

Interview with Gov. Dale Bumpers, Little Rock, Arkansas, June 17, 1974,
and Walter De Vries
conducted by Jack Bass, transcript by Linda Killen.

Walter De Vries: Let me start by asking you this. Commentators and editorial writers within a few months will probably be writing about your administration, the past four years. What are they going to be saying about it?

Bumpers: I think they're going to be saying. . . . You know it's very difficult for me to answer that without answering what I hope they'll be saying, the things that I--

W.D.V.: Was going to ask you that next.

Bumpers: Yeah. The things that I consider to be relevant. And I can tell you what the more astute observers, who have really been on the scene while it was all taking place, are going to be writing. I think they're going to be first of all saying that I surrounded myself with some very capable, dedicated people. You know, the success of any administration depends on both the intelligence, the dedication and the integrity of the people you surround yourself with. Every administration that winds up getting in trouble, you find that the man who's been doing the personnel selection has, shall I say, been a poor judge of character. Or, on the other hand, they have picked people that they thought would not overshadow them or people that they thought would never constitute a political threat to them. I've done my best, even with our limited salaries, to pick the people I thought who could do the job and would do the job. Now that is sort of subjective analysis of the administration. To get down to the point, what you're asking me is what part of my administration do I think future generations will

appreciate most. I think, obviously, one is going to be the tax reform package we put through in 1971 which gives the state an opportunity to wax and wane with the economy. I've been very fortunate because the economy's been waxing since I've been governor. I don't take any credit for that. But it has and therefore the coffers of the state have waxed with it. We've been able to do so many things that I'm sure predecessors have wanted to do but simply didn't have the money to do. And secondly, that ties in with the reorganization that we made and did in fact accomplish. The reorganization of state government because two things happened. One, a reorganization in and by itself would have been very significant accomplishment simply because from an administrative standpoint, when I came in the governor had 165 department heads reporting to him. He couldn't possibly stay on top of a situation operating the government with that many people reporting to him. So what we did, we took 65 of the major departments, the big ones, and consolidated them into 13 departments. So I now have 13 people reporting to me. And of course this has given us an opportunity to implement personnel policies and other broad policies in cabinet meetings and implement those policies. Secondly, it has given the governor the opportunity to keep his mandate with the people because in the past the governor would go out and tell the people in the state what he believed, what his philosophy was and the specific things he wanted to accomplish. Only to arrive at the capital and find that these 165 people had their own ideas about what the state was doing and how it was going to be operated and what we were going to do. And in many of those instances you had virtually autonomous boards and commissions for each one of those departments. And these department heads and those boards and commissions which had this autonomy, they were making policy decisions and it may or may not

it would be a pure coincidence if it tied in with what you'd been saying and what you wanted the policy of the state to be. So when you have 13 men around a table who are responsible for about 90% of the functions of the state and you say this is going to be the policy and you have the right to hire and fire those people, they're going to be responsive. And that's the way it ought to be. They're part of the executive branch. They should be responsive to the governor because the governor is the guy who made the commitment and went out and got himself elected. And then finally. . . you can say to these people . . . you have the fiscal responsibility. Of course now when I talk about policy I'm sort of separating fiscal policy from say other policy of all kinds. But so far as fiscal policy is concerned, the governor is the one who has to sit there and either veto or sign bills on the basis of how much money we're going to have to spend. And so I sit down and go through all these 13 department budgets and I cut where I think the priorities ought to be. So that there's enough money, for example, for the medical center. And maybe some other program over here has two or three exotics programs in it that we can do without because it's not as important for example as health care. And you know when it comes to making the money fit in the pie, that's the governor's responsibility. And reorganization has, for the first time, given the governor the opportunity to see that overview so that he knows before the legislature comes in what those budgets are, what he will accept and what he cannot accept. So those are the things, the reorganization of state government coupled with the tax reform programs. See, we put a fairly stiff progressive income tax into effect. And the upper income levels now pay a significantly bigger share of income tax in this state than they used to. We took away some privileges the utilities had. Tax exemptions, which they never had any right to except they just happened

to have the political clout back in 1949 to get it. And it took just about all the power of my office to get those things repealed because they were out there fighting, scrapping, to keep them. But those two things, plus I think the significant accomplishments we have begun to make in the fields of prison reform and health care. . . to me those are the really outstanding things of this admin--

W.D.V.: What about your impact in the Democratic party?

Bumpers: You're going into politics now.

W.D.V.: I'm just trying to get an assessment, looking back.

Bumpers: I don't know how to evaluate that and I don't know what impact I have had on the Democratic party. I do believe this. I believe there have been many. . . . I think there are probably more myths that surround the profession of politics by far than any other profession. Since I've been in office I have heard and I've watched the commentators wax eloquently about all kinds of things and party politics and about politicians that are pure myths.

W.D.V.: Such as?

Bumpers: Well, for example. . . . Let's take the election I just completed. I was interested for example in saying Senator Fulbright has all the money tied up. That if the governor decides to run for the Senate, he'll find raising money very difficult because, you know, all the big money in the state's tied up. That's a myth. Nobody ever ties up all the money. Another myth is, you know, that you have to have this name and face recognition, that you'd have to run once to learn how. And secondly, this business about organization in politics. I remember hearing that. All the commentators said well, if the governor decides to run for the Senate he'd be way behind organizationally. And they write for weeks on end about this very sophisticated organization Sen Fulbright had. He didn't have any organization. Just

one of those myths that float around. For that matter, one of the-- well, I don't want to get into this. But there're a lot more. The truth of the matter is, there are so many commentators writing about what's on people's minds and they miss the mark by such a wide margin that. . . . Those are the things I consider myths. For example. . . .

J.B.: You think you shattered some of those myths?

Bumpers: I hope so. I like to think I have. I think that the more of those myths that are shattered. . . . It seems to me though. . . . The funniest thing is, they continue to crop up. In 1976 and 1978 you're going to hear all these same things said again because it's just been done for so many years. But for example, some people said well, the governor's too liberal for the people of Arkansas. This doesn't mean anything, the people of this state. You can say I'm too conservative or I'm too liberal or I'm indecisive or you can make all those subjective judgments which are made by people who, incidentally, indulge themselves in the luxury of an attitude of moral and intellectual superiority. The truth of the matter is, the people will base their judgments on specific acts of specific conduct while you're in office. They aren't looking at you, and they're not going to base their judgment of you, based on whether they think you're too liberal or too conservative or moderate or anything else. They're going to judge you based on your day to day activities. And at election time they're not going to go back and say I'm against him because of this or I'm for him because of this. It's the overall picture. And this is the reason politicians should always, in each individual case, do what he thinks is right. Even though it may be intensely unpopular and particularly unpopular with some very vocal minority group or some very vocal vested interest group. Because if he's concerned about being elected next time

he'll be admired and respected more because he did what he thought was right than he would by succumbing to small pressures. Those are some of the myths. This last one in particular, I think is important, because in southern politics right now there probably isn't 5% difference in the thinking of the people of this state and the thinking of the people in any state in the nation. I think probably Frank Sargent, the governor of Massachusetts, could come to Arkansas and be elected essentially on what he has tried to do in Massachusetts. And I think I could go to Massachusetts and be elected on the same things I talked about and did in Arkansas.

W.D.V.: So the voters in Arkansas aren't that different from other voters in the South?

Bumpers: They're not. There are some things that. . . . Well, you've seen. . . . Busing for example. You've seen a lot of the people in the North who had no feelings one way or the other about busing, right. It was unique in the South simply because the Supreme Court had made a distinction between those states that had had segregation in the past and those that had not. And for a while the South bore the brunt of that and everything was lovely in the rest of the country. But the minute the courts began to extend their orders to Michigan, for example, you heard that same hue and cry that you heard in the South. The point I'm trying to make is people are very much the same all over the nation.

W.D.V.: Is another one of the myths that if you have the backing of the county court house and the so-called organization Democrats that you automatically win in the primary?

Bumpers: There was a time, not very long ago, during the days of the poll tax, when that was not a myth. That was fact. If you had the backing of the court house crew back during the old poll tax days, you know, you were a serious candidate.

W.D.V.: But in neither of the campaigns, the three you've been in--

Bumpers: No. No, as you've said, I've never had any significant backing. As a matter of fact, in 1970, I had little or no backing.

W.D.V.: Didn't you prove in 1970 and 1974 that you could take the nomination away and quote that group?

Bumpers: Yes.

W.D.V.: So you shattered that myth.

Bumpers: Absolutely. Absolutely. But in all fairness I think it should be known that I did have. . . the county judges who have been considered usually the most powerful influence in the county court houses in Arkansas. I'd have to. . . . In all fairness I had probably 10 to 15 of the 75 county judges in my corner. But I had. . . . This was an interesting thing. Probably the most controversial, certainly one of the most controversial things that came up in 1973 in the legislature was a bill ^{which} ~~with~~ the municipal league and the organization of Arkansas counties had fought for a year to get. And it would have allocated 7% of all money that came into the state treasury to the counties and cities. I told them, when I realized that that thing had begun to move, you know, more dramatically than I thought it would and I realized that it was probably going to pass. I injected it in my inaugural address just thirty minutes before I delivered that address. And I just said, you know, we're not going to do this. We're not going to ^{destroy} ~~blow~~ the fiscal integrity of this state with such a bill. Allocating money out on a percentage basis. So we had quite a fight. And they passed it by a landslide. And I vetoed it and they were never able to override that veto even though it requires a simple majority to override a veto in Arkansas. None of that two-thirds stuff. You veto a bill and it just takes that same majority to override that it took to

pass them. But the point I'm saying is I incurred the animosity of an awful lot of so-called powerful influences in this state, namely the county judges and the mayors. You'd be amazed how many of the county judges and mayors understood, even though they wanted it, they understood the veto and were still back my friends at election time. But you're right. One of the myths about the county courthouse has been shattered.

J.B.: Was the reason the poll tax, when it was in effect, made a difference because of the electorate or because of the purchase of the poll tax in controlling the vote?

Bumpers: Yes.

J.B.: It was the latter?

Bumper: No, it was the purchase of poll taxes by some of the landed gentry in certain areas, you know, would go out and buy 2- or 3,000 poll taxes receipts. Almost in blank. Fill the names in later. And they did constitute a big bloc of votes in this state.

W.D.V.: We've asked a lot of people about your strengths and weaknesses. In fact we don't find too many weaknesses. The only one, the one you said, that you're indecisive.

Bumpers: Yes.

W.D.V.: Then we try and probe. What's the basis of his indecisiveness? Is it because he's thinking through a decision or what is it? Maybe you--

Bumpers: Two things. One is I have a long standing policy of not committing myself until I have to commit, simply because I feel that anything that might come up from the time I would otherwise make a decision and the time I had to make a decision might have caused me to see it in a different light. Might have caused me to change my mind. So as long as nobody's hurt. . . . You know, if it's a decision that needs to be

made and procrastination hurts, I make that decision. But where procrastination doesn't hurt and it gives me the opportunity to study it until the last minute to make sure that I'm making the right decision, that's the option I take. The reason for this myth of indecisiveness which is there again that's sort of amusing to me. . . . I don't find it particularly insulting or even bothersome. But some of the newspaper reporters write about that indecisiveness because, you know, I know where I am at all times and I know pretty well what I'm going to do. And incidentally the people of this state know pretty well what I'm going to do, too. It's the comfortable feeling that the people have with me as their governor which has brought me the political success I've attained. They may not know precisely what I'm going to do, but they certainly trust my judgment. And they trust me to do what I think is right. But getting back to the point. . . .

J.B.: It's just the way you approach decision making.

Bumpers: Exactly. Plus the fact. . . . There's a personality thing. You see, I have never been a _____ or a strident or impulsive type governor. For example, during four or five vetoes in the last special session. You know, each one was supposed to spell my death knell politically. In each of those cases, I never got out and made impulsive or improper remark, what I would consider improper remarks, about those people who were almost daily on television calling me every name under the shining sun. You see, most public officials will respond in kind. And I have never felt that that was in my best interest or the best interest of the state. Some legislators up there, when I vetoed the highway bill, which would have destroyed not only the constitutional integrity of our highway commission but it would have meant that roads in this state would be built by logrolling through the legislature in the future. And I alienated a good 100,000 voters in southeast Arkansas

by vetoing that bill. And I remember one legislator up there, particularly vocal, said "That man is so arrogant every time it thunders he takes a bow." But you know I never respond to those comments that legislators make and the reason I don't is because if I publicly denigrate a legislator or a group of legislators then I cut off a line of communication between him and my office. He can say what he wants to, publicly, and he can condemn me publicly, but once I do that then there's a communication been severed. It's very difficult to ever restore. As long as I don't do that publicly that man knows he can always come to my office and I can call him into my office with a perfectly clean conscience and tell him that I need his help on a bill. Quite frankly I can get it and that's the reason we get 95% of all our bills through in both sessions.

J.B.: Someone told us that you had the support of less than ten legislators in this last race. Is that true?

Bumpers: No, that's not true. But it would certainly be a minority. I didn't have the support of a majority of them.

J.B.: Why was that?

Bumpers: I really don't have the answer to that. I don't know. You know I may have to back up and give that another thought. That certainly. . . that's patently untrue that I wouldn't have had the support of more than ten. I had the support of significantly more than that. But just how many, I couldn't say. But you know. . . I honestly don't know the answer to that. One of the things probably is that local legislators are more responsive to local court house politics than the governor is.

J.B.: But wouldn't that tend to lead to another myth. If you had support, say of less than half of the legislature--they're supposed to

represent the people of this state and they were actively supporting Fulbright. It would also suggest that maybe the legislature isn't that important in some state wide races. That is, their endorsement or their support.

Bumpers: That's never been considered. . . . That wouldn't be classed as a myth in this state because that's never been considered all that essential. The support of the legislature. For example, when I ran the first time I would say in the first primary I probably had less than five legislators in the state supporting me. When I got to the run off against Orvelle Faubus. But having the support of the legislators has never been considered a very potent force in this state. There are notable exceptions to that. I can name you a half a dozen legislators who can be extremely effective for you. And I might add that most of that half dozen were for me this last time. But they're not considered, as a bloc, a powerful group. Most of them usually have opposition which sort of nullifies what effect they would have anyway. But I really don't know quite how to treat that. The reason I'm sort of equivocating on that is because I think the figures probably were wrong. I think probably it was. . . . I never sat down and tried to figure it out, but my guess would be that I had pretty good support among the legislators.

J.B.: Perhaps less than ten vocal legislators.

Bumpers: Well, I can tell you that there are a lot of legislators who are extremely vocal when the session's going on and who are for Fulbright.

W.D.V.: Could I ask you something about the Republican party? Which was really no party at all until '64 and '66 when ~~z~~ Winthrop Rockefeller won. It seems to us that what the party, what Rockefeller did in those four years was provide a ~~client?~~ climate? where somebody like you could get elected or nominated in the Democratic party. What it in effect did was reform, or maybe revitalize is a better word, the Democratic

party.

Bumper: I've said that many times.

W.D.V.: Have you?

Bumpers: Yes. I think that's the very analysis. It would have been-- Gov. Rockefeller's election was probably for the first time a repudiation of what people thought was machine politics in this state. And it was his election and his subsequent championing of a very significant reforms in the state that sort of laid the foundation that made it possible for a guy like me to be elected.

J.B.: And to do some of the things you did as governor.

Bumpers: Right. No, no. I'll back down on the last statement. Retract that. That's not necessarily true.

J.B.: I was thinking of the climate for tax reform, for reorganization, the constitutional convention.

Bumpers: No, no. The state was in terrible financial condition when I became governor. The legislature knew it and the people knew it. And the fact that Gov Rockefeller had tried to get a tax reform bill through and was unable to was simply, I think, a resentment of him by the legislature. Plus the fact that his tax proposals were totally unrealistic. He proposed a \$100 million increase back at a time when that would have been like a 40% increase in the general revenues of the state. And the state was just not prepared to accept a tax increase of that magnitude. And the legislature resented his even putting them on the spot to vote on such a thing. And when I was elected two things happened. One is the legislature and the people both knew the state was in serious financial straits. I mean we could survive, but it was in serious financial straits so far as trying to do more things for education and prison reform, medical care and all the things that we needed to do. And the other thing was. There were two things. One, the

proposal I submitted was a realistic proposal. And two, the legislature was so happy to have a Democrat back in the governor's office that they were anxious to cooperate to the fullest. That combination of things made that tax reform possible. The reorganization bill was, admittedly, an idea of Gov Rockefeller's. But there was nothing unique about it. Because in the constitutional convention in 1970, you know, this was the total approach of constitutional reform. That was reorganization of state government. And so during the campaign of 1970 I fervently championed the adoption of the constitution that was being proposed in 1970. Which carried with it essentially all of the organizational reform that we subsequently implemented by legislation. Many people thought it could not be done by legislation. They thought it had to be done constitutionally.

[Interruption on tape.]

I think the biggest impact was breaking up a very strong political power structure in the state that had dominated politics in this state for many years. That's ~~when?~~ why? I say his election gave a chance to somebody like me. It was the fact that his election, as I say, pretty well destroyed another myth. And that is that--it wasn't a myth at that time, it was real. That there was a power structure in the state who had been accustomed to naming the candidates and getting them elected.

J.B.: You talking about the utilities?

Bumpers: Well I'm talking about not necessarily the utilities. But they were people who like to dominate state politics in their respective areas. Maybe a county. Maybe a region. Maybe it was somebody who did business with the state. But it was a very significant group of them all over the state. And so he diminished their influence when he got elected. And then my election, I think, finalized that because there was nobody for me except the people. You know, I didn't have any of that.

When I ran the first time I just had none of that. Power structure or vested interest behind me.

J.B.: Wasn't that true of '74 as well?

Bumpers: Yes, essentially, in '74.

J.B.: So you managed to make the point twice, in '70 and '74?

Bumpers: I like to think I have.

J.B.: How about in so far as your '74 governor's race?

Bumpers: [Laughter.]

J.B.: [Unclear.]

Bumpers: First of all, while most people backed David Prior, that was not the reason he got elected.

J.B.: What was the reason?

Bumpers: I think it was a case of alternatives to people.

J.B.: [unclear]

Bumpers: There was a significant anti-pulse and then of course David still had a pretty good organization in tact from his senate campaign in 1972. And they were pretty effective. And. . . . I think it was that combination. I don't think it was the fact that 50 men gathered in a hotel room and decided he's our man that got him elected.

J.B.: Do you think that got other candidates out of the race, as has been alleged?

Bumpers: Unfortunately I'm afraid it did. As I say, that is unfortunate because, you know. . . . I was never confronted with anything like that in 1970 and I started out low man on the totem pole in a field of eight people. And nothing like that daunted me at all. I didn't expect their support. I knew I wouldn't get it. I knew that you concentrated on two or three of the big names and so I didn't even see it [?]. But I had hoped. . . . There again, I had hoped that in 1970, my election. . . . You know, starting out with nothing. . . . That my election would give

courage to a lot of potential candidates to, you know, go ahead and

jump in regardless of where this power structure might lie.

And it could have. . . you know. . . I think it did have the effect of scaring off a few people in the race. And it shouldn't have.

J.B.: Were you disappointed that they were scared off by that?

Bumpers: Yes.

J.B.: Why didn't you think in 1970--

Bumpers: Listen, I don't mean to denigrate anybody who ran for governor. I'm just simply saying I'm disappointed that that tactic would scare anybody off.

J.B.: Why did you think you could win in '70? When you were a complete unknown politically.

W.D.V.: Didn't you know what the conventional wisdom was in 1970?

[Laughter.]

Bumpers: Nooo. You know, you say how did I know I was going to win or why did I think I was going to win. And I'm not sure how strongly I felt that I would win in 1970.

J.B.: What were you thinking when you entered that race?

Bumpers: I thought it was going to be a wide open race between a lot of candidates some of whose names people were tired of hearing. And I thought it was a golden opportunity to bring a new face and some new thoughts into Arkansas politics. You know this state, the people in this state, have always had a great deal of pride. But they're always rather defensive about us being a rural state. We're always defensive about us being a rural state and about us being a poor state. And, that's one of the reasons, for example, that Arkansas race riots were always. . . that was always the focus of attention. Because this was someplace where we could excel. This was one place where we could com-

pete with any state in the country. We could compete with any school in the country. But on almost every other--socially, culturally and economically--people were defensive. And they didn't like that. You know, it was an uncomfortable feeling. This was sort of a subconscious thought. But I felt that they were looking for leadership who would appeal to their pride and tell them there was nothing to be defensive about. You know, first of all, God endowed this state very richly with a lot of natural resources. With a lot of natural areas. And that whether we liked it or not, sooner or later, we were going to be found by the rest of the nation. And as I say. . . . Those are the things that I talked about. I appealed to people's basic good instincts. And I had no way of knowing I was going to win, of course, but as I say, just from a purely strategic standpoint. . . . We made a little splash when I first started running and then we just started running real hard. But with eight people on the campaign we felt--and this was my own personal thought, this was my own personal strategy--such strategy as we had. It was mostly just shaking hands and meeting a lot of people and spending what little money we had on television. My own strategy was that with eight people in the race, people were not going to try to sort out those names and pick the right candidate until two or three weeks before the election. The ordinary person is not paying that much attention. And as the campaign warmed up and got down to the wire, why, that's when we began to spend what little money we had on television. So that people would have an opportunity to pick us out of the pack. And that's exactly what they did. But I can tell you, it was not all as unique as, you know, as a lot of the local and national press would like to think. It was just giving people alternatives. When you give people alternatives between two bad or two good. . . it's tough for them. But when you give them alternatives, you know, from very bad

to very good all the way up the ladder, they'll normally make the right choice. Sometimes, you know, they get fooled. But basically, they'll make the right choice. And they will respond to the right things, given the opportunity. I guess I'm a real pollyanna when it comes to talking like that because I believe that.

W.D.V.: suggested that with your election, that in the '70s, if people have a choice between a moderate--whatever that means--candidate and a strident or loud or vocal candidate, they're going to go the moderate route. . And that that will characterize the politics of the '70s.

Bumpers: It certainly will. That's a very legitimate conclusion. And I think that will be born out in 1980. I'll tell you something else. I hope that's the wave of the future past 1980.

W.D.V.: *[Then this]* suggests that the politics of race, if there ever was such a politics in this state, is dead. Or died in the '60s as a blatant, open issue.

Bumpers: Race will never be an issue in Arkansas politics again. Not with 150,000 blacks registered.

J.B.: Do you think the 35% that Faubus got this time and '70--and that's about what Wallace got too.

Bumpers: He got 37 in 1970 and he got 33 this time in the first primary.

J.B.: Well, around 35%. Is that a hard core conservative vote on the race matter?

Bumpers: No. Cause Fulbright also got it.

J.B.: What is it?

Bumpers: It's a cross section.

J.B.: It's not a bloc?

Bumpers: See some of the votes that Faubus got in this election were

anti-Prior votes, anti-labor votes. [It was not hard core or conservative.]
I'd say that 18-20% of it fell into the fairly strong conservative

. No more than that.

J.B.: As you know, some of the strongest Fulbright supporters. . . .

A certain amount of bitterness out of this campaign. Why did you decide to run for the Senate this time? We heard several theories on it.

Bumpers: Well, the theories you hear for the most part, at least from people who are , are subjective. You know, this is one of the unfortunately things about politics in this country that make it very unpleasant. And that is once you put yourself up in the limelight as a public official and you get into politics, people feel, as I said earlier, in this profession there is no loyalty [?]. The right to make any kind of subjective judgment about you that they want to. It may be phlegmatic, it may be without thought, and most of the time it is. And the only thing I resented about this campaign were those subjective judgments that were made about me by some of the strong supporters of Sen Fulbright. I never denigrated Sen Fulbright and if you go back and look, since I started running for governor, I never spent ten minutes checking under the background of an opponent. Because I want people to vote for me on what they think about me and my merits, or not vote for me because of something that they don't like about me. But I never picked up any votes. . . . In my opinion, I very seldom. . . . I don't think I've ever picked up a vote because of something I've said about my opponent. Simply because I've never talked about my opponent.

Occasionally, when they get too raunchy, I respond. But you know, there are a lot of things that I have said in this campaign and was urged to say that I didn't because it wouldn't have been in keeping with the kind character I've displayed since I've been in public office. And secondly,

I thought it would have been highly divisive and would have simply further torn people in their allegiances. I recognize that an awful lot of people in this state were very torn in this campaign. You know, there were husbands and wives who almost divorced; one would be for me and one would be for Sen Fulbright. It was that kind of a campaign. Sort of like Alabama . But the truth of the matter is my decision to run was made very late. Almost at the last minute. It was based on a number of things. One, I genuinely feel that seniority is a basic problem in this country. Two, and it's tied directly to the first, Congress is simply going to have to reorganize itself and that includes seniority. Three, there is a certain unresponsiveness that develops over a period of time. It's based on doing things the same old way. Congress cannot respond to the complexities of this society because they're trying to use 1900 decision making processes in 1974. And it just simply will not and cannot work. And finally, having been a governor, the most desperate need I saw was to diminish--not necessarily dismantle--the so-called bureaucracy but at least recognize that Washington and the Washington bureaucracy can no longer effectively control the operations of this country on a day to day basis. They don't have that kind of expertise; they don't have that kind of planning process; they're not that close to the people. I'm one that believes that conceptually the president's new federalism is imminently correct. Unfortunately he's crippled and he couldn't sell a sick hen a mess of worms. But the concept of new federalism is good. Muskie's subcommittee on governments showed that nationwide people liked that government which was closest to them. Municipal, county, state, federal. In that order. Fortunately in Arkansas, incidentally, state level in that same survey--or at least the survey of the advisory committee on intergovernment relations--showed that in Arkansas state government had the most respect

of the people in this state. This is the reason I'm saying that the federal government is going to have to abandon some of the things that they've been doing in the past and defer to the states and give the states the money to do it. There are some things, such as defense, that obviously have to be done on a national basis. But the whole spectrum of human resources and social services, land use planning, health care, education, all of those things can best be done at the local level. Until the government recognizes that it's going to have to abandon its responsibility in those fields. . . . Either abandon some of its tax gathering powers or use its tax gathering powers to return the money to the states to do those things. The states, and the cities and the counties simply must have more flexibility if they're going to operate efficiently. And the way most of the guidelines come to us now, the flexibility isn't there. Those are all the reasons. But I felt that Sen Fulbright, having been there 30 years, I felt that he had been fairly insensitive to these things. I frankly felt that Sen Fulbright had not been. . . . I'm just one of those people who never felt that he is always right. That's another myth, incidentally. You know this is something the newspapers and particularly the Gazette and some of the eastern papers tried to peddle. And I don't want to try to take anything away from those instances where Sen Fulbright has been a visionary and he has been right. But one of these things about how he's always right is certainly a myth.

J.B.: How do you think you're going to function in a legislative arena. Your basic government experience. . . .

Bumpers: Very little transition to make.

W.D.V.: Because it's the reversal of what most people do. The tendency would be go from the Congress to the executive office rather than vice

versa. How do you think you're going to be able to operate in that kind of an arena?

Bumpers: Well, I'll say this. I think it's possible. I may be wrong, but I think it's possible to be a leader in the Congress. If you work hard. And when I say work hard I'm talking about providing some options. You know, a Senator doesn't have to wait for the White House to speak on a subject in order for the Congress to address the problem. And this is one of the problems I thought that Congress had indulged itself in the past and allowed to perpetuate itself. Is that Congress is simply sitting there either shoot down or approve what the president sends over. I think that there are some national policy decisions that can and should be instituted and initiated by the Congress. They don't have to wait for the president. I'm saying that in order to do those things there has to be some Congressional leadership. My present thought as the simple method of doing that is through the party caucus. I think in many of these areas you can get the party caucus to agree on certain policy and design the legislation. I'd like to stay in close touch with the governors as a Senator. Last year the national governors conference drafted the manpower legislation bill and they drafted most of the social services legislation. Incidentally, Fritz Mondale, some of them asked us to do this, because they recognize we're the ones out here having to deal with these problems. And we did it, through out staffs. You know, then they finally ruin it after we get it up there and get it introduced, you know, and it gets amended and we get some of the rules put on it that just make the same inflexibility back in it.

W.D.V.: If this were 1980 and we're sitting in your Senate office in Washington or the office of the vice president, whatever, and looking back over the last six years. What would you say then that you wanted or

hoped to have accomplished in that time. We're trying to--

Bumpers: That's the best question you've asked today. Because. . . . First of all, if I look back in 1980 and find that I have not been as effective as I had hoped to be and that the country is not in a more stable condition economically and spiritually than it is right now, I strongly suspect that I would be willing to leave. . . you know, that I would want to gracefully exit. There are people, for example, who'd like to stay in the governor's office forever. That has no appeal to me. For a number of reasons. One is, it's very hard work and intense pressure. You know, you're making administrative decisions that affect thousands of people's lives every day. And while I don't mind doing that, I know that you can only be effective over a certain period of time. Any job carries with it the possibility that you're going to grow tired and you're going to grow ineffective because there's a lethargy sets in after a certain period of time. And I might add that this is one of the things I suspect is happening in Congress, too.

J.B.: What would you have--

Bumpers: To answer your question, I would hope to have accomplished some of this dismantling of the bureaucracy that we talked about a moment ago. I would hope, through that process, to have reestablished people's faith in the political system and some of it's institutions. Namely, Congress. You know, the real danger in this country

[End of side of tape.]

stems from a lack of confidence in the way the system is functioning. And it is at an all time low, a dangerous low right now. That in turn stems from people feeling that they're not being treated fairly. For example, if you ask a barber or a man who operates a service station or a welder out on a job. . . you know, you ask him about Watergate. He may not understand the meaning of obstruction of justice and conspiracy

but he understands that the president paid no income tax on a half a million dollars of income. And he understands that that's grossly inequitable because he is making \$10- or 15,000 a year and paying a pretty significant portion of it in income tax. Now those are the things which lead to this low confidence level. And therefore, if I was going to look back six years from now, one, I'd like to think that I had been able to at least initiate or help in removing some of those inequities that cause people to lose confidence in the system and those who operate it. And two, that I had been able to further help rekindle people's faith in government by bringing government closer to them, by bringing the money back to the state and local governments.

J.B.: Are you concerned with what some people consider to be a lack of openness in government at the federal level?

Bumpers: Yes.

J.B.: [Deceptive?] secrecy?

Bumpers: Yes. I think there's always the possibility and the temptation to overreact to that criticism, but I do feel that--

W.D.V.: If those are your goals, if the opportunity for a vice presidential or presidential nomination came, wouldn't that be one of the best ways to fulfill those goals?

Bumpers: You know, the one thing that you cannot sell oftentimes in politics, or a politician can't sell, is the truth. I'm not flattered by all the talk about the vice presidency. I think it would be presumptuous to talk about it in the first place. And secondly, I think it's hypocrisy to say that you'd shove down the options, that you'd accept the presidency or the vice presidency. But, you know, I answered this question for the national press. I'm going to Washington today and inbetween now and tomorrow night I'll have to discuss that no less than twenty times with every commentator that comes up to talk to me

about it. And frankly I don't quite know how you discuss something like that. If I ever decided to make a move to capture the presidency or the vice presidency I would probably announce it loudly and clearly and I would go after it. But I can tell you that right now it has no attraction. I'm not attracted by the idea.

W.D.V.: What about the Democratic party nationally or in the South. If you were looking back six years what would you want to be able to say about it?

Bumpers: I'd like to be able to say that the South has rejoined the national Democratic party. And I think it will.

J.B.: What do you think would be the best strategy for the national Democratic party in regards to George Wallace? In 1976.

Bumpers: To treat him like they would any other candidate. After all, this is a democratic system, it's a representative form of government. And for the national Democratic party, which is essentially the national Democratic committee, between elections, to say that we are or are not going to treat George Wallace in a certain way, I think would be a serious mistake. I think they would to accept him and treat him as they would anybody else. There's a 10-15% strong, very vocal minority in the Democratic party that would like to read George Wallace out of the party once and for all. But, you know, that's like some fellow deciding on the front end who's a presidential nominee that he's going to ride the [saddle?] off the front end. I can tell you categorically that any candidate who in the future says that I'm writing off 150 electoral votes on the front end is going to have a difficult if not impossible time being elected president. And I think it would be the height of folly for the national Democrats to write George Wallace off. He has a constituency; he has a philosophy that a lot of people identify with. And whatever he's able to do with it, let him do with it. But

to judge him ideologically and subjectively is a mistake. Treat him the same as they would any other kind of candidate who avows himself to be a candidate seeking the presidency. Is the only way to treat him.

J.B.: I want to ask you one other question about your decision to enter the Senate race.

Bumpers: We're going to have to terminate. . .

J.B.: This is the last question. One of the stories that we hear is that one of the reasons you entered that race was that the polls showed early that Sen Fulbright was very weak, that Gov Faubus was seriously considering the race and that you felt that it would be unfortunate for the state if Gov Faubus became US Senator and you felt there was a very real chance that might happen.

Bumpers: You know that's a question I really, I don't want to get in to.

W.D.V.: Let me ask one final question. We're doing a book on the South. The premise or assertion is that it is different than the rest of the country, politically and governmentally and so on. In your period of experience with the national government, Congress and other, around the country, are there any basic differences between the South and other regions of the country?

Bumpers: There's probably 5% difference in a number of people who would still be considered very conservative as opposed to the rest of the nation. But, you know, television and modern transportation has eliminated virtually all of that, the last vestige of those differences except. . . . There are still certain things that are the result of our geography and of our culture that still exist. And some of it I hope always will. When people say do you consider yourself a spokesman for the New South, I always say "Well, I don't like to use the term New South. I like to use the emerging South or the maturing South when

I'm talking about economically and socially. But I never say New South because when you say New South you're sort of, by implication, saying we've abandoned the Old South. And there are a lot of things about the Old South that are worth keeping. The rural nature of the South for example. The intense concern of one person for another at the local level which has always been in existence in the South."

Those are good traditions which I hope we never abandon. But philosophically and politically the South is very much like the rest of the nation. Even George McGovern got as many votes in Arkansas as he got in a lot of other states out of the South.

J.B.: Would you mind elaborating just a little bit on what you see as the emerging South?

Bumpers: Yes. When I say the emerging South, I'm talking about socially and economically. Socially, the blacks in the South are probably as well off right now. . . . Certainly educationally they're better off in the South than they are in many sections of the country. And the South will begin to bear the fruit of their education of the blacks.

They're already beginning to reap the benefits of educating blacks.

And two, economically the South is rapidly becoming as viable as any other section of the country. The beautiful thing about the South is, you see, we have developed late, industrially. And it's my hope that we're going to be able, before we industrialize much further. . . .

One, you know we can be selective. We're trying to be selective in Arkansas right now. We're not inviting just anybody and everybody to come into this state that wants to come. As a matter of fact I'm not inviting just people into this state. Population growth is not one of the goals I've sought since I've been governor. We've increased our population by 6% in the last two years. And that's a little disturbing to me because that creates special problems and particularly in certain

areas. But this is true all over the South. People are coming here because of a sort of different life style. I'm referring specifically to Arkansas. There is a leisurely life style. There's a strong work ethic in this state, but we have a leisurely, slow life style that is very appealing to people who come from metropolitan, urban areas in the midwest and the northeast. And they are coming here in great numbers. Industrially, they are coming for the same reasons. One, the South economically isn't past the point where there're good markets for their products in the South now. Levi Straus for example just located one of their biggest distribution centers in the United States in Little Rock because they can reach all the markets in the South and Southwest from here. And of course this adds to the economic growth of the state. So economically, last year for example, Arkansas had a 17% increase in the percentage of its per capita income. The highest in the nation. I haven't checked the other states in the South, but I expect you'll find that probably Georgia, Florida and maybe South Carolina were probably right in there pretty close to Arkansas as having tremendous increases in their percentage of per capita income growth. So what I'm saying is, the emerging South still has an opportunity to avoid a lot of pitfalls. And if we will take advantage of the experience that states such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania and California had, we can maintain this rich natural heritage that we have and still accommodate our own people as well as those who come here. And accommodate them with the same life style that we have enjoyed in the past and hope we'll enjoy in the future. Land use planning has more benefits for the South than it does any other section of the country, because we have more land left to preserve. We're the last real frontier so far as land is concerned.

J.B.: Would you just extend your comments just to the politics of this

emerging South. As you see it. And that's the last question, I promise.

Bumpers: It's difficult for me to say what effect that's going to have on politics in Arkansas and the South. But my guess is that you're going to see. . . . And of course, you know that the fact that you hear my name mentioned quite frequently and Ruben Asquew and Jimmy Carter, for example, on the national ticket in 1976. . . . That in itself is something sort of new, you know, just in the last three or four years. That you've heard that sort of thing being mentioned. And I always felt the eastern press, they knew Arkansas was one of the 50 states, that it was out there somewhere. And frankly that's still pretty much the way it is. And I don't overestimate what's happening in the South in the eyes of the rest of the nation. But I'm here in it and I know what's happening. The point is, it's probably going to make the South, the South like the blacks, are going to be a factor to be dealt with in national politics in the future. And I think the Democratic party for one recognizes that.

J.B.: Do you see election of more progressives? Is this the trend?

Bumpers: Yes, I think the trend is definitely--

J.B.: South *wide* as well as Arkansas?

Bumpers: Yes, I think the trend has been set by people such as Carter and Asquew and the rest and myself. And I think it's going to continue because I think the people identify with it and they like it. They see the benefits that have accrued to their states from it and they want to continue it.

[End of interview.]