the leadership in the big states, are afraid of him because they're afraid that they can't get that black, that Jewish vote and that black vote and that liberal vote with him on that ticket. And that's the only way they can win. And some of them in those key states can't afford to support him because of their own local situation. I believe that the thing that brought on this racial problem that we have is the migration of the blacks out of the South into the big cities of the East and Midwest and West. And this started largely after World War II. And when they got to those states, like New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, California, they got the right to vote and they all vote together. That's the only group of folks I know of that vote in a block if they get the word. And they became and have become and continue to be the swing vote in those key states. And Harry Truman proved in '48 that you could be president of the United States without carrying a single southern state if you could carry New York and Pennsylvania and Ohio and Illinois and California. That's right. And that accounts, in my judgment, for the attitude of the government toward the blacks. They patronize them and cater to them because of their political muscle in the key states. And when it comes to that convention, they're going to think a long time before they put somebody on that ticket that's going to risk those states. This is George's biggest problem. And I don't think they come down here to see him because they like him, at all. I think, probably, and I'm not the only one that thinks this, that they are lulling him into a sense of insecurity about this thing. "We want you to have a

part in party affairs. We want you to have a voice and seat at the table.

And all this. And come on down to the convention. We're going to give you a big part in the convention and everything." And if he goes along with this and they beat him at that convention--which is what they intend to do, if they can--then it will be too late for him to organize his third party effort or legally very difficult to get on the ballot in enough states to win, you see. And they will have defeated him simply by delay. . . doing any real harm. It's just the way I think about it. I think the Kennedy folks want this fellow Mondale, from ^{Minnesota}~~Texas~~, on the ticket with them. I think they're working on that right now. I think they're trying their best to come up with some alternative to Wallace that would insure some of these southern states.

J.B.: You mean Benson or Mondale?

Patterson: Mondale. I've heard Benson, too. Mondale. Talking with somebody about that yesterday. Somebody in the Wallace camp, who was deeply concerned about the Kennedys and the Humphrey folks fooling around with Mondale and Benson.

J.B.: Do you know what actually brought Kennedy down here last year?

Patterson: Gosh, you know, I don't. I really don't. I used to have contact with those people, but I don't have my contacts with them any more. I have a friend that does, but I haven't talked with him in quite some time about it. Charlie Meriwether was my finance director and Charlie went to Washington and became a director on the Export Import Bank and used to help in some of the Kennedy political activities. And I think he might probably have an opinion about that, but I don't. I just don't. . . . Lot of folks thought that Kennedy made a bad mistake coming and a lot of folks down here through George made a mistake going up there and being with him. I don't know whether it did either

ticket would be hard to carry in Alabama. Tough. Now, of course, if George was on there with him, it would be a cinch. Hell, it was hard enough just supporting John Kennedy here. And you know we only got. . . . We have to elect our electors in Alabama. And we had 11 at that time. And then after the election we fought like hell to elect a Democratic slate of electors. And after the election damned if they didn't meet up there at the capital and cast their votes and six out of the 11 voted for Harry Byrd of Virginia. Just threw their damn votes away. Kennedy used to kid me about that. How hard we worked for those bastards and then they get up there and just throw their vote away. But Ted Kennedy would have a hard time in Alabama.

J.B.: But wasn't it known before they voted, though, that it was split 6-5?

Patterson: Not for sure. We couldn't believe--

J.B.: Six ran as unpledged.

Patterson: Yeah.

J.B.: But there was some chance that--

Patterson: One of them is still in town, practices law. Frank Meizel is still here in town. Frank was the one that we beat for chairman of the Democratic committee and put in Sam Englehart instead of Frank Meizel and beat him by one vote. Terrible mistake. What I should have done was simply join Frank Meizel and made peace with Frank Meizel and then we'd of had all the control over the committee we ever would need and it wouldn't have made any enemy, it wouldn't have cost us anything. George Wallace could not have helped himself very much even had he beat Mr Vance. The only injury he got out of that thing was simply a few stories that might imply, in other places, that he's not as strong down here as he makes out like he is. God! Look at that last

election. Shoot, that was just a cinch. He didn't spend any money, much.

J.B.: Well, he didn't really have any opposition much, did he?

Patterson: That's correct.

J.B.: I mean Dale Bumpers got a larger majority in Arkansas against Fulbright than Wallace got here for governor.

Patterson: I'm surprised. . . . A lot of folks just didn't go to vote. But I was surprised at the number of votes that young fellow got. I was surprised at that.

J.B.: Does that suggest that there's a 36% built in anti-Wallace vote in Alabama?

Patterson: I think that's true. Probably more than that.

W.D.V.: What do you think of the theory that Wallace's whole life is one of campaigning for public office and when 1978 comes, and suppose he's not a vice president, that he's going to try to run his wife or one of his relatives and perpetuate his control.

Patterson: Oh, I honestly believe that he'll try to name his successor. Yes sir. I believe that. You're right about that.

J.B.: Can he do that if it's not somebody in the family?

Patterson: He's the only guy that ever has done it and he did it with his wife. I would say--

J.B.: But with his wife, he was almost running himself.

Patterson: I would say no. I don't believe that George Wallace will ever again be able to name his successor unless who ever he supports just simply happens to be a leading contender. Now if you had somebody who had something going to start with, he could possibly, you know, in effect help re-elect his successor. But I don't think he can just pick somebody out there, who is not a contender and not unusually qualified, and name them governor. No, I don't think so.

J.B.: You think it's more likely that he'll run for the US Senate?

Patterson: You know, he has never expressed a desire to go to Washington. And has said on a number of occasions that he was not interested in going to the United States Senate.

J.B.: Washington in that capacity.

Patterson: Yeah, that's right, as Senator. He has never expressed an interest in that and in fact has expressed an interest, a disinterest in it.

W.D.V.: But is that explanation about his interest in campaigning and politics, is that a fairly good explanation of his personality?

Patterson: Yeah, I agree with you there.

W.D.V.: It just dominates his life.

Patterson: The day he came back from the Air Force, he started running for the legislature. And that's where I first met him. I was with my father, who was in the senate, and we were down at the Cafe. And he introduced me to George Wallace. And George Wallace was in law school at that time and he was in the legislature, too. Just been elected. This was 1946. I remember very well. George looked to me just like a, he was just like a little boy. Looked just like a little boy. And from that time on, of my own knowledge, he has been 100% interested in nothing but running for office. That's all.

W.D.V.: So there's nothing to suggest that when that term ends in '78 that that interest is going to die?

Patterson: No, it will continue. I'm convinced of that. Yes sir. And that's why I say, if he's not on the national scene in some way, then he will try to name his successor. I don't think there's any question about that. I don't believe he'll amend that constitution again. I

don't believe that. Because during this administration, this time, he

has not had the control of the legislature. And I think he could control the legislature. But there again, George is not willing to pay the price of doing that. He has been very lucky. . . he has been very, very lucky in that all the time he has been governor, we have had relatively economic prosperity. He has had plenty of money. There has not been a single recession. Nothing but just constantly increasing revenues, all the time. By 15% a year. And then on top of all that comes revenue sharing. Let him give away. . . just like he wants. . . to give it out to anybody. The damndest thing I ever saw. So he's never really had to have, never really had to interest himself in the inner workings of the legislature and really use his office to get something done up there. Up to this last legislature, he's been able to pretty well demand what he wants, simply because he was so popular back home where they came from. I've heard him threaten to go back and to make speeches against them. And hell, they just knuckle right under. During this last session, he just ignored them and they went ahead and did pretty well what he wanted anyway. But he just sort of ignored them, stayed away from them. Had plenty of money. Didn't have to worry about anything. Even the press, the pressure of the press got them to pass the appropriation bills early, which was a very bad mistake for them. And then he went on. They couldn't even find him. Had a legislature that passed the appropriation bills early and then the governor had what he wanted and he didn't spend no more time with them. And they just foundered out to the end. Of course they shouldn't have done that. They should have waited until the last night. And then they'd of had that governor down there.

J.B.: Basically it's a weak legislature, isn't it?

Patterson: Sure.

J.B.: Institutionally weak.

Patterson: Yep.

J.B.: They meet still annually? Or do they still meet biannually?

Patterson: No. Biannually. Yeah.

J.B.: Is it a limited session then?

Patterson: Limited to 36 legislative days. They drag it out.

First Tuesday in May to about the first of October. They drag it out. They meet two days a week and have committee meetings on three days and pay themselves on five days. But. . . a legislator gets about \$10,000 a year. He could get about \$10,000 a year out of it. That's about all. Now you know traditionally that the governor in Alabama. . . traditionally the governor names his speaker. And this has always happened. And they just automatically do this. This gives the governor, of course, control of the key committees in the house and control of the legislation in the house. The lieutenant governor, traditionally in Alabama, has given the governor his choice of the appointment of the majority of the rules committee and the finance and taxation committee of the senate. And as far as I know, this has always been the case in modern times. Beasley did this with George last time. Now we have a seven man rules committee and all the rest of them are 15 men. But the lieutenant governor traditionally has let the governor pick four out of the seven man rules committee and eight out of the 15 man finance and taxation committee.

J.B.: How about the chairman?

Patterson: No, just the majority of the membership.

J.B.: Traditionally does the lieutenant governor appoint a member of that majority as chairman?

make a great deal of difference if you had a majority. But traditionally I would say yes. Traditionally, the lieutenant governor has gotten along with the governor. Very rare occasion when you have a lieutenant governor that don't get along with the governor.

J.B.: But they don't really run as a team, right?

Patterson: No.

J.B.: He doesn't designate his running mate.

Patterson: That's right. Of course that's your one party system again. Now the leadership in the legislature is going to come from some source. And when it's a strickly a one party state like Alabama is, that leadership is going to come from the governor.

J.B.: The rules committee in the senate is powerful why?

Patterson: Well, they determine the special order calendar in the final days of the session. You know, everything bogs down to the end and there at the tail end of the session you got a tremendous calendar with all the important legislation. Usually, you got the appropriation bills usually there. All right, the rules committee then can come out with a special order calendar any time they want to and they can just move stuff up to the top of the calendar, you see. All right, the rules committee can cut off debate, you see. Under our rule here, you have to have a resolution from the rules committee to vote on the cutting off of debate. Otherwise you've got unlimited possibilities for filibuster, see.

J.B.: So if you control the rules committee and the finance and taxation committee, you don't need anything else, right?

Patterson: That's right. The only other person you have to worry about would be the lieutenant governor. He could sit up there on that gavel and arbitrarily block things. But he can't get away with that. He

might try it, but that senate would probably revolt on it. Revolt against him on that thing. And they could curb his authority.

J.B.: Does the lieutenant governor by law have the power, by statute have the power, by constitution have the power to appoint committees or is that just tradition?

Patterson: No, he has the power to do it.

J.B.: But I mean is it statutory or constitutional?

Patterson: Constitutional, I believe. I believe I'm right about that.

J.B.: Is seniority much of a factor?

Patterson: No. None.

W.D.V.: What is? Allegiance to the governor?

Patterson: Yeah.

W.D.V.: And in the house that's purely precedent. That's not in the rules or statutory--

Patterson: Purely traditional. That's right.

J.B.: So the governor of Alabama is really one of the most powerful governor's offices in the nation, right?

Patterson: No question about it. I would rate it near the top. Even though he shares the executive power with several other constitutional officers, like the attorney general or the treasurer, the secretary of state, auditor and state commissioner of agriculture and industries. Still, the constitution charges him with seeing to it that all the laws are enforced, including all those that they enforce. And he can call on them for information, under oath. And a refusal to do so is grounds for impeachment. So the governor is really all powerful in the executive branch. And with the traditional power he has in the legislative

branch, I'd say yes, he's one of the strongest in the United States.

J.B.: Let me ask you this. Suppose Wallace as governor would decide that by golly he would really like to revamp the tax structure of the state. He'd like to maybe even. . . . Does the sales tax include food and drugs in Alabama?

Patterson: Yes, it does now.

J.B.: Let's say he'd like to get rid of the sales tax on food and drugs. Is there a state income tax?

Patterson: Yes.

J.B.: With 5% maximum.

Patterson: Maximum 5%.

J.B.: That's by constitution, I assume.

Patterson: That's correct.

J.B.: All right, and he'd like to get a constitutional amendment to change that, increase it. Remove the limit or increase it to 7% or whatever. Replace that. If he really wanted to do that, considering the power he's got. That he in effect can name committees and the people who are on it. Would there be any reason why he couldn't do that?

Patterson: No, he could do it. If he took that on as a program it could be done. He would have to be willing to use the powers of his office, the powers of patronage and persuasion that the office has, probably to get it done. But if he were willing to do what he could do, legally, I'm talking about. I'm not talking about anything illegitimate. Then the answer's yes. No question but he could do it. And it should be done. It should be done.

J.B.: This goes back to the original question is George Wallace really a liberal. I know he has this. . . people in Alabama say he is and

he likes to sort of project it now, nationally. You know, I really am. I'm a populist. But I haven't quite seen the evidence.

W.D.V.: They say the rhetoric is there. The performance is not.

Patterson: Well, I said a while ago, based on performance, I think Brewer's showing against Wallace was because of Wallace's overall performance.

J.B.: Which was also a reflection that Alabama was beginning to get tired of the rhetoric?

Patterson: No question about it. People are tired of the same old--

J.B.: This new image of Wallace--

Patterson: How great everything is. You know, everything's great. But they know it really ain't great.

J.B.: The new rhetoric is much more an adjustment--

Patterson: George is not particularly interested in going to a lot of trouble for wholesale reorganization of state finances and things of this kind. I've heard his own people say. . . his own kinfolk say that George knows how to get elected, but once he gets up there he devotes his time to other things, other than running the office.

W.D.V.: What you said about taxes, isn't the same thing true about executive reorganization? Most of the governors in the South have taken on a program of the consolidation of the executive branch down to 20 agencies or 15 or whatever. Most of them have at least tried.

Patterson: Yeah. George's interests lie in other directions. I don't think that George wants to tie up his time in that kind of thing. I think he's more interested in the overall political politics than he is in the day to day running of the office or any attempt to try to reorganize the state government. I think this is the least of his concerns.

set his mind on administration, is there any question in your mind so far as him having the ability to perform well in that capacity?

Patterson: He could do it if he set his mind to do it. I'd say again, you've got to be willing to pay the price. And of course what I'm talking about is this. You've got to call that senator down there that's blocking your program or blocking some bill you've got to have and you've got to say "Now look, by god, if you want that damn bridge up there over that river, you go back up there and vote for this bill or you're not going to get this bridge." You see.

J.B.: In Alabama the governor can deliver on that sort of thing, right?

Patterson: Absolutely. You've got to find out what it is that fellow that's bottleneaking your program, what it is that he's got he wants to keep that you can take away from him, or what it is he wants very badly that you can give him. And you've got to use every conceivable pressure that you can bring to bear on a fellow to force him around to your way of thinking. Now George has never done that. He's not good at that. A few attempts that they made to bring pressure to bear on people that I know about, particularly during that succession fight, backfired on them. Because you don't put pressure the way some of his folks tried to do it, you see. "You're going to vote the way I do or I'm going to knock your brains out." The average guy'll say "You go to hell," see. It ain't the way to do it. Now George has never been good at that and he's never had to do that, you see. A lot of difference. . . . I remember one time when I was faced with a recession, during that Eisenhower recession, and a 100 day steel strike in Birmingham which caused a tremendous drop in sales tax. And God damn, we were running

out of money and we were in a hell of a shape. We were having to prorate school funds. And when you get in that kind of a situation, you have to devote your time to the business of the state. You can't be interested in anything else. Now George has been very fortunate in that he's never had problems of that kind. He's had plenty of money ever since he's been up. In fact too much. Run a surplus every time.

W.D.V.: Has he ever been tested in any economic or social crisis? I mean other than the race thing, where he sort of, as you say, drew the line and made the confrontation. But has he ever been tested?

Patterson: No, you're about right. You see, that penny sales tax breezed through up there.

W.D.V.: But that really wasn't his program either. I mean he didn't really work to get that through, did he?

J.B.: Hadn't he pledged himself against the sales tax increase?

Patterson: Oh yeah, he ran pledged against the sales tax, then turned around and supported it. But there was quite a head of steam up on that at that time to try to, you know, break out of this education problems that we were in at that time. And of course that penny sales tax made it possible for us to make tremendous strides in public education at that time. I think some of it was misdirected. We built too many junior colleges. Hell, they got junior colleges some places. . . you can almost hit three of them with a rock, some places. Overbuilt. Poor planning. Really, poor planning.

J.B.: Am I correct though that that sales tax was not part of a package. It was just a one cent sales tax increase.

Patterson: Yeah. And when he ran, he was pledged not to put it on when he ran for office. Of course when I was in office. . . I ran

against putting on a sales tax, too. When I was in office we didn't put one on. We took some exemptions. . . . When I was there, the way we financed the largest increase in funds for schools up to that time in the history of Alabama was when I was in office. A \$35 million a year increase in appropriations plus \$100 million school construction program. And we financed it by taking the exemptions off of heavy machinery. Now you talk about a fight with the big wheels. We had one on that. At the time machinery. . . for instance, dynamos in the Alabama Power Company plants were exempt from sales tax. The looms in the mills and the lathes and all those exemptions. So we financed it by taking the sales tax exemptions off of heavy machinery and in effect we put the burden on industry.

J.B.: Including manufacturing machinery.

Patterson: Right. Man, that was a bitter damn thing. And it passed the senate by one vote. I never got through paying for it. I mean it nearly wrecked my administration to do that. But I did it for the school people. Of course, they weren't very grateful because they didn't realize how hard it was to get it done. They really didn't. And the lieutenant governor had always tried to make like he was a supporter of public education, but when it came down to that damn bill, he fought it. And when he appointed a conference committee, he appointed three members of the conference committee that were against the legislation. We anticipated this and had the speaker to appoint three that was for it. We didn't follow the traditional rules in appointing a conference committee. So when they met they were three and three. If it hadn't been for that, we'd of been whipped early. But we did get it through. You're right about. . . . George has been very fortunate in that all the time he's been in office,

we have had relatively good times. Really have. Plenty of money.

J.B.: You going to run for office again?

Patterson: No. I've made up my mind about that. I'm just 52 years old, but you have to decide at some time in your life whether, you know, you want to have a profession of business and have anything for yourself and your family or whether you want to just fool with politics all your life. You just can't continue to fool with gubernatorial politics. It's just too short lived. And if you want to continue to run all the time and do all the things that's necessary to stay in the public eye, you've got to have a private income. You've got to have a base. And you can't make any money in it. George Wallace don't have any money. If George Wallace had to get up \$10,000 right now to put a down payment on a house, he'd have to go borrow it. He gives no thought whatsoever to his future, financially or anything like that. He operates as if that day is never going to come. It's a bad thing to. . . .

J.B.: In so far as personal honesty is concerned. . . .

Patterson: I have no doubt about his honesty. I think he's, like all governors, he's made some mistakes in judgment in the appointment of people. But you know, if you're right half the time picking people, you're lucky. But he doesn't hesitate to cut their heads off when they get in trouble. And this is something good to say for him.

J.B.: Does he have a competent staff?

Patterson: I would say that it was competent enough to function. Could you find somebody, you know, that might do a job better? Probably so. Of course not always the best fellow gets elected governor, either, you know. But I think by and large he's got a pretty good staff. I don't think he delegates much authority.

J.B.: Has the state's industrial growth and economic development in

the last 12 years resulted because of George Wallace or in spite of George Wallace?

Patterson: No, I think that was going to come anyway.

J.B.: What are the major forces behind that? Just the economic forces in the state?

Patterson: Oh, I think this part of the country, the southeast, is developing. People are moving down here. The population is, to some extent, growing. Not particularly here, but in Florida and places like that. I think it was just bound to come. I think it just happened. I do think, though, that George is responsible for the industrial bond act, which has probably given us more small industry and more scattered industry than we would have got without it.

J.B.: Is this Tennessee Tom Bigby project going to be the biggest thing. . . ?

Patterson: Yeah, that's going to be a big thing.

J.B.: Does that result more from the Congressional delegation?

Patterson: No, he's been working on that thing since. . . . The first drawing of that thing was drawn by the French, when the French controlled the Louisiana Territory. That's how old that thing is. [Laughter.] That's right. That thing has been in the cards for many, many years. The first appropriation to start construction on that project came from John Kennedy. That's right.

J.B.: Was your office involved in that?

Patterson: Yeah. I went up and appeared as a witness before the committee. Mr Cannon's committee at that time? Tough old bird. That was the first money for construction. And that opened the door. But I can't take credit for that. That thing started many administrations

before mine had a hand in getting that thing going. Now the reason that

thing is so important is that this will give shippers a slack water route, with no current, both ways, see, from the gulf to Chicago. That's a tremendous thing. Now they have to buck that current up the Mississippi going back, see.

J.B.: Does John Sparkman play any significant role in Alabama politics?

Patterson: Yeah, I think so.

J.B.: In what way?

Patterson: John Sparkman has a lot of friends in Alabama that he's made over the years that are in influential positions. Lot of them in the banking industry. And he has calls on these people. And he's somebody to be reckoned with in Alabama. No question about that.

J.B.: But I mean does he help other candidates?

Patterson: No, no sir. With a two party state he might. . . . Now he came down here and appeared a couple of times and made a little talk for the Democratic ticket when Lyndon Johnson was running. But that's safe enough to do that in a general election in Alabama. It's pretty safe to do that. But as far as getting involved in anybody else's race other than possibly speaking on behalf of the Democratic ticket during the presidential race, no, he's never got involved in any local politics.

J.B.: To what extent does Wallace get involved in other races?

Patterson: None. Absolutely none.

J.B.: How about this lieutenant governor's run off?

Patterson: Nah. He had nothing to do with. . . he had a hard time keeping his people from getting mixed up in the thing and some of them got deeply involved in it. You just can't control all your people. And I think some of his people are looking way ahead. They figure that Beasley's

going to be the next governor and they want a piece of the action when George is gone. I think some of them are looking that far ahead.

J.B.: You think he's going to be the next governor?

Patterson: I don't have no idea. What do you think? [Laughter.] Sen Sparkman. . . he and Sen Hill collaborated for years in parcelling out the federal patronage. And so you have not only key people around in business and financial circles that are deeply obligated to Sen Sparkman, but you also have a lot of federal officeholders that are deeply obligated to Sen Sparkman as well.

J.B.: What was Judge ^{Rives'} ~~Reeves'~~ role?

Patterson: Well of course, I think that Sen Hill and Sparkman both were instrumental in the original appointment of Judge ^{Rives} ~~Reeves~~ to the bench. But Judge ^{Rives} ~~Reeves~~, once he got on the bench, he just took the tack of Judge Johnson. Man, he was rough on us. Talking about enforcement, the carrying out of the law of the land as announced by the United States Supreme Court, now Judge ^{Rives} ~~Reeves~~ did his part. He was like Judge Johnson. In fact he still sits on cases. He's still around. You knew that, didn't you? A very honorable man, incidentally. Very honorable man. Very much of a liberal, in my judgment. He and Frank Johnson have had a great deal to do with the implementation of the Brown decision.

J.B.: I heard someone even go so far as to say that the legislature and the governor don't really run the state of Alabama because it's all in the control of the federal courts.

Patterson: It's all because. . . it's because of these certain controversial issues that are hot potatoes politically. Where the state has simply defaulted and has refused to carry out what the state was supposed to do itself. And how in the hell can you complain if the federal court

steps in and does it where by god you refused to do it. See? And the reason they refused to do it is simply because the leaders feel like it's safer, politically, for them to let the federal courts do it, cuss the courts for doing it and to keep them from having to do it themselves. If they did it themselves they probably couldn't get re-elected. This is the way I analyze it. Reapportionment of the legislature. The Alabama constitution specifically says--the 1901 constitution specifically says--that the legislature should reapportion itself every ten years based on the decennial census. And that each house of the Alabama legislature would have to be as near equal, as far as the vote was concerned, . . . that is, to each house, had to be on a population basis in Alabama. We had no complaint, even about that. Of course they never would do it. And it got. . . I don't know whether you read that. . . . There's an Alabama Law Review article on that question that spells that thing out in great detail. And the federal court here gave the legislature and the governor years to do something about it themselves. And then recently, when they finally adopted this professor's plan--what's his name, Bolinsky from NYU--when they finally adopted his plan of one man one vote and did away with. . . and single member districts, even then the judge asked the state of Alabama to file a suggested plan. And hell, the attorney general filed a plan that was so far out of line that it could not possibly have been accepted. So the state didn't even come up with a feasible plan. And the court probably would have accepted multi-member districts. They even indicated in their opinion that if you'd come up with a feasible plan, they might even have accepted multi-member districts. But they didn't. The only feasible plan was the one of the plaintiffs by Dr Bolinsky. So now we have the single member district and

the one man one vote formula. Which has brought this thing about. Same is true with the tax thing. We just flat refused. . . . You know, the thing for years. . . we had to assess property on 60% of fair market value. But now it's down to 30 and still they're not doing it and they don't intend to do it in my opinion. The federal court is going to have to reassess our property formula. You can't get that local tax assessor. . . .

J.B.: The contention that the federal courts really run the state of Alabama is not very far fetched then.

Patterson: Yeah. Take. . . .

J.B.: Mental health.

Patterson: Mental health, see. If the state picks people up off the street who are supposed to be crazy who haven't hurt anybody or violated any laws, and sends them over to the state hospital, the only constitutional justification for depriving them of their liberty is that you're going to treat them. And once you get them over there, if you don't treat them, you violate their constitutional rights by keeping them. And all Frank Johnson said here, is you treat them. . . if you pick them up and take them over there and lock them up, you've got to treat them up to a certain standard or you've got to send them home, see. That's all he said. And the state has not done anything about that. Get back to that performance thing, again, is what I'm talking about, see.

J.B.: If the next governor of Alabama turned out to be somebody who really wanted to institute a great deal of reform, he likely would get a great deal accomplished. Is that right?

Patterson: Yeah.

W.D.V.: If you were willing to work at it with the legislature.

Patterson: It would be a good time, a good time. You're going to have to be somebody, though, that understands the nature of the process and who is willing to do what is required to be done to get it done. You understand that that legislature is a coming together of all the conflicting economic interests of a state. There might be a guy in there that thinks he is there to do what is best for all his constituents regardless of his own personal views or anything else, but in the final analysis, when you come down to a show down on something that's controversial, he'll vote for his economic interest of the group he comes out of. And the governor's got to tackle that thing. He's got to understand that the very nature of the thing is compromise.

J.B.: Isn't Alabama about due for a new constitution?

Patterson: Oh god, yes. There again. . . . We're going to get it piecemeal, though. We got a new judicial article. We're going to get it piecemeal. Have you seen the proposed new constitution? It's very brief.

[Interruption on tape.]

J.B.: -- control the county judge and the county government. Is that the key position?

Patterson: That's the strongest position in the county. Particularly in a county like that. See in a small, rural county, the probate judge acts as county judge and handles misdemeanors and preliminary hearings. He acts as juvenile judge and he acts as judge of the county court, the county commission and sits as a member of the county commission and has a vote in the handling of, making county governmental decisions.

J.B.: Does he in effect function as chairman of the county commission?

Patterson: Yes.

J.B.: And dominant figure.

Patterson: That's right.

J.B.: So he has both judicial and administrative

Patterson: That's correct. Strongest position in the county.

And the second position, of course, would be the sheriff. The sheriff is the only constitutional officer in the county and the sheriff is a very formidable position, too. Not that he has any authority other than political. His influence is really political. You know, the sheriff--

[End of tape. End of interview.]