

Interview with Professor Richard Murray, University of Houston, political scientist, December 16, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter de Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Murray: -- normally should expect to win it. The Republican party has become competitive in Senatorial elections. Has approached competitiveness in gubernatorial elections. Their normal vote should probably be about forty to forty-five percent. Of course that's very different from the situation in 1948 or so. The Republican party though has not achieved competitiveness in legislative politics and doesn't reasonably expect to do so I think in the twentieth century. The rural small towns here in Texas have remained solidly Democratic in local, political races. Pretty much anything below the governor. So that we still have a very strong degree of one partyism in the state. This is probably the one party state in the [entire] South, without any question, I think. I don't know how it would rate on a competitive scale nationally, but probably would be about fifth from the bottom of the list. Most of the Republican party gains had occurred by the mid 'sixties. The party's made limited headway since '64, '66. The other gross trend, besides the fact the Republican party has moved up a couple of significant levels since Key looked at Texas is that the factionalism that Key identified as emerging in Texas with the conservative-liberal split did become the predominant feature in the state's politics through

the fifties and 'sixties. It looks to be now perhaps on the wane.

Walter de Vries: Is it going to be replaced by something else?

Murray: I don't know. Maybe the politics of personality. But it's getting a little more difficult within the Democratic party to identify the divisions. It would be something of a mistake to interpret the '74 Briscoe-Farenthold race along liberal-conservative lines. Or even the '72 race. Although they were superficially labelled the conservative and the liberal. I think an important factor that's happening here in this state is that beyond Briscoe there is no state-wide conservative leader of note and there are no state-wide liberal leaders of note. All the Democrats in line for positions of authority in this state are moderates and not closely identified with either faction. The defeat of Wayne Connally in 1972 for lieutenant governor was probably a very significant election in this state. Because it cut off the obvious heir apparent to pull together the conservative Democratic factional forces. Bentsen, who started off of course in his 1970 [race] against Yarborough as a strongly identified conservative, has probably, because of his national political interest, very clearly moved to the center and is not a traditional factional conservative Democrat in any sense. I think the Republican party has moved up so that it is competitive in a number of state-wide elections and is very strong in metropolitan areas. Figures to continue to be so. It's going to have difficulty enlarging its position. The Democrats are probably going to be a somewhat more unified party in the future.

Jack Bass: Does that mean the politics of moderation? Sort of

moderately progressive candidates winning?

Murray: Just moderates. I don't know how progressive. I guess in part the rising Republican challenge has tended to drive the Democrats a little more together. I would not underestimate the role of personalities here, that are involved here.

J.B.: Personality would be more of a force as to which of the moderates win rather than a distinction between actual issue oriented positions, won't it? What's the difference between Hill and Hobby? Everybody tells us Hobby will get the conservative support and Hill will get more the liberal support, but really there's not much difference.

Murray: Lot of difference in I.Q. probably. But beyond that, I don't know. I think it's a little misleading to say Hobby would be the conservative candidate. A lot of conservatives here in Houston hate him, for example. Because of his association with the Houston Post and involvement in local school board politics and other things where he was on the opposite side of the fence.

J.B.: What was his background on that? I'm just not familiar with it.

Murray: The Post was a leading critic here in the 'sixties of the conservative dominated school board. And in this town school politics was a red hot, hard fought political issue from the 'fifties on. It got a deep dose of right wing ideology infused in the conservative faction that organized the school politics here. The Citizens for Sound American Education. Very conservative group.

J.B.: That was Nancy Palm's group?

Murray: Well, she was more or less on the periphery. They weren't

aligned with the Republican party. There was some overlap there. But they had a strong Birch element within the movement and very, very strongly segregationist. And the Post more or less took them on and helped eventually defeat them in the late 'sixties. So a lot of the local fairly well on conservatives have very little good to say about Bill Hobby. They consider him not only to be dumb but also dangerous from their perspective. It would be really an oversimplification I think to think, if Hill and Hobby run, that Hobby would be the conservative and Hill the liberal. For one thing, Hobby has been--partly because of his newspaper background and positions on the school issues--very successful in courting black support. He had about 95 percent of the black vote against Wayne Connally in '72. I doubt if he's going to want to write off the blacks. Traditionally in this state they're the most solid liberal voting element. Typically, in a state-wide race, if there's a clear liberal-conservative split the blacks will vote 92, 94 percent or 98 percent sometimes for the liberal. Which is really an astounding primary vote when you don't have party labels to help out. I would have to reserve judgment on whether the '78 race would break along liberal-conservative lines. I think it would just be more a contest of personality if Hobby and Hill are the leading Democratic contenders. The liberals have had real problems of recruiting significant state-wide leaders.

J.B.: Is <sup>Bullitt</sup> Bullitt perceived as more of a maverick than a liberal?

Murray: Sure, certainly. I mean he is very lately come to, around to a position where he has worked with liberals. Just in the last year or two. He started off as an east Texas, very segregationist



state legislator. And more recently he was the hatchet man for Preston Smith, who was certainly no liberal. But Bullock has been willing to take on establishment Democrats sometimes. He was a real prick with respect to Ben Barnes. He just kept jabbing Barnes. He's hard to type now. I don't know if he has much of a political future in the state. He has some health problems. Seems to me there are some real heavy weights in the party--

W.D.V.:

Murray: They're in a kind of second rank. If I were categorizing the Democratic leaders Hill and Hobby are, beyond Briscoe, the most significant. In the second echelon I would think perhaps Price Daniel, Junior, who, although [he gave up] the speakership, has a great name and will remain active in Texas politics and has a kind of good government image and a lot of support from middle class, Common Cause reform oriented types. So he could be a factor in the future. Barefoot Sanders, who ran the '72 Senate race against John Tower, is still around, still ambitious. I think Armstrong and Bullock, White would be in the third group. Not likely to move much beyond the position that they are presently in. You know, we have such a scarcity of high level offices here. Those two Senate seats. Bentsen's unbeatable if he chooses to remain in the Senate. Tower is proving a lot more difficult to defeat than most thought.

J.B.: But Price Daniel, Jr., because of his name, record and age, is still perceived as a force. . . .

Murray: He's politically ambitious. His wife is getting a

divorce now primarily because of his long-term political ambitions. He's just not willing to go back to Liberty, Texas, and become a lawyer.

J.B.: Is he practicing there in Liberty?

Murray: He practiced a little law, but hell, he was elected to the legislature when he was 26 I think.

J.B.: What's he going now?

Murray: Well, he's speaker of the house right now. Which is a very powerful position in this state. He's leaving the position in January because he didn't run for re-election. He was a reform speaker, elected on, among other pledges, that he would be a one-term speaker. Texas has had this tradition, up through Sam Rayburn or so. Then it was breached with two term speakers. In the 'sixties we got Mutchler, who apparently wanted to be speaker for life. And Daniel tried to break that tradition. But Price is what, 33 I guess. So he's got plenty of time. 33 or 34. He would like to run probably for attorney general. Possibly for lieutenant governor. If one of those positions opens up. I doubt if he would run for governor or the United States Senate in '78. The Republicans, of course, have terrific leadership problems within the state. Steelman looks impressive as a future party leader here. Particularly the fact he was able to hold his Congressional district after it had been redrawn to include significantly larger numbers of Democratic voters. But I take it that Grover's finished as a party leader.

J.B.: Would Grover have gotten elected if he'd gotten strong support from Tower and Nixon?

Murray: I don't know. It might have been really close if that had been the case. I think he pretty well got most of his potential vote. The thing that made the race close was the fact that pulled off a significant number of votes from Briscoe. I have some tables we worked up from the '72 election.

[Interruption.]

J.B.: -- contention that it was the failure of Tower and Nixon to support Grover is a gross oversimplification?

Murray: Well, it probably hurt him a little, but whether it would have made a 100,000 vote difference. In '68 the Democrats carried the heavily Spanish surname areas by about 104,000 votes. With about 460,000 voting. In '72, with 550,000 voting, their margin fell to 79,000. And almost all of these Raza Unida votes would either have been no votes or Democratic votes. They would not have voted for Grover. Grover got virtually no votes in those counties from chicanos. So the strong race by Muniz, which of course is in some ways connected with Grover since a good many Republicans put money into Muniz's campaign to make him a competitive factor, pulled Briscoe's margin down to where it was actually a pretty close race. Maybe if more money had been funnelled in to Muniz earlier that might have made a difference. Because Ramsey, outside of Austin, didn't get much support from liberals. And that's usually been critical for a Republican to win. The reason he didn't get it They weren't willing to jump the party traces the way they did in '61 when they either didn't work or in '66--

J.B.: What kind of a guy was Grover? I really know nothing about Grover.

Murray: He was a former conservative Democrat. He wanted to be speaker of the house. He was very unhappy when the position suddenly opened up in '64 and Ben Barnes, with Connally's help, was elected as speaker. The next year he did a little calculating here in Harris county and figured out he could run as a Republican for the state senate and almost surely win. And he did just that. He switched parties and won easily. Was re-elected and re-elected. He never got along well with Tower and the state-wide party officials. Donald, primarily. So he was something of a maverick. He was more or less representative of this insurgent faction within the Republican party that's strongest base has been the Palm Republicans here in Houston. But they have considerable strength in other areas of the state. The Permian base in Midland, Odessa, Amarillo, Beaumont, the valley. Areas where there was a core of hard-line conservative Republicans who thought that the Tower-O'Donnall people were a) too inclined to be pragmatic about things and b) not really interested in building a strong state Republican party but interested in protecting Tower and his Washington connection. Of course in '72 the insurgents got control.

J.B.: Is that view they have of Tower an accurate one?

Murray: I think Tower is a fairly typical American politician. He's first concerned about his own skin and second about his party. He has not worked very hard to build a strong state Republican party. And I think in part because that would probably be detrimental to his

interest. For one thing, it would create more competition for position of leadership within the state. Since he's the only major state elected official who is a Republican.

J.B.: And two, it would also energize the opposition.

Murray: Right. It would create a situation where it would make it more difficult for Tower perhaps to appeal to some disaffected Democrats when he himself comes up for election. So he's, you know, not really worked very hard at putting the party together. I think some of the criticisms that Ms Palm and other people in the party have made of him are fairly accurate.

W.D.V.: What's your comment about the Republican state chairman's assertion that the party really isn't that bad off after 1974 and might be better off than the rest of the Republican parties in the South?

Murray: Well, they didn't suffer as badly here as they did in some states. I tend to think that the governor's race was a little misleading. Briscoe was such a new governor. He's only been in about 19 months or whatever it was. He hasn't really done much. He's been blessed with a lot of money that's suddenly materialized. So it's very difficult to run against him and he's terribly strong with rural conservatives. And the Republicans could only get a fair hunk of the vote there. So Granberry just never had a chance in that race. The party held pretty much what it had in the legislature and lost one Congressional seat. So, they didn't suffer much from the national Democratic sweep. But the problem with the Republicans, it seems to me, is hell,

they're no further along than they were ten years ago. They are internally divided. They don't have any natural party leaders to turn to. I think, in retrospect, a critical election for the Republican party was 1970. Bush epitomized, it seems to me, the alternative strategy that has been pursued in a number of peripheral South states with success. Where a Republican makes appeal to the normally Democratic segments of the electorate and picks up enough support from those to win. Bush, for example, cultivated blacks, browns, worked hard to establish a moderate image. And I think was the strongest Republican electorally in Texas by far. I think he's a lot stronger candidate than Tower. But hell, in '64 when he ran for the Senate, he wasn't too well known then, didn't have a local base. He was the county chairman here in Harris county. Never held elective office before. And he ran into the Johnson landslide. He got beat pretty badly. But he ran a hell of a lot better than Goldwater did. In '70, everything looked great. He set up to take on Yarborough. And Ralph starts with 35 percent against him. So all you have got to do is pick up 15 or 16 percent. But you know, then Bentsen comes out of nowhere. Wins the primary. At first Bush thought that was fine. But it turned out Bentsen was just a hell of a lot tougher than anybody estimated. He was well financed and he had some things going for him. '70 was a good Democratic year again. And there was a liquor by the drink proposition here on the ballot that really got out the rural, small town vote. And that killed Bush. Bentsen swamped him in these small counties in east Texas and north central. And there was very heavy turn out in that election. Much heavier than a normal off year



Senatorial election. So Bush was defeated. And since he's always been interested in going to Washington, too, and not in running for governor or building a particularly strong state party, he sort of drifted out of state politics. Of course now he's completely out. But I think if Bush, making the kind of moderate appeal, trying to pick up significant support from blacks and browns, had won, the Republican party might have broken out of this. . . the restraints that it seems to be presently hindered by. And that is, hell, it only appeals to white, middle class or conservative voters. In this state, with two large minorities, if you write those off you've got to get five out of every eight votes from there on. About 20 percent of the electorate in most elections are black or brown. And that was Grover's position. He explicitly stated at the beginning of the campaign, I don't want black or brown votes. Those people are liberals and I'm a conservative. You admire his candor, but. . .

W.D.V.: Not his strategy.

Murray: Yeah. It worked. I mean he didn't get any black or brown votes.

W.D.V.: It would be your observation that Harris county is the best organized county both in terms of Republicans and Democrats in the state?

Murray: It's not terribly well organized by the Democrats. Republicans are well organized here, yes. I don't really know enough about the inner workings of Dallas county. Dallas is a more conservative county. There are fewer blacks and far fewer browns there. So that the Republican vote looks better out of Dallas county. Because

they just have a more favorable constituency to work with and very little organized labor, too. So, you know, Dallas county outperforms Harris for the Republican party. But my top of the head impression is that probably the local Palm organization is the best.

W.D.V.: Is that how you explain the election of the county judge?

Murray: One of two or three things. The incumbent had had a number of problems. He'd been involved in a fracas, lawsuits were filed over a year or two ago. Then there was an extensive grand jury investigation and things kept leaking and people were saying the county judge is going to be indicted and so forth. He wasn't indicted, but the grand jury did issue a report a couple of months before the election saying that there had been undue use of influence by friends of the judge. His reputation was certainly stained. He did nothing to counter this. He just more or less counted on the Democratic sweep carrying him in. He only raised \$15,000 when, if he had hustled, he could raise \$150,000 or \$200,000 and mounted an effective PR campaign to soften some of these negatives. But he didn't do anything. And the electorate. There is a large element of the electorate in this county that is a swing vote. Ticket splitting that you're sure very familiar with. A hell of a lot of people here, while they were voting Democratic, did cross over and vote against Elliott. So the county judge's own ineptitude hurt him a lot. And then the fact that the Republicans were well organized and did work hard for Lindsey. The organization put its effort behind him. They didn't have much money but they did have some. And they gave most of it to Lindsey. They worked hard for him and pulled it out for him. The turn out in their precincts was pretty good. It's 36, 38, 40 percent.

In the Democratic precincts it was 20, 22, 24. So I would rate first Elliott's ineptitude in the campaign. He had soured on the office. He had reached the point of so the public be damned. If they didn't recognize a good public servant he wasn't going to work too hard to change their minds. Secondly the organizational factor that got the turn out up. But the local Republican is impressive. Of course it's confined to about 200 precincts out of the 450 in the county. There are 100 ethnic precincts here where there's virtually no Republican vote. There are about 150 other precincts that either are rural or heavily labor or elderly that the Republicans just don't have organized. But west of Mainstreet, they have quite a formidable organization. They drained off all the activists from the conservative Democrats. That's why the conservative Democrats here are toothless. They're just dead. They don't have any workers. All the dedicated conservatives here that work in campaigns have gone into the Republican party.

J.B.: So has there been a political realignment in Harris county?

Murray: Oh sure. Here there's nothing but liberal-moderate Democrats and Republicans.

J.B.: How much of a factor has single member districts been in that?

Murray: It helped. It helped a lot. Because if you're

with Texas politics, the conservative Democrats worked this double switch. In the primary, they appeal for Republican voters who don't vote in the Republican primary because that primary draws virtually no participation. To come over in the Democratic primary and help them defeat the liberals. And then in November they want the normally

Democratic vote, much of which went to the liberals, the primary, to switch and vote for the conservative Democrat and to defeat the Republicans. We worked on a table with some of the precincts in Houston and Dallas showing how this switch works. Here you can see the primary vote is not a good predictor at all for Briscoe of his November vote. The precincts he carries in the primary, he loses in November because of the flip flop that occurs. But this flip flop doesn't work well unless you have a large, have large electoral units that have a lot of conservative and a lot of ethnics, liberal voters. When you get single member districts, you get much more homogeneous districts and there's no possibility for working the double switch. And that's what's happened here in Harris county. Almost every district, when you draw them for 75,000 people for house districts, is either going to be Republican or liberal Democratic.

J.B.: What's the status of these other multi-member house districts? It's in federal court, right?

Murray: Right. There was an order requiring single member districts throughout the state. But that order was stayed. There's a good chance, I think, the legislature in '75 will go ahead and redistrict itself into single member districts just to retain control of the process. The impact would probably be greatest in Tarrant county. That's Ft. Worth, which is a huge single member district, multi-member district. Has 750,000 people in it. If required single member districts becomes a uniform fact here, the Republicans will pick up five or six more seats in the house. That would give them 22, 24, 26 maybe in a good year. And probably the ethnics will pick up two or three more seats than they presently hold.

W.D.V.: You don't see that alignment changing much between now and the end of the century?

Murray: Not very much. The Republicans are so far from becoming competitive in the 35 or 40 rural districts of the state, excepting the panhandle and a district or two around San Antonio, the German hill country, that it's just very difficult to foresee them breaking through. Everybody who is young and politically ambitious there, runs in the Democratic primary. The court house gangs are solidly Democratic. There isn't a Republican office holder sometimes within a hundred miles. The court house gangs particularly in those small counties want those counties to stay uniformly Democratic. Hell, most of those guys never have a challenge.

J.B.: So they stay solidly behind the state-wide Democratic candidates?

Murray: Well, if they don't like the state-wide Democratic candidates, they'll defect or won't work very hard for them. But boy, at the local level, they don't want local Republicans. It's certainly all right to vote for Republicans for president. That's fine. Whether the court house gang supports the Democratic nominee or not depends very much on the given election. They certainly didn't in '72. In governor, they're usually going to go with the Democrat. That's one reason the Republicans haven't won. But below governor, they're solidly Democratic. And they will work for the local Democratic nominees. Breaking through is going to be very tough there. Sharpstown was the biggest scandal this state's seen. But it's gone, it's washed out. And it didn't produce any substantial realignment. All the real fighting took place

within the Democratic primary. And it finished off the career of Ben Barnes, who looked like the rising star.

W.D.V.: It did produce the election of a new group of state-wide officers.

Murray: Yeah, it did. But all Democrats.

W.D.V.: You got some legislation in '73.

Murray: Right. And we'll probably pull back a little from that in '75. There's been some criticism of this.

W.D.V.: But now the effect of that's over?

Murray: Yeah, Sharpstown is gone as a political issue in Texas. There's no mileage in it.

J.B.: Has it effected the style of Texas politics substantially?

Murray: It's probably made this long time connection between the corporate establishment and the conservative Democratic faction a little less close. Because there are obviously great political dangers now of any kind of obvious conflict of interest.

W.D.V.: But is that connection still there? Let me go back. In the 'fifties and the 'sixties, would that group have pretty well decided who the nominee would be for a state-wide office? Particularly governor.

Murray: Yeah, you know, every gubernatorial nominee that the Democrats have won has been backed by a substantial conservative element.

W.D.V.: Some say that now what's happened is that they have a veto over that but they don't any more. . . . If they decide to defeat you, or to veto it, they could do it.

Murray: Well, there isn't any tightly organized conservative faction in the state. Like Smith, who was a conservative, and Connally,



who was a conservative, drew their support from quite different elements. It's a fairly loosely defined. There have been a lot of internal tensions. Within a community it might be reasonably well organized. Dallas has a very well organized conservative community that can swing support to candidates. Houston less well organized. The old Johnson organization, as I understand, is pretty well gone now. The personal contacts with county judges and influentials scattered all over the state that Johnson put together and then that Connally used is fairly well dissipated. There's really no comparable state-wide organization today within the Democratic party. Briscoe's leadership is very, very thin. I mean he just doesn't work at it. He's got a few people around him that he deals through. But in '76 he won't be much of a factor say in presidential politics. He has no base in the party. He won primarily because he had a hell of a lot of money. He spent a million in '68. He didn't win, but he got name identification and built something of a political base. In '72, spent a couple of million more and things broke very fortunate for him.

W.D.V.: Is that one of the keys to success in Texas politics? The amount of money you can spend on the election?

Murray: Well, it's such a big state. 22, 24 television markets here. You've got to have money usually. Or else start off being sectionally well known. Like Price Daniel, Jr. Inherited probably about a half million dollar name in the state. But you can spend two million so easily in this state just really to get a decent campaign going. Briscoe was not able to raise money. He's never been able to raise money. He's always had to spend his own. But he's got enough of it there to do

so. To whatever level seems necessary. And raising money here is getting to be tougher. This is one of the long-term problems we face. These new disclosure laws within the state are pretty tough. Like this year Briscoe could raise nothing. He was a cinch winner, but he still couldn't raise any money. So he had to dig into his own pocket again. He had a big fundraiser, but Farenthold tied up the proceeds and could not get to it. He's still in court over that one. You might have seen some of the stories in the press. Probably will be resolved in the next month or two.

J.B.: What campaigns have you specifically worked in?

Murray: As a full scale consultant I've only worked in local campaigns. I've done polling for Briscoe and Sanders in state-wide races, but only in the southeast Texas area. About 25 percent of the electorate. They've had major polling efforts going state-wide, but they wanted more specific information on this particular region. I worked for a lot of local candidates doing polling. Jordan. Several other Congressional candidates. A number of them unsuccessful like Hackleman, who ran against Casey in the spring primary. Judge candidates, so forth. Pretty low level stuff.

J.B.: State-wide, is Texas becoming more conservative? Is it moving to the right? Is it moving to the left? Becoming more moderate?

Murray: It's hard to say whether it's becoming more liberal or conservative. I think elections here are getting more difficult to predict. The number of voters who will switch from election to election is increasing in the state. It's a very large number certainly in presi-

dential elections. It's getting to be larger even in governor's elections, although the Democrats have started with a very substantial advantage. My top of the head guess is that Republicans here start with a sure 30 percent in a gubernatorial election. And the Democrat with something between 40 and 45 percent. Forty-five if there's no Raza Unida factor. So the Republicans have to get virtually all the swing vote. I think that swing vote is growing. Party I.D. is declining. Or the Democrats have declined and the Republicans are holding steady at about 15 percent within this state. I think Bush's poll showed it was 16 percent Republican, 49 Democrat and 35 independent in '70. In '72 Briscoe's polling showed that the Democratic identification was down four points, or something like that. The Republicans are staying at about the same level. Somewhere in the teens. Most of those independents are certainly presidential Republicans though. The Republican party could bounce back quickly here if it could find some forces to make the right kinds of political appeals. I just don't see anybody on the horizon, though, that could do this. So I think we're going to remain a state where the Democratic party is still the major vehicle for achieving political prominence. It's not much of a party. It's not well organized. As a party it doesn't do much. But it's the way to power within the state.

J.B.: Does big wealth dominate Texas politics on basic decision-making?

Murray: Most of the people, I think, who are wealthy in Texas or corporations aren't terribly interested in state politics. There are some who are, and they have provided much of the money that has helped preserve the conservative Democratic hegemony. But I don't think it's as

close a connection as some of the ideological liberals like Ronny Dugger would like to make out. Big money has tended to support the dominant political faction. But I don't think big money runs the state of Texas. And I think that's getting less and less true.

J.B.: Do they do it differently? In other words, do they do it by simply supporting candidates who think like they think? Rather than someone who serves directly as their spokesman.

Murray: I don't see any evidence of an organized big money in this state. Most of the big corporations in Houston are not Texas oriented corporations. They're nationally oriented. They don't spend much money in Texas or local politics. Many of them are fairly new here. In Dallas you do have a more clearly defined. . . .

J.B.: How about the lobbying groups in Austin?

Murray: The lobby has been very strong in Texas. But I think the power of the business lobby is declining. A good test case coming up now is what's going to happen with Southwestern Bell. This largest of the Bell Subsidiaries is now in a hell of a lot of hot water in this state. We're the only state without a utility commission. There have been a lot of seamy things coming out. Their manager killed himself a few weeks ago in Dallas. His heirs are suing Southwestern Bell and they're dragging out a lot of sensitive matters. Double bookkeeping. Pay off to political figures and so forth. Southwestern Bell has been one of the more effective members of the business lobby in Austin. And the business lobby took it on the chin with the Sharpstown thing. Now they're catching it again. The publicity is improving of lobby activities. I think legislators and administrators and governors are more

sensitive now to good government concerns. And less likely to simply ratify what major financial interests want from them. Labor is probably getting a little more effective as a counterlobby group in Texas. They have got more out of Briscoe than any governor in modern times. Still don't get much, but they have access anyway. So the old big business--particularly things like the Texas Manufacturers Association, the Brewers Association, the insurance and banking lobbies' ability to fairly well dictate legislative decisions in their areas of interest--that ability is declining. You're just getting more groups now involved in the fight. A larger number of voters who are sensitive to these considerations. A hell of a lot of the conservatives, too, of course. It's a more chancey ball game. The people who lobby in Austin say it's getting tougher all the time. The old days, when you could go to a couple of people and pretty well cut your deals, are largely over. I think if you look for a test case of whether big money dominates the state, you'd have to say if big money does they would have passed the unitization bill in the '73 session. I don't know if you are familiar with that. Unitization refers to operating an oil field as a unit. So that all the people who are extracting oil or gas from the unit must cooperate in removing the resources. The primary effect is that you get more out of it if you do it in this fashion, because you can do it in a regulated manner that will maximize your . But the down side of that is that an individual extractor, of course, loses his complete freedom to take it out as quickly as he can. The major oil companies, particularly Exxon, pushed very hard to get unitization. Pretty good article on

that in the Texas Monthly devoted just to the unitization fight. And they were beat on the issue. It was as big a lobby effort as you'd ever get in Texas. They pulled out every stop that they could. They probably spent \$300,000 working on legislation. And it still lost. I mean they really wanted unitization. Because unitization probably means for the majors several billion dollars in additional revenues.

J.B.: The independents were fighting it, right?

Murray: Some of the independents were. But the independents didn't have the money or the clout. Unitization had most of the biggies behind it. Chamber of Commerce of Houston was lobbying strongly for it. Still got beat.

W.D.V.: Are the ideological liberals in Texas becoming anachronisms?

Murray: They're still very important in presidential politics because of this cult--

W.D.V.: In state politics.

Murray: Well, the presidential thing spills over because people are always working to preserve their base so they can throw their weight in when you have these caucuses in presidential years.

J.B.: How do presidential delegates get selected in Texas? Is it something unique, different from other states?

Murray: Not really. We don't have registration by party. If you vote, say, in the presidential year--our primary elections are in May--if you vote in the Republican or Democratic party that day, then you are eligible to attend the precinct convention that day or evening.



Varies from county to county as to when it's held. Typically, in a contested presidential year, five to ten percent of the people who vote in the Democratic party would turn out and a somewhat higher percentage of the Republican party because so few vote there. These precinct caucuses are traditionally bitterly fought. The blood flows freely. Especially in areas like Houston or Dallas or Austin, where you tend to have some semblance of organization on each side. The precinct caucuses are apportioned. A certain number of delegates to the district or county caucus based on the vote for governor two years before. The number of votes the Democratic or Republican nominee for governor got. A delegate for every 25 votes cast in their precinct. So they select a delegation that goes to the county or senatorial convention. The process is repeated with again a certain number of delegates apportioned. It lends itself to a hell of a lot of hard fighting. Complaints about enforcement of the rules. Tendencies to gut the opponent if you get the opportunity.

J.B.: The delegates to the national convention are actually elected at the state convention?

Murray: Yes, but the present rules make it clear that three-fourths of those are, in effect, chosen by the senatorial district caucuses. Which leaves only a fourth as sort of free and open for the state leadership. So these are perceived to be important things and are hard fought. The liberals are very interested in presidential politics. The conservative Democrats are less interested. Why should they be interested? Hell, nobody in the Democratic party they like. Scoop

Jackson is far, far from their ideal candidate.

J.B.: How about Lloyd Bentsen?

Murray: Bentsen doesn't excite the old conservative workers, the people who put together active precinct efforts. Bentsen will have probably, because he will be very well financed and very well organized staff wise, will have a good effort here. But he'll probably be lucky to come out of this state with half the delegates. The Wallacites on one hand. The hard-line liberals on the other. Are going to chew him up in a lot of these precincts and senatorial caucuses. My guess would be Bentsen will get 40-45 percent of the delegation that will go to the national convention. The Republicans, of course, haven't had very many good contests. So things have been less interesting over there. If Reagan mounts a significant challenge to Ford, I assume that he would really mix it up in Texas. They would have hard fought battles with the Republican caucuses. But in state politics the hardline liberals are in a weak position. They don't have any good candidates. Farenthold seems to me to be discredited as a state-wide candidate from here on in. The blacks, who used to be their strongest base of support, are indicating they're becoming more pragmatic. They want to go with people who can win and who can deliver. The Mexican-Americans similarly.

J.B.: How much damage did Farenthold do staying in that vice presidential business?

Murray: I don't think that hurt her so much as getting identified as a McGovernite, as an advocate of women's causes. Then the issues that she had used so effectively, the reform--

[End of side of tape.]

W.D.V.: You've characterized Briscoe's administration for us. Could you kind of go back through time. How would you evaluate Smith and Connally and Daniel, Shivers?

Murray: Smith, again, was not an effective leader within the party. He didn't have a strong network of party. He won the governor's election under very fluky circumstances. Ten candidates running in the primary. He happened to be the conservative that made the run off with the liberal. It's pretty easy to win from there on. He didn't get along well with Connally or the old Connally-Johnson forces within the party. Was fighting and feuding with them half the time. And finished up, of course, disastrously. He got eight percent in the Democratic primary when he ran for renomination. That might be a record for an incumbent governor seeking his own party's renomination. Might check that out sometime. In other words, by the end of his four years, his stock was so low. I saw one bumper sticker for Smith in '72. I was so surprised I drove up behind it and saw that it said Dump Smith. Didn't even say support him. He was ineffective. He wasn't interested in party politics very much. But he was pretty much a zero. He just let the liberal-conservative-Wallacites fight it out and may the best man win. I think the liberals felt he was fairly fair on party matters. He didn't have any solutions he was trying to impose. Connally, of course, would be very much the opposite. Intensely interested in party affairs. Tremendous connections all over the state. Say, in '66, a year he was going to be easily re-elected. Had token opposition in the Democratic primary. He arranges to go on state-wide television the day or two

before the primary. Talk about there's a liberal plot. The liberals are organizing to take over the precinct conventions. He really whipped up the troops to get out and prevent this liberal takeover. With some degree of success. Smith would have never considered doing anything like this. Connally was an active party leader. He was interested in party affairs. He tried to run the party. He wanted to control the state party organization and generally was successful--after the assassination attempt. He himself was in some trouble at that point. And probably faced a tough race for re-election. But after Oswald, his position within the party was unchallenged until he retired as governor. Before him, Price Daniel, Sr., had served six years. Most of his administration he was hung up with these terrible money problems. The state had no sales tax, no income tax. It was just continually in a terrific financial bind. Poor Daniel happened to be caught up in this and he was ideologically opposed to both a sales tax and an income tax. There was no possibility of an income tax, anyway. But he had troubles through his administration. He remained moderately popular. But he wasn't an extremely vigorous party leader. I would guess he would fall somewhere between a Smith-Briscoe type and a Connally or a Shivers, who was very, very interested in party affairs, and very influential. I think Shivers, like Connally, was a sort of person who wanted to run everything. Worked hard at it. He had ideas he wanted to see implemented. Shivers probably helped the liberals here because of the fact that he did defect and while governor support Eisenhower in '52 and '56. This was a stimulus to liberals to organize to take back over control of the party.

J.B.: Briscoe is generally perceived by liberals to be basically

fair on party matters, is that it?

Murray: Pretty fair. The liberals feel Briscoe

Sort of the wheel that squeaks gets greased type thing. If you press him and push him, he'll at least give you something. Their view is he dislikes conflict. He wants to try to preside over a reasonably happy party. So they think he's fairly fair. They think his gut inclinations are not favorable to them certainly. But he doesn't want a bitter, factionalized party. And as such, he has been willing to deal somewhat. But he doesn't deal directly. He uses his agents, like Calvin Guest, who are not skilled political operators in many instances. Briscoe has a very low level of people around him I think in terms of competence in party matters.

J.B.: How about Strauss? What's his role in Democratic party matters in Texas?

Murray: I don't see too many of his footprints here in the state. I think he has so damn many problems nationally that he just has not had the ability to give much attention to Texas. Before his elevation to national party prominence, he was a moderately influential person. He was unknown outside of Dallas, but he was one of the old Johnson then Connally connection and close to Bentsen. I think his view, since he's been away at the national convention, is that Texas politics is such a snakepit that he should just stay out of it down here, unless it's absolutely necessary to intervene. And it's doubtful that his intervention could accomplish much. Neither the Wallacites, who probably constitute a minimum of ten or fifteen percent of the intra-party forces

within the Democrats or the liberals, who maybe are thirty percent, trust Strauss. They're pretty stand offish about him and his leadership. In '76, one thing to watch here will be when the Wallacites and the liberals combine to try to frustrate Bentsen.

J.B.: Who is the main Wallace leader?

Murray: Well, Hall Tamatus is the official wing of the Wallace party. He's the Houston based national committeeman. Wallace has used Tamatus on a number of occasions as his spokesman. Say, in the Democratic national committee. Tamatus is a long-time conservative activist. He represents the official Wallace forces. There's the other element of the Wallacites. The hard line American party types whose first commitment is to the American party. Many of them are Birchers. They have past associations with other radical movements like the Conservative or the Constitution party in Texas. Brad Logan, say, would be a representative figure of this group. They're always squabbling with Tamatus and the official Wallace forces. The ones that the governor has laid hands on and said "These are my people." That undercurrent conflict comes out in the public precinct fights, where the insurgent, nonofficial Wallace people are quite willing to cut deals with liberals. But Tamatus has so far stayed away from that. He wants nothing to do with liberals at this point. But strategies may change in '76. But if you have a chance, it might be meaningful to talk to Tamatus if you could get to see him.

[Interruption.]

W.D.V.: -- liberals shrinking in state politics. Continue to



shrink. They don't have any candidates. Nobody wants to call themselves a liberal anymore. They all want to be moderates. And I think there is more than just semantics involved there.

Murray: Right. Part of it is that I think the old visible enemies, the devils, are fading away. And the liberals, you know, always had great devils in Texas.

W.D.V.: They're losing what they had to feed their paranoia is the way we read it.

Murray: I think there's some of that. You know, the state leadership has become somewhat more progressive and moderate. It's ceased to be racist, for example. When Briscoe visits the fifth ward, which is the poorest slum area, 99 percent black in Houston, and the state representative looks like he could as equally be at home in the Black Panther party as the Democratic party puts his arm around him. Things have changed a little bit.

W.D.V.: Is that one of the biggest changes in the past twenty-five years?

Murray: I think so. As Key pointed out, race wasn't critical in Texas the way it was in other states. Because there were virtually no blacks in two-thirds or so of the state. In the larger part of the state, Mexican-Americans were the minority. And white-Mexican American relations have always been different than black-white relations. So Texas didn't have the race factor as the underlying motive or driving force the way it was in the other ten states. Excepting east Texas, where in local politics that sort of thing certainly was true. But the

race thing has become more moderate. The Democratic candidates now have to have black votes to beat Republicans. No Democratic candidate of any intelligence--no Democratic nominee of any intelligence is going to offend black voters in this state.

J.B.: Is it fair to say that the Republican party in Texas has become strong enough and has attracted enough of the conservative vote to take the edge off the old conservative-liberal split in the Democratic party?

Murray: Well, the problem is, they don't get any votes in the primaries. You look at Republican primary participation. The best year was '64 and it was about 145,000 that year. Recently they've stalled out right at 100,000. In a state with over five million voters, that's just a ridiculous primary vote.

J.B.: Even the single member districts has not increased their primary participation?

Murray: Very little. They don't have very many competitive primaries. Usually they have one or two candidates running at most in most districts. They haven't had any good state races in recent years where there's been hard fought competition. Grover had competition in '72 but it never got off the ground. I think one of the factors that's hurt the Republican party here is this no party registration factor. All the conservatives remain free to vote in the Democratic primary and that's always where the action is. So why not go over and vote there. And you just have the hard core Republican vote, which is about 7 percent maybe of the normal Republican vote in the general election that stays

in the primary. The Republicans can count on a minimum--in a major turn out election--a million votes state-wide and a million and a half. But they get 100,000 in their primary. So that's reduced their pulling off. But it has been a factor here because in Harris county the Republicans do get a decent vote. They get 20, 25, 30, once they got 38,000 I think to vote in their primary. They just subtract those votes from the conservative Democrats. There's no question of that. Bentsen, for example, lost this county to Yarborough back in the primary, although this is Bentsen's home county.

[Interruption]

The Republicans were drawing a heavy turn out in their primary and they cut Bentsen's margin. The conservatives would be wiped out in the primaries by liberals and then you'd get a kind of polarized general election where you'd have liberals fighting conservative Republicans. But the Republican strategy never clicked. They were never able to pull voters into their own primary.

[Tape speeds up and is unintelligible.]

--between the blacks who are oriented toward labor and they're somewhat more willing to work with Briscoe and between blacks who are anti-labor

[Tape speeds up again.]

[End of interview.]