

This is an interview with Patt Derian, Democratic National Committeewoman from the State of Mississippi. The interview was conducted by Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, and was transcribed by Susan Hathaway. The interview date was March 25, 1974.

JACK BASS: What is the basic conflict. I mean, I understand the basic conflict between the loyalists and the regulars, but what is the basic point of contention?

PATT DERIAN: Well the real problem is not so much the points of contention any more. You know, I think that the regulars are resigned to the fact that they are indeed going to have to accommodate black people, and that they have to have a different kind of authority, but the real problem is the Governor, and he is inexperienced politically, he is inept politically, and he doesn't know how to negotiate. He was a prosecuting attorney before he was magically made Governor by Delois Walker, a fluke that I am sure took both of their breaths away. He just plain doesn't know how to do it. Now there are some old die hard regulars who had significant power in Mississippi politically and who still have it; and maybe had it for 20 years. There are some of those that absolutely cannot make an accommodation to the change. However, their number is small.

J.B.: Where does Senator East~~land~~ fit into all of this?

WALTER DEVRIES: Can I go back, you say can't be done by the Governor, can it be done by anybody in this state or . . .

P.D.: It can be somebody. It can be done by the senate, or it can be done by William Mercer, it could be done by the Executive Committee of the regulars, it could be done by a group of legislators, it could be done by anybody with any guts, and that is the whole problem that they have. It has been the whole problem of leadership in this state . . . lack of guts and lack of brains.

J.B.: Let me ask you something else so we will understand. What is your background with the loyalists in Mississippi politics, are you a native of Mississippi?

P.D.: No, I came here in 1959. I got started really in the public schools to keep the schools open and to keep white kids in.

J.B.: So you came here from where?

P.D.: My husband is a Professor at the Medical School. When he finished his residency we went to Ohio, and we lived there about two years, and that is the place we came from to this place, but I really am from Virginia, from Danville. Anyhow I started in the public school movement and then sort of slipped over to the civil rights movement as an extension of that. Then politics was kind of an extension of

that. In '65 when the YD's were getting put together on a biracial basis for ^(Carter III) ~~Harding~~ and Spencer Oliver, they asked me to be the National Committeewoman for the YD's, but it was the second or third summer of the Mississippians for Public Education, and there were so few of us working in that, that we had decided we wouldn't do anything but that until we got enough people who were willing to work on it. So I didn't do it, but then I kind of got hooked into that sort of group of people who were working politically and then in '68 I met a number of times with those groups of people and the decision was made to try to participate in the regulars process and see if we could get anywhere, and then the Hughes Commission guidelines had come down, but they had never ever responded to them, none of the national committee members, the Governor, none of those leaders ever sent back the minimal little thing that was required, and as it happened they didn't the door much, they made Charles Evers a delegate, I think . . .

J.B.: What was the basic requirement of the Hughes Commission?

PD: There were six elements in the Hughes thing . . . In essence it was that anybody who wanted to be a Democrat could be a Democrat and participate in it, and that you had to assure them that your party was open to all people, and the requirement was that you would send a letter that your party was willing to do that, that was all. It was really very little. I have a copy . . .

gosh, I have so many documents, I know you don't want to get bogged down in those However, in the new delegate selection guidelines . . . have you seen those? Anyway, they are incorporated, those Hughes things are incorporated again, updated a little bit to give recognition to ethnic groups, and says more about sex, I think, and that kind of thing. In essence they are the keystones of the reform in the Democratic party. So anyway, then we have have this coalition, and it was kind of funny. It was mostly made up of organizations, you know, the FDP, and the NAACP were the main components of it, and then there were millions of subdivisions . . . beauticians, undertakers, teachers, you know, every kind of organization that had ever existed; and the AFL-CIO was in it in a marginal public light and a very strong undercover sort of way. But, I didn't represent any of those groups, and I've worked hard, and I wanted to be on the Exeuctive Committee, and Aaron and Harding and another man and I sat at a table one day, and I said that, you know, I expected to have a hope in the decision making thing. Aaron, who is very organizational, 'hmm, there is no way I can make that , he came out like he is oriented to organizational representation. He said he was sorry, but I would have to belong to some group. So, we had a terrible squabble about it. I had never known him very well until '68, I've worked with Charles Evers

since he came back to the state, but I didn't know Aaron very well, and there was always just a little bit of rivalry between them although they were very close at the same time, but anyway Harding said he would take me as a YD, and that made me angry, so we had a great to do and finally everybody lost and everybody won in that Aaron had it fixed in his mind that I was on as YD and I had it fixed in my mind that I was on as myself, and since it finally boiled down to my being the one that wrote the list of who was . . . my name was just there alone. It was kind of interesting because they were not much accustomed to working with women.

J.B.: This was what year?

P.D.: 1968. Then we went to Chicago for the credentials committee hearing, and we won. At some point . . . at the State Convention, I was elected National Committeewoman in '68, and so that is kind of ^{how} ~~who~~ I got into it.

J.B.: Okay now, in '72 Waller wanted to let the lawyers have one third representation, am I basically correct on that?

P.D.: Well he made several offers. One was a 60 - 40, but what happened was before he started making any offers, you know, anything more than saying what it was that he wanted, we set up a negotiating team, and they set up a negotiating team. We met down at the Heidelberg Hotel,

and it turned out that their negotiating team had never talked before. You know, they had been appointed and they had come to this meeting, but they had not made any kind of plan about what they would do or what they would say. They seemed to feel that their presence at the negotiating table was what they had to give, and that that was a thing of great value. We had met and fought and struggled for hours and hours . . . oh, endless meetings, probably 60 hours of meetings beforehand, so we knew what we wanted and what we were willing to throw away in trade. It was really incredible because they stated that they would like to have half the delegation, and that was all. So we sat there for a couple of hours in this smokey old room . . . nothing came of it. They asked us for a list of the things that we were going to discuss, so we gave it to them, and we had taken at the very beginning they were very nervous about meeting with us. We agreed at the very beginning in a very solemn kind of way that we would not discuss what we talked about or any of the negotiating points with the press or with anybody else, that it really would be an off the record open kind of discussion. So somewhere in there the Governor had sent a young legislature out to see me in the middle of the night, and he said that if we would give them half the delegation the Governor would go with us to Miami, and I explained to him that that might really mean a lot to them, but it just didn't mean a damn thing to us, and I was not going to negotiate unilaterally. It has been one of

the problems from the very beginning, particularly with Waller and his group of people, is that they absolutely do not want to deal with any black people, and they would really rather not deal with any of us in the state. When the call to the '72 convention came Waller and a couple of his people went to Washington and registered in a Hotel under an assumed name, called the DNC, refused to go over there . . . Bill Welch went to the Hotel to see them, and what they wanted was for Larry O'Brien to write to Aaron and ask him to send the call to the convention back to the DNC so that the DNC could send it to Waller. Now that is not realistic thinking, and it is not bright, and it makes you cautious to try to do any kind of dealings with a person of that type. So, anyway, I sent that young fellow along the way. I can't remember if we met again before the regulars convention, and I don't . . . maybe we did one time We may have tried one other time, we did try twice, but I can't remember whether it was before the convention or not. Anyway, thunder struck when Waller got up on the platform and read off our list of negotiating points, and really that is what they were, you know, complete with throw aways, as absolute demands, saying that they were not going to be blackmailed by this kind of stuff, and you know, we were almost all there sitting in the back. Then he said that what he was going to do . . . he would give us two weeks, I think, to give them half of the seats, and if we didn't do it in that time, he would

go to federal court, then he would go to the credentials committee, and then he would go to the full convention. Well, it just shows you what a Boob he was, even if he was going to do it that way, if he is trying to gain any points with the National Committee, or the National Party, he would say he was going through the credentials committee. Anybody would know that, but indeed he went to federal court, and we were in court two weeks, and the case got enormously complicated for several reasons; one, is that Chuck Morgan is our lawyer and one issue after another reveals itself, so that they never really knew what hit them . . . anyway, they didn't get to go, even though they had a last minute appeal to a three judge panel in the Fifth Circuit, and then they went to the Credentials Committee . . . Waller went there and argued the case, and we won an unanimous decision including the Wallace people. It was just unbelievable, and somewhere in the midst of that, maybe during the bomb scare, or maybe just when we got started, we all rushed up to a Hotel room with Waller and two of his henchmen standing around, and that was the first time he ever came up with anything besides half the delegation, and McNair that man who used to be Governor of South Carolina came down to see what he could do during the trial, he talked to Waller, and then he came down to see us on it. By then we had a week of the trial in Jackson, and the second week was down on the coast. So he came down to the coast, and said "I explained to Governor Waller that all he has to do is what I did in South Carolina. I just

took the chief haunch of the NAACP and made him our legal counsel, and gave him a little praise; and he said all the rest of them fell in line. You know, it just really kind of takes your breath away . . . the assumption that because you are white and southern that that is the way I was really absolutely astonished, but anyhow, McNair failed also. He failed with Waller and he failed with us. He was a dead log. I talked to Strauss on the phone two or three weeks ago, and he said now we want to get that thing straightened out down there, and I agreed heartily that indeed we did, and he said he thought he would send Bob McNair down, since the Democratic party had no sense of its past, you know, that was a problem. So, now we have Strauss, we start all over again, but anyway, I explained that maybe McNair was not the ideal person to come, and he didn't understand it at all, but I ployed with Windall Ford, who was also not my idea of the right person to come, but I thought it would confuse Windall Ford so that he wouldn't think of coming if I wanted him. It is just a matter of sort of dancing around on the top of all of these extraneous matters. So anyway, he lost in the credentials committee, as not one living being voted for the regulars . . . they didn't have enough for a minority report to the National Convention, and I suppose by then he felt there was no hope, but even now, they will dwell When there was the telethon back in the summer or the fall, whenever

that thing was Waller had called up and . . . or I think somebody appeared in Washington with a check for \$15,000 for the DNC to use as their donation, and I must say for Strauss, he wouldn't touch it. He called me right up and told me they had offered it, and that he hadn't taken it. So, we're on pretty safe ground as far as that goes. But it is absolutely absurd to have a political party like this. We have 23% of the vote, and if we lived in Arizona, where everybody is a Republican, that would be what you go with. But it is not in the interest of the people here to be Republican, and most of them aren't, and we need to get the party together. It certainly is teaching me patience. It takes a very long time, but by '76 we will have it . . . one, we will have a new Governor, and unless we get some neandathall like A. F. Summers, Attorney General, or Jim Buck Ross, who is head of the Department of Agriculture now, we'll have it worked out, and it will be better.

J.B.: Then what will there be? What will the state of the Democratic party in Mississippi be then?

P.D.: Well, it will be interesting because one of the real problems is that there is not much confidence on the part of either segment in the other group. You know, we have to have some guarantees. It was one of the things Waller didn't understand about trying to negotiate at the very last minute before the Credentials Committee. You know, he said 60 - 40, and then there were arrangements about the national committee

members and the chair and the vice-chair and all of that kind of stuff, but really not very much, all very sketchy, and when you are doing that . . . a negotiation of a merger of two organizations with the kinds of feelings that existed between these two, you have to be very careful. You have to build in guarantees. It is not the kind of thing you do like plea bargaining at the door to the court room. It just is not the same thing. He was never able to grasp that concept that this was something different, but we have to have a careful agreement . . . a carefully drawn agreement . . .

J.B.: Are you saying that Waller, during all this time, was negotiating as a prosecutor . . .

P.D.: Yes, that is his mentality. One of his own people told me that you had to understand he had the prosecutors mentality.

W.D.: But he personally is doing this, it is not some henchmen or somebody else that is involved. He led all the negotiations and all the efforts or whatever . . .

P.D.: Well he was at that time. Now he pretends that he doesn't know anything about it. In fact, I called him up. Somebody told me that they had filed a delegate selection plan for the '74 mid-term conference. So I called him up and said please send me a copy of your delegate selection plan, and he said, "well, listen, I don't know if I can do that."

He said, "you know, I don't know if we are letting that out, I'm not on the Executive Committee, I'd have to ask them." I said nonsense, it is the Democratic party and you have to make it public. You have to show it to me, and have to put it out to the press. He said "well, I guess I could send you one," I said "no, you can give one to any Democrat who wants one that's the way it goes." So he sent it and it was just awful. I was really embarrassed by it. I could have filed a better one for him than that. So, he just can't seem to understand the point of the thing is now they are the challengers. So instead of filing a challenge to ours, they filed their own as though it was the Democratic party, you know. I tell you it is a matter of brains and courage.

J.B.: How do you think it is going to end up being resolved?

P.D.: It is going to be resolved . . . Waller, he won't be the Governor anymore, and he won't be the problem. It might even be resolved before he stops being the Governor.

J.B.: Where does Eastland fit into all of this?

P.D.: Eastland? Well Eastland is really interesting because Waller is his guy, he has been from the very beginning. But Eastland has a very limited sphere of interest, and so he counts on Waller to do what he tells him to do in the areas that are of concern to him, and the rest of the time he sort of leaves him flopping around, and I think that he is just beginning to realize

the extent of his disability; although I told him. I went to see him one time and told him that it really was not fair to Waller to tell him what to do when it was in his interest and then let him dig himself deeper and deeper, and that he ought to take him off somewhere and teach him some politics. It was really awful for him, it was embarrassing for Waller, it was embarrassing for the state, and he laughed and shook his cigar, and said he was suppose to take a trip with him to California, and that was just at the time when the Republicans were getting ready to meet out there, so we laughed gaily about that, but Eastland, I hear, has put the word out that he wants this thing solved, and we are beginning to talk around to the next round of power people.

W.D.: Well, hasn't Waller recently called himself a National Democrat?

J.B.: He's been calling himself a National Democrat.

P.D.: Well sometimes he says he is, and sometimes he says he is a Mississippi Democrat. He made a big to do about who he was going to vote for and put it off for about three weeks, and finally was on his way to the airport to take a trip to South America and some of the reporters got in and said "Governor you promised us you would tell," he said, "well, he changed his mind, he didn't think he would." So, he never declared for McGovern, never said he voted

for McGovern; went down when one of those Nixon children appeared on the coast at a Republican rally during the campaign, and explained to people how he could split the ticket. So, it isn't . . . it is a pity to spend so much time talking about him except I guess he is in the grand tradition of dopes running things in the South, You know, second raters left at home trying to be statesmen. It is very perplexing and distressing, and he is a sweet fellow, very hearty and warm, friendly, wants to be the most loved Governor in the history of the state, wouldn't hurt anybody.

J.B.: But Eastland wants it solved you say?

P.D.: Sure he does. You know that is an embarrassment to him. It'll be solved.

J.B.: Was Eastland interested in building a strong Democratic party in Mississippi?

P.D.: Well, as I say, his interests are limited, and I am not convinced that that is one of them. I think his interests are mostly personal. How old is he? Not old enough. I keep thinking he is a lot older than he is. So, I suppose he would go again. He'd probably be close to 70 next time around, and he didn't like being challenged by Gill Carmichael, the Republican, and if Nixon would have given him the nod, he would be our United States Senator now. I think that Eastland was really shaken by the percentage of the vote that Carmichael got.

J.B.: So you think Nixon made the difference in that?

P.D.: Made the whole difference. If it hadn't been for Nixon, Eastland would not be up there now. Did you see the evening news? Eastland and Stennis had breakfast with Nixon this morning . . .

W.D.:

P.D.: Well, I do think that practically everything you do out of your house turns out to be political. So if that is right . . .

W.D.: What major changes have you seen in the state?

P.D.: Oh Gosh, they have been phenomenal. The most dramatic one is the change in having black people able to vote. That really has made an enormous difference. The voting rights act and the presence of civil rights lawyers here for 14 years have made all the difference, and I give them equal standing. I think the presence of those lawyers suing and suing and suing . . .

J.B.: Any particular lawyers?

P.D.: Sure the lawyers committee for . . . what is it the LCDC, ~~which is~~ now. Anyway, and Al Bronstein, Bruce Ruveno in the early '60's. Then the lawyers committee, which is the lawyers committee for civil rights under George Taylor, who is going to Alabama now, Frank Parker, who is still here, that whole *Committee* . Of course now, Leventhall ~~with the~~ ~~whose~~ really made such strides in school desegregation, it is unbelievable, and he is the one who got the Shaw case, which is equalization of facilities in the black part of the community. I

mean, it is really unbelievable what they have done. Chuck Morgan with his one man one vote and jury things. You know, he worked out of Atlanta, but those cases effected us too. You just can never calculate what a difference it has made in the whole life of the place and particularly in the political life. Marion Wright when she was here, . . . but, so there is all of that. It is one of those cataclismic events that black people voting that you still use after the actual factor of reaping results. I think that . . . you know when we first moved here, no black person was safe walking on the street anywhere in this state, not in this town or any other place. The system of justice simply did not apply to black people. I expect that there is not one black person that I know in this state, who hasn't at some time, been abused by police or by white people with the acquiescence of the police. When you look back from this day to what it was when we moved here, I can hardly believe that anybody stood it, that the black people put up with it, or that the white community put up with it. It is just absolutely astonishing to me when I think of the way we lived. Charles Evers just to call me up and use a code name on the telephone. It is just unbelievable. So, it is not that everything is better. We still have terrible problems with poverty. We have terrible jails, the penitentiary is a nightmare. Black people are still abused from time to time in

various ways, but that absolute iron control is gone, and it just makes an enormous difference.

J.B.: Did you ever have any threats made against you?

P.D.: Certainly, but of course, of no consequence. It was sort of scary at the time, but when you consider the actual things that happened to other people, black people particularly, . . .

J.B.: Why did you decide to come to Mississippi anyway?

P.D.: Well it is very funny. You know I was engaged to a man from Mississippi, and I decided that I absolutely could not live in this place; having grown up in elegant uptown Virginia . . . I had a very low opinion of Mississippi, and so I bid him a fond farewell and explained that I couldn't live here, and then I married this man from New York at the University of Virginia, and when we were in Ohio a classmate of his asked him to come down and look at this job at this medical school as second man in the Department of Orthopedics. He came down and he looked at it. He said it was a brand new medical school, and it would be fun but he was not going to be second man anywhere. In about four months the first man left, and they offered him the job as head of the department, and he said he would like to come, and that the people didn't look as bad as the pictures of Mississippi in the '30's, and it was a beginning, and so that is how it came about.

J.B.: Did you have any regrets after you got here?

P.D.: No, you know, it is such a revelation. I mean, I regretted the way the place was. I was stern and horrified and also ashamed of myself because it finally dawned on me that things were probably like this in the place that I had grown up, and that I had really not been aware of it, and I was far away from all of my relatives, so I was free to do as I pleased, and I really couldn't live anywhere else. I mean, I could go somewhere else for a while, but this is the place I would prefer . . . the problems are enormous but they are easy to identify. Only two million people live here so it is not an unmanageable kind of thing like Manhattan, and the climate is great. I like a lot of humidity, and I like a lot of hot air and growing things and soft ground to walk on, and it is an interesting place because so much needs to be done.

J.B.: Where do you see the Democratic party in Mississippi after 1976?

P.D.: Well the ideal thing, I think would be to try to do it as though it were just a plain political party, and that there was something to be gained from having a well organized state party. That you would have an executive, you would have an office, you would have a system of fund raising, and that You see, one of the things that I discovered . . . oh, I didn't discover it alone but which was a great surprise to me

was when the voting rights act was passed, there was a lot of talk everywhere about the newly franchised black voter, politically naive and inexperienced, and there is still a lot of talk about that, as a matter of fact. But what was quickly evident is that the white voter in Mississippi was exactly in the same boat. There was no political party here. There was what was called a political party. It was run by a very small handful of men, and the only political exercise that citizens got really was going out and voting, which is really, you know, not all of it. There is really a lot more to it than that. So the state is just ripe for a good organizer, and you might very well begin to move away from the one issue race into other issues that are pressing.

J.B.: We have been told that race was not a real issue in the Governors race last time.

P.D.: No, it wasn't.

J.B.: Do you see a populists coalition forming?

P.D.: I am very leary of those kinds of labels. But what I hope would be some sort of issue oriented thing that would amount to it. It has been very interesting, Common Cause in this state. I think that Common Cause is a much bigger threat to political parties everywhere, and people are considering it, but the thing attracted an enormous amount of people in Mississippi. A surprising type person . . . a woman came over from Jones County . . . that's , that's backwoods, redneck clan country, and she came

over to . . . because she belongs to Common Cause, and they had given her a job to do, which was to interview me. You know, not me particularly, but a person in my category. They give their people things to do. They have meetings where they discuss things and get their opinions, and it is that concept of feeding in that these people are ready for. So I am not sure what form it would take. I don't think it is going to be any agrarian kind of a movement, but I think it would be . . .

J.B.: I am talking about contemporary populists, and my definition of that is basically blacks

P.D.: And poor whites . . .

J.B.: And poor whites or working class whites. Let's say George Wallace . . .

P.D.: I don't know anybody else that lives here.

J.B.: Right.

P.D.: 98% (?) of the people make under \$10,000 a year in this state.

J.B.: The people who voted for George Wallace in '68 forming a coalition with blacks or a segment of that group.

P.D.: Well I don't think it would be as bald a thing as that.

J.B. . . . all of them, then you would have the whole state.

P.D.: Right, except for the 42 Republicans. The reason that I just sort of hesitate to say yes because

I don't think it will be struck along those lines. You know, that we are amalgamating these kinds of people, but with proper organization it would come about that their interests would be in common. However, you know it takes time in planning and my experience is that very few people are willing to plan, that they sort of operate out of the hip pocket according to be expedient. I think that it is ready. I think that people would like it. I think that it would be interesting. I think it is possible. What happens now, in these last few elections it has been discouraging and disarming to some of the regulars, and has made them a little more open about putting the party together and trying to have a party organization, and that is that each politician in this state has a box of names, and they are his names, they are his people who give him money and lend machines and automobiles and do his political work with him. Okay, in the past those supporters had to do it twice, the first primary and the second primary, and they were sufficient. But now there is a Republican challenge almost everywhere. And they have to do it all over again. While the Republicans have been very very cautious not to have a lot of primaries, so they save everything for the one shot, their money, their organization, and their energy, and Ellis Bogman, who is a long time state senator and a very powerful one learned that lesson in the last congressional race when he

lost to Thad Cochran, the Republican. There was no reason to believe that Ellis Bogman would lose to this upstart kid that nobody ever heard of, but what happened was he was in a really bloody primary with a young legislator who would have been wonderful, and he spent all his money, and his people put all their money in. When they got to the general election, he didn't have anything to go on. If you had a political organization, then your organization would take over after your primary victory, so you wouldn't have to continue to bleed the people that you have already used up, and that you would have something more. So, it is just the logical thing to do. Of course, an awful lot depends on Wallace. Everything here and maybe in the whole Democratic party is contingent upon Wallace . . . not upon his actions, but upon the actions of the Democratic party to him. Right now I think they are pandering each other. They want those votes that he has got so badly, that they will go down there and bow and *scrape* to him in Alabama, and I think he is taking them for a ride. He is either going to make constant demands that they will not honorably be able to meet, or else he is going to leave them flat and say I've tried for four years to work with these people, and he is going to roll out all his defeats in the National Committee meeting and all the bad things that the Democrats have done, and he is going to say all you people come with me, and he will pick up some more. But I

see the people in Michigan, look at Jim O'Hara and his stand on bussing. He has done a complete about face. I think he would lead a parade across the country against bussing if anybody would start one . . . that's Michigan. So, a lot depends on him, and Charles Evers is always running over there and patting him on his head, and Johnny Ford in Tuscaloosa, Jay Cooper, he's a bad man.

J.B.: Do you think Wallace has changed?

P.D.: Heavens no. He has never said he has changed. He maintains that he always believed in freedom and justice. He doesn't know why people haven't been able to see that from the very beginning. He has never once repudiated anything he did, and he did a lot of bad stuff, and as a result of that leadership, a lot of people are dead. I know that Ted Kennedy and a lot of those would like topretend that this is a new day, and this is a new man, but really while it is quite an exaggeration. Just suppose that it were Hitler 15 years later, and you would say to the Jewish community "well look, you know, it's 15 years ago, and he really didn't mean that," you know, that is really kind of the way I feel about him. I think a lot of black people do. I do not say that he was Hitler, or equate that he was Hitler, it's the same principle operating as far as I am concerned. It will be interesting to see.

J.B.: We have heard from some people that they think that Wallace has changed.

P.D.: Oh, I know . . . we have heard . . . changed from what? . . . a standing demagogue to a sitting

demagogue.

J.B.: No they maintained that Wallace, because of being shot and the experience he has had since that time has become a more compassionate person.

P.D.: Oh, I am sure that is what people would like to believe. One would hope that something of that magnitude would have some effect, but I don't see any evidence of it. It kind of seems to me what is that Colson, you know, he would say he took Jesus as his personal savior and he just stood right up and said so. I haven't seen Wallace say anything like that.

W.D.: Have you noticed any change in the perceptions among your colleagues on the committee towards Mississippi. When you think when you talk to people around the country about Mississippi there are a whole set of stereotypes has that changed at all? (?)

P.D.: Well of course the National Committee has changed in that it got so big so there are lots of new people, and (side one of tape over.)

W.D.: You don't believe in the Mississippi Democratic party then?

P.D.: A lot of them do. A lot of them have kind of forgotten. They remembered that there was something . . . you know, kind of a fuzzy kind of thing, or they will say "how we coming along." But in general they are very supportive. You know we are sort of the symbol of all of this reform anyway, and even the people who are not too keen about later developments

feel very very pleased with having done a right, historical splendid thing. There we sit Anne and me, black and white together, year after year, you know. However, they don't always think of us now as only representing that goodness that they did. We are now, you know, what skill we have is now recognized as useful skill, by people who feel the way we do about things, and we are like other national committee members now in terms of issues and things. Every now and then something will come up and someone will come over and say "listen, if you have to vote against us for this because of your situation, I understand." We still get a little bit of that, which is very much, you know, you take what you can get and that kind of thing. We are grateful for anything that helps us be more powerful as members, but I think by in large they don't much understand now what is going on.

J.B.: Getting back to the original thing we were discussing about the problems between the regulars and the loyalists. Basically what is the loyalists position? What would it take to resolve it?

P.D.: Now, today?

J.B.: Yeah.

P.D.: I think what we would have to do is sit down and the Executive Committee. Well, the

first thing we really have to have is party registration, some sort of party enrollment, you know, we can name it something else, but that is what we have to have. Right now there is no way to protect the party, and its primaries and its organizational business, and that is a requirement of the national party. So, that is something we would insist on, some form of party enrollment. Then we need to enlarge the Executive Committee because that will make it easier for the regulars. You know most of the southern states around us have got very big parties . . . Executive Committees now. Vance, I think, has got 130 people now, we still have 25. That is not enough because if you have more, then more white people will not be ~~represented~~ by the number of black people. We would probably have some sort of interim arrangement on those committees, you know, to kind of guarantee everybody a running start flat even. Then we would go County by county, and we work on county executive committees, and we would proportion them in some way. In some cases it would be half and half in other cases it would be one way or the other maybe depending on the population or something. Just so the black people who have been loyal to the Democratic nominees . . . the Presidential nominees don't feel like they are getting sold out and wiped out and disregarded, and that could happen if it wasn't very carefully planned . . . particularly some negotiation about the national committee seats if there is some negotiation about them . . . about the state

chairmanships and that kind of thing. But it would be so simple. I mean, you know, such minor problems in the grand scale of problems, and then there are the face saving ways to make the announcement. You know, that is one of the things that is very important here. None of these politicians want to be given the credit in this decade for having put this party together. They would like it to be delivered like the Immaculate Conception or something like that. Just all of a sudden one day everybody understood and said our problem was solved, and generally this would be the way, but with no announcement of anybody. It would be something that they would not care to claim credit for, and then in ten years 47 of them would come forward as the authors but . . . really, you know, it's funny, it's such a consuming sort of interest, and yet the actual problems of it are very slight . . .

W.D.: How do you explain that Mississippi has this problem and no other state?

P.D.: Because we have had dumb racist leadership.

W.D.: Yeah. But other states have had that too.

P.D.: (Tape turned off) . . . I mean with the Cabb Junior High School or something, and he is above it all.

J.B.: How about Stennis?

P.D.: Yeah, you go to Washington and people tell you what a gentlemen he is, what a man of honor, hell, he voted just like Jim Eastland did against the Civil

Rights Act, against the Poverty Program, against the Food Program, he has never done a damn thing on behalf of anybody but his own very small group of people. You know, he is no better than Eastland as far as I am concerned. You've got Eastland who was doing his own thing. They provided no leadership at all. In '72 Stennis told us that . . . in his annual press conference, that he had voted for Hubert Humphrey in 1968 and some reporter called me up and asked me what I thought of that and I said well I expect in 1976 he will tell us who he voted for in 1972. You know, that is nothing. So you account for it that way. They didn't feel threatened that they had to take any action to protect themselves and they certainly weren't much interested in anybody else as far as, you know, dissent of the state, they just didn't do anything. You get a bunch of boobs elected, the Governor, who is going to provide the leadership? Nobody.

J.B.: How significant do you consider the election of David Vaughan? (?)

P.D.: Well, as you know, he is certainly not what we have been accustomed to, and he wants desperately to be reelected. I suppose that in his future plan what he would like to do is get Stennis's seat. You know, establish himself several terms in the House, and then be elected for that spot. However, he has forgotten John Hampton, Stennis's child, who also wants to be Senator, but in any case, I think it is pretty

significant. I am feeling rather irritated with him today with his amnesty position, but you know, I understand that he is going to try to please all the elements of his constituency at one time or another. It depends, if he gets knocked off this time or the next time, if he can make it through three terms, then we will have had something significant, or if he gets knocked off in the next three times, he will just be . . .

J.B.: Who is John Hampton Stennis? Is he a public office holder?

P.D.: Yes, he is in the legislature.

J.B.: How old is he?

P.D.: He is 40 going on 97.

J.B.: In the senate or in the house?

P.D.: I think he is in the senate. He is not a member of the . . . He's very kind and nice, slow of speech . . .

J.B.: How about Governor Waller? Isn't he perceived also as a potential contendor for that seat?

P.D.: I think he is washed up.

J.B.: How about if he suddenly comes up with a solution to the problem that we have been . . .

P.D.: (Laughing) . . . What sort of solution . . . could cross his mind. If he came up with a solution to the problem would the people elect him? No I don't think he means that much to the people yet. You know, as I have said before it is a problem concerning interest to a very limited number of people. We still

don't have an electorate keyed in enough to political organization to give a damn much one way or another. The only time that they really get involved in it is when they think they aren't going to be represented at the convention, and beyond that . . .

J.B.: Is it fair to say that there really is no Democratic party in Mississippi?

P.D.: No. It is not fair to say that at all. We've got one. It's little . . .

J.B.: Do you have one or do you have two?

P.D.: Well I don't know what theirs are or what theirs is . . . they have got something that is state-wide. It is sort of a local party, like a club . . . not really, but, you know, they do hold state-wide offices by in large, but Jim Walling . . . have you been to see him?

J.B.: No.

P.D.: He is somebody you ought to go and see.

W.D.: Yeah, John Quincy told us about him.

P.D.: Yeah, he took him in federal court . . . in Mississippi Federal Court as an expert witness, but he is certified as a political party because he can predict our vote within 1% time after time, and we have a Humphrey, we have a Evers, we have a McGovern . . . the McGovern vote was interesting too. We didn't have very much money, we had \$9,000 for the whole state-wide campaign, and we didn't have money to turn out the vote on election day. You know, car pools and things like that. An awful lot of our people are poor and a lot of black people

just didn't see any point in going to vote for McGovern . . . it was perfectly obvious that Nixon had everything sewed up. So we didn't get as big a black turn out as we had had before, but we wound up with the same percentage of the vote, and what happened was that we picked up a lot of white voters, and it just made me itchy to think what we could do with this party as it is today without the regulars if we had, you know, money and organization . . . or money enough to begin building an organization. We could probably build one from the dead start we are on right now never have to amalgamate with the regulars. Although I don't think that is a good solution. I think whether we had to or not, we ought to make the gesture and have that sort of symbollic union.

J.B.: But from the standpoint of a functioning political party that does have a regular organization, is there a Democratic party?

P.D.: If you had asked me that a few years ago, I would have said no because I was under the illusion for a long time that every state except this one had a real political organization. You know, a functioning party with all of its various parts on the organizational chart chugging away at the appropriate time. It turns out that that is not true in many places. So in terms of the national norm, yes. Where we don't, is in a place that is crucial and which is one of the most compelling reasons for making us feel like we have got to put it together with them, and that is that the

whole point of a political party is that you meet needs of the people who belong to it, and we don't do that. We are not able to deliver street lights In a sense we are, but that comes . . . well I suppose that is a bonified part of it. The more I think about politics and find out about it the more I realize that some of the things I didn't think were important really are. For instance, the propaganda effort, and like I say, there are not very many people here. So, if some one of us might go on television with a sternly stated matter of fact complaint about something there is every likelihood that some action might be taken to rectify it. You know, something that is wrong, and so you have to count, if that is a legitimate function of a political party, and I think that it is, but in the text book sense of what you are talking about, which is essentially an idea of precinct and county (break in conversation) . . .

W.D.: liberal woman, and also black.

P.D.: I don't think so. I think I'd betray the , but you know, it would cost them a lot.

That is something that we want to elect to the regulars, and that is what the committee wants and keep not getting, and they are very eager to go. I don't know, it is going to be interesting.

(The paragraph above was filled with static, a good deal of it was inaudible) . . . Charles Evers, you know, is a committee man, but he doesn't go because

he doesn't like meetings, and I think he is not to keen about being absolutely identified as a Democrat. He is having troubles with the Internal Revenue Service, and he likes to get a lot of money from Nixon. So, you know, he went to one committee meeting in between '68 and '72 and he went to the first one after the '72 convention, and that has been the end of it, but now the State Chairmen are members . . . so I don't know what they do about Charles. He has become a real problem for them because he is so well known. I don't know, it will be very interesting to see, but you know this is not my career, and it wasn't my lifes dream, but I absolutely love it now that I am doing it, and I would like to go ahead and finish it until whatever comes next . . . until this time is up. But, all of us really . . . in the top white leadership are expendable, we were from the beginning. We are something concrete to be traded off, and it suits me but I don't go around telling them that much because I want them to think they have to fight for it so when we trade we get something important that we need.

J.B.: Like what?

P.D.: You never know when you start negotiating what's going to be important, and we are not negotiating now, so we just have to wait and see how that shakes down. One point, when we met in that Hotel room with Waller, you know, the last minute thing, he offered Aaron a job as Vice-Chairman of the State party, and you

see some of those things are going to be very important. Aaron and Charlie are very important symbols to this black community. They are going to have to be counted in, but not in some kind of window dressing way, and we may really have to fight for that. Eastland told me one time . . . I talked to him on the side of the road in Sunfloo^(over)k County, he said he would never do business with Charles Evers . . . Well, he is going to have to, and he is beginning to know it now, but what that means is that we can't afford to let that which McNair *has* as the ultimate solution to take place here, and they will try it. They will try anything.

J.B.: His solution . . . I've cut it back on.
(Machine was cut off)

P.D.: I can't say anything twice . . . I should have told you that in the beginning.

J.B.: You are saying then that McNair's solution then is to pick a couple of blacks put them out front, treat them nice and they are not going to bite the hand that feeds them.

P.D.: Right.

W.D.: Let me paraphrase.

P.D.: You put that well.

J.B.: But what would happen if Aaron and Henry were . . . I mean Aaron Henry . . . that is confusing . . .

P.D.: You have Henry Aaron in the back of your mind all the time.

J.B.: It really is. If you've got Aaron Henry and Charles Evers and put them out front and treat them nice, in effect aren't you also going to have to give them a certain amount of power to treat them nice?

P.D.: Well the only way that those two men who are experienced and who have had power and who have it now, and who understand itThe only way that they could be used is to give them something substantial. I don't think it is possible for them to be bought off in any way. What I do think is possible, is that the mentality of the regulars doesn't understand that yet.

J.B.: But my question is really . . . you perceive McNair as just buying the people off?

P.D.: Well, not exactly. I think that he thought he was making accommodations that if you have got the visible leadership into your camp that the rest of the black people would mindlessly follow behind, and he seems to feel that that was a successful way to do it when he did it. Now in the first place, he did it a long time ago. In the second place, South Carolina is some kind of problem in its own in race relations even now. Although they have made what are called great strides, the fact of it is, you know, they still have got their problems there. It was a place that might very easily have been Mississippi instead of Mississippi. So he is talking about a different time and a different place. His solution would not work here. The problem with his solution in terms

of Mississippi and today is that there will probably be some people here who think they ought to give it a try. You know, who will try to do it, which will then weaken the willingness of the black leadership to deal with it. You know, if they are going to come on playing this kind of game, who needs it, we won't be bothered with them. You know, there really is a kind of a delicate little balance here. Those people from the regulars have got to come in a straight forward arms kind of way . . . not playing games. They are playing games. The black people are going to withdraw.

J.B.: Are you saying that the problem with McNair's solution is that it also was tried at the time when in effect he was in the saddle and had something to offer to accommodate somebody to bring in. Where these people, you know have in effect the blacks insofar at least Aaron Henry and Charles Evers . . .

P. D.: It's a group of people.

J.B.: But also the power relationship is different, isn't it?

P.D.: Exactly right. But even . . . suppose you didn't have Waller anymore. Suppose you got a bright . . .

J.B.: Let me ask you something about Waller? Is Waller's efforts in bringing blacks into state government having any effect on blacks in generally saying, "well he isn't such a bad fellow." If not saying he is such

fellow at least that he's somebody you can deal with.

P.D.: Well I suppose if he had brought more than one, but he uses Cleve McDowell so that was a big mistake. Cleve McDowell is on the prison board. He works in his office as some sort of a consultant to a counsellor, and he has another state job. This telegraphs an immediate message to the black community, and people don't blame Cleve for it so much. They think it is very skillful of him to get whatever he can, but it's funny, when you are talking in a group and somebody says well there is a new appointment coming up and it will probably be a black man some drawing voice in the back says "oh yeah, another job for Cleve," and everybody chuckles. Well there is not much said about it, but the understanding is that it is sort of implicit now. He has indeed put black people on any number of different boards and commissions, and in general they have not been . . . they have been from the religious and academic community among black people. They are the old people that you used to deal with, and that's alright, people are very glad that they have those jobs. They are very pleased, they think that that is a step forward. However, they don't have a lot of illusions about it. Now, you know we have an integrated Highway Patrol, and somebody was giving him credit for that, and it was pointed out that Frank Parker of the Lawyers Committee was the one that integrated the Highway Patrol in the federal court. In some sense

people understand that while he indeed is the first Governor to do this, he didn't have many options, and while everybody thinks that it is nice that he did and good for him, and at least he isn't a Ross Barnett playing that old game, he really hasn't gone out of his way. So people take it, I think in a very mature kind of way. They think it is fine, and they encourage him to go right ahead, but it is not by choice.

J.B.: To what do you attribute the fact that there is only one black in the legislature? Why aren't there more?

P.D.: Because we have at large voting and in most places white people are the majority and in most places they vote for white people. You would be surprised of the number of black people who get into run offs and then are wiped out. But every now and then there is a change. There is a woman in Greenville named Sara Johnson, and she ran for the City Council, and she got in the run off and she was absolutely trounced. Every white person in that town able to struggle to the polls voted. Then she ran again and that didn't happen. She got in the run off and she won. Part of that comes from enlightened leadership in the community, it comes from Hottings newspaper, it comes from a small community of white people that are going to say "you know, I'm going to vote for Sara Johnson, it's time black people had a representative on the city council," and they go around and work for her . . . a candidate like that and give her money, and treat her like somebody

who ought to be elected. So that happens and we do have a lot of elected officials at the local level, but in the legislature that seems to be important to people, and it is particularly important in a little rural county where you have a very small number You have to realize that almost nobody here has any money, and in those places, the people who have money have an interest in the business of the legislature. They made be in the road building business, or they may be in the milk business, and they have to look after their interests, and they are going to put their own people in there. It's a sad fact I think in the whole United States an enormous number of the state legislators are bought and paid for by some special interest, and when you have the kinds of elections we do, where it is hard to get people elected to city councils and to boards of supervisors because we have at large voting in many areas. I think it is a pity, but you know, this legislature this time has been very interesting because they started out looking like they were going to be an entirely new group of people. They had all sorts of open hearings, it was really incredible, and they did everything right right up to voting time, and then they voted almost as though it were 1965 . . . not so much on racial matters but just reactionary. You know, every reform offered practically was voted down. It is interesting. ~~People~~ ~~to go home~~. We have annual sessions now. Everybody dreads their coming,

especially the newsmen who go absolutely insane in the twelve week session. You see perfectly normal people just deteriorate before your eyes . . . exposed to all that absolute awfulness. But we have got for the first time just a handful . . . six or seven young legislators who, you know, keep trying to get open hearings for instance and tack it on to every bill, and get beaten every time, but you know just that handful and in the next two years we are going to get open meetings. So, there is hope. (Tape cut off and cut back on.) . . . In comparison to other Mississippi politicians he is absolutely dazzling. He was bright, he was courageous, he had a funny job called a State Tax Collector, I think was the name of it, and the main part of that job was to collect the black market tax for the boot leg whiskey because you know we were dry up until a few years ago, and if you were a bootlegger then you had to buy a stamp for every bottle of whiskey you imported. You know, they paid a big chunk. His salary was a percentage of that. So he got paid more than any other state officer, over \$100,000, and through the whole time that he held that position he campaigned for its abolition and had it abolished, and he probably could have held it for 20 more years and become a millionaire. You know he has great integrity in that way. He is a Presbyterian, he speaks with God like most Presbyterians do, and he ran for Governor against John L. Williamson. He got in the run off and when they announced it, you know,

he walked out of the Heidleburg Hotel onto the street into the television cameras and talked just exactly like John Delreams (?). He had decided in that length of time, from upstairs to the street, that the only way to beat John L. Williams was to try to be more than he was, which is always a mistake. But it was interesting to watch him and heartbreaking because he just burned out right there, you know, he lost his courage. He hasn't said a damned thing since then. So, I don't know. He knows it, he knows it was a terrible mistake, but he is a man of intelligence and integrity, and if he can just get some background, you know, he just might turn out to be a super good guy. There is that possibility. Although I am not sure that people having once lost him will get him back again. He's kind of the closest I can come to it is what happens to people who become College Presidents, and by the time they do, there is nothing left but that smile and the handshake, you know, and that was the state he was in. Two or three excepting including Terry Sanford I must say I have gotten to like him very well. He is very skillful and tricky besides being a nice man, and I do like a tricky person being the Chairman, even when I suffer in front of them as I do once at each meeting. (Tape cut off.) . . . Loyalists . . . while it is absorbing and certainly an important factor. The really interesting thing here is what I said before about the electorate, nobody knows how to do it. Nobody has any experience. It is

absolutely virgin territory politically. The potential is breathtaking.

J.B.: How strong are the Republicans organizationally?

P.D.: They are pretty well put together organizationally. You know, they have a thing like the electric company where you sign the little thing to your bank saying how much you want to send every month so they have an automatic amount of money coming in from the people who contribute. So they have a nice financial base, which mundane as it seems, is really always important for a political party, and they encourage their people a lot. There is a lot of ego feeding that goes on, because it is so small you can kind of pat everybody on the head. They do have a split, you know, they had a power displacement a number of years ago when Clark Reed really rested it away from Worth Urebith, bless him, he is my insurance man. But, so they do have that problem and during the Presidential campaign, the split became wider because in general one group supported Gil Carmichael and his candidacy and the other group stuck with Eastland and Nixon.

J.B.: Which group went where?

P.D.: Clark Reed's group went with John Mitchell, Eastland, Thacker, and they are the ones that put the lid on the Nixon endorsement of Carmichael. Then the optometrist and Worth Urebith who has taken a much lower position now, and there is another man, name I can't remember and it may be Jack Reed, but that may be wrong because I am very undependable about names and

and numbers, but anyway, they were the Carmichael people. So I am not sure what kind of damage that might do to them in the long run, and Clark Reed has been damaged somewhat by the housing mini-scandal, so it is hard to know, but the thing of it is that it is kind of a phony party, and it is interesting how they get black people in and that is that they select black people and approve them. So they are mostly trying to get young lawyers, young businessmen and people like that, and some of them go. You know, Clem Ward and a handful of others. The thing of it is that it is an unnatural political party in Mississippi. I mean they are set up to do everything right if there were only Democrats, but what is bothering them is the same thing that is eating those Democrats at the National level who want Wallace, and what it is they really want the regulars and the segregationists to come and swell their numbers. At the same time, they don't want to lose their power. They are a lot more sophisticated about it than Strauss and Kennedy and Scoop Jackson and that group of people in that they understand that they might indeed be jeopardizing something.

J.B.: What are the changing type of women in politics in the South, or the changing role of politics in the South?

P.D.: Both.

J.B.: Was there a role?

P.D.: Before

J.B.: There was?

P.D.: Yes, it was ornamental.

J.B.: I mean besides that role.

P.D.: And it gave the men who were in control of the votes say on things like National Committee or any other kind of committee two votes instead of one which is very useful, and that really is changing although there still is . . .

J.B.: How about the women who are on the Democratic National Committee from the South. During the time you have been on the committee has there been a change?

P.D.: Of course ~~that is the last~~, and I must say the change has been commendable from southern women.

J.B.: Is there really a change elsewhere though?

P.D.: Yes there is really a change elsewhere and there is no change in the Democratic National Committee.

J.B.: Well, what is the change elsewhere? Where is it occurring?

P.D.: It is occurring almost everywhere and what you get really are effective women politicians who campaign for their jobs and who don't owe it to some man's willingness to bestow it on them. There was a *common* thesis about women who get name *recognition* like national committees, Vice-Chairman of this.

J.B.: How are these women who are either running for office on their own and getting elected different from the other women who have run for office and gotten

elected in the South on their own. There haven't been very many of them but there aren't very many now that I see?

P.D.: Are you talking about southern women? Because I thought you meant how are the women in other states different from the way they were. Southern women are almost no different.

J.B.: That is my question, is there a change . . .

P.D.: I said there was a minimal one, and then I took it back and said there is none.

J.B.: Insofar as the national committee, but beyond the national committee, is there a changing role for women in politics in the South?

P.D.: Yeah you can see Brownie Ledbetter in Arkansas in Little Rock. She runs campaigns, she's tough, she's effective.

J.B.: But there have always been a few like that haven't there?

P.D.: Well there aren't very many now but there more than there used to be. I really do think there is a change. We haven't got time to talk about it. I wish we did because I need to be thinking about it a lot because I am going to talk in Alabama. (Break in tape.)