

Interview with Winton (Red) Blount, 1972 Republican candidate for the United States Senate against John Sparkman, former Postmaster General under the Nixon administration, July 10, 1974, Montgomery, Alabama, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Blount: And he was the third man in the first primary. And he was the so-called white hat guy in the campaign. And he made a . . . after the first primary, when <sup>Folsom</sup>~~Fulsome~~ and Handy Ellis were to be in the run off. He had a deal with Jim <sup>Folsom</sup>~~Fulsome~~ to support him

. And that was big news in the state. And as a young man. . . I was very red headed. . . and that just upset me no end. How in the world could this white hat guy make a deal with a black hat guy? And I sent him off a three page telegram. Just raising hell. you know, and how he could let us down. Well, I got a three page letter back from him, calling me a young whippersnapper and this, that and the other. He'd actually known my father, who'd been dead for some time by then. But they had in fact been good friends. Raised some issues about that. I guess that was probably my baptism in fire in politics in Alabama as a . . . . Course I was a Democrat in the primary. Needless to say, Fulsome won. Then in '52, I had then moved to Montgomery and a number of us were talking about the campaign coming up. Of course the Eisenhower phenomenon was on the scene. In January of '52, Grover Hall, who was then the editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, and Dick Hudson, who was the son of the publisher. I guess he was assistant publisher at that time. Both of whom are now dead. They were probably young men at that time and we were talking about politics and we had a group together

down at Dick Hudson's house and decided we would form the Citizens for Eisenhower in Alabama. This began as preconvention. January of '52. And it ended up that they decided that I would be the chairman of the citizens for Eisenhower in Alabama. Our objective would be to get Republican delegates to the convention in favor of Gen Eisenhower. That went along and we did whatever we did in that period and had quite a conflict with the Republicans. As you know, they were a very small, closely knit groups, holding conventions in telephone booths, those kind of things. Trying to elect delegates in the spring of '52 to the Republican convention in Alabama in any kind of open way was a very, very difficult thing. Very interesting thing. We were pretty vigorous in it and made some impact and got some support. And I went to that convention. That was my first involvement with Republican politics. After the convention I was designated to be the state chairman for the citizens for Eisenhower and Nixon and functioned in that capacity during the rest of the campaign, rest of that year. That was the first time, I guess, there had been any vigor to a Republican movement at all in this state. I'm sure you've seen the pattern in the other southern states. Pre 1952 the Republicans were only patronage, post office Republicans, so-called. Patronage oriented. We were interested in votes and people and that kind of thing and this was entirely different from what the old line Republicans were interested in. They wanted to keep it small where they could control the patronage when and if the Republicans won. We weren't interested in patronage. We were interested in votes and people and the election. Principles. But I did that, of course, as a Democrat. The Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon was an organization to provide a vehicle, as you know, for Democrats and independents to support a Republican

ticket that didn't want to get involved in the Republican party. Obviously

in the South at that time that was a badly needed vehicle. Well, subsequent to that I worked in Democratic campaigns in Alabama and Senatorial campaigns for the United States Senate, working for various candidates. Governor. And that's the way I got started in politics. I don't know how far you want me to carry this. You want me to carry it on?

Jack Bass: Go ahead.

Walter De Vries: Sure.

Blount: Well again, in the '50s I was active on the national level supporting the Republican candidate for president and on the local level supporting Democrat candidates. 1958, when John Patterson was elected governor of Alabama I was one of his principal supporters. As a matter of fact I introduced John Patterson and Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy came down to speak to the chamber of commerce here in Montgomery in 1958 or 9, I believe. And I took him back. . . we had an airplane and I flew Bobby back to Washington after the speech. But prior to that I had introduced John Patterson and Bobby Kennedy. Jumping ahead a bit, John Patterson was the only southern governor to support John Kennedy at the Democratic convention in Los Angeles in 1960. That's just a side-light. In 1960 I was not involved in the convention politics, but after the convention Lynn Hall, who I had known as chairman of the Republican national committee, who was campaign chairman along with Bob Finch, called and asked me to come to Washington to work in the volunteers for Nixon-Lodge and be in charge of the eight southeastern states. Which is what I did during that campaign. I left Montgomery, I guess in late August, and spent the rest of the campaign working in the Volunteers for Nixon-Lodge, organizing each of the states: Virginia down through I guess Louisiana. In 1962 we had another governor's race

in Alabama and I supported <sup>Ryan</sup> ~~de~~ [de Graffenreid] who ran and campaigned in the Democratic primary against George Wallace, Jim Fulsome and a number of other minor candidates. I don't know what you've heard about that campaign. That was the race which George Wallace won, for governor. John Love, who was then a practicing attorney in Colorado Springs, was here in Montgomery at what's called the security forum run by the [Air] University out at Maxwell field. I happened to be attending the same one. That's when I first met him. He was thinking about running for governor and he knew about my interest in Ron de Graffenreid's campaign. And the security forum was the week of the primary. On Tuesday. Typically, Monday night all of the candidates were on television. Jim <sup>Folsom</sup> ~~Fulsome~~ got on television and he was absolutely loaded to the gills. Couldn't even. . . had his children around, had a lot of children. Didn't even know their names. "Oh, there's children. I don't know what the hell his name is." It was an absolutely ludicrous performance. John Love will tell you to this day that he wouldn't of being in Alabama to see that broadcast. Nobody would believe it if you hadn't seen it. As a result of that performance, ~~Folsome~~ did not get in the run off with Wallace and the man I supported, <sup>Ryan</sup> ~~Ron~~ de Graffenreid, did get in the run off. Wallace won the run off. But de Graffenreid remained a very viable candidate and in 1966 you may know that he was the leading candidate going into the qualification period for governor and was killed in a light plane accident on a campaign trip in February. And I think that's when. . . subsequent to that's when Laurleen Wallace got in the race. In my opinion she would not have run against Ron de Graffenreid. But about that period, or following '62 to the '66 period, I was not. . . . I don't mean to imply



that I was active in the gubernatorial campaign in '66, because I wasn't. There was speculation as to whether or not I was going to support Ron de Graffenreid, but I did not. I had not planned to and of course he was killed. I decided about that time that it was really time for me to become a Republican. So I wasn't involved in the '66 campaign as far as Democrats are concerned. I was involved in the Republican campaign. Jim Martin ran against Lurleen Wallace as the Republican candidate and I supported him in that campaign. I wasn't really. . . . Didn't take off or anything like that. But I did support him and we made some trips together. You asked a question?

J.B.: I was going to ask, were you involved at all in the Goldwater campaign in '64?

Blount: No. Well, the only extent I was involved in it was I signed an ad, a nation wide ad in the Wall Street Journal--I guess it was in other papers--signed by a number of people who were supporting Goldwater. Businessmen for Goldwater or something like that. I forget the title of it. But I wasn't active campaigning in any way. In '68 I was president of the chamber of commerce of the United States and had to be nonpartisan, of course, and I wasn't involved in the campaign at all in '68. So that brings me up to the '72 campaign when I got right actively involved as a Republican candidate for the United States Senate. Of course got beat. But that's where we stand. Well, that's the way I started. What my involvement was on an overview basis. In the meantime, I was active supporting Battle [?], a Democrat candidate in 1954 running against John Sparkman for the United States Senate. Larry [?] Battle was a Democratic Congressman and ran against Sparkman. I supported him in that campaign. I guess that's about the extent of it.

W.D.V.: How do you assess the Republican party in this state today?

Blount: Well, as you know, we have three Republican Congressmen and they are very solidly entrenched. I don't think they will have any trouble getting beat. . . I mean winning, in spite of the Watergate problems or any other problems there might be on the scene. One has a right strong race on his hands this time, but I think he'll win. The other two will win rather handily. They have a number of local Republicans around the state. Here in Montgomery, of course, the president of the board of revenue. . . is controlled by the Republicans. They have a majority. Probate judge here is a Republican and he's won handily both times he's run. He's now running for circuit judge and I think he will win handily in that election. The Wallace factor, of course, is dominating Alabama and has for [the last] ten years, but even more so now since he was wounded. He's been deified in this state and there's no way of escaping it. Anybody runs against Wallace is a nut. I made that statement earlier in the year. There's a Republican candidate now running against Wallace and he introduces himself by saying that Red Blount was quoted in Newsweek as saying that anybody runs against Wallace is a nut. And he says "I'm that nut." So I think that. . . talk about the Republican party today . . . is difficult to really. . . . Well, on a state wide basis, it hasn't got a chance of winning in the state wide races, in my opinion. With Wallace out actively campaigning. If the Republican candidate for governor got out of the race, then I think it would be an open question about Beasley and Don Collins, who is running against him. It would be a horse race. How it would come out I wouldn't know at this point. But with Wallace out campaigning there's no chance. Absolutely no chance. Now, on the local level or the Congressional level, they're going to win. I think

there will be a number of Republican candidates elected to the legislature this time. We've never had more than two in the recent past, but I think they'll

J.B.: How many Republican legislators would you expect to get elected? Rough range.

Blount: Oh I. . . I really don't know that I'm very knowledgeable about that at this point. 10 or 15 might be a good figure.

W.D.V.: '64 was the high point for the party.

Blount: Goldwater swept the state.

W.D.V.: The election of Congressmen and so on.

Blount: Five Republican Congressmen were elected out of the then eight which we had. We don't have that many now. But it was. . . no question about it being a high point. I think it was very damaging for Martin to have run against Laurleen Wallace. I think that was very much of a mistake. I fought against it internally. But John Grunnier insisted he was going to run for the Senate. Thought he could beat John Sparkman. And he had boxed Martin into a position of making a commitment that he was going to run for governor. Which I thought was a mistake. As soon as Laurleen was elected, I thought that was the time to make the decision what he was going to do. That hurt the party very much.

J.B.: How did it hurt?

Blount: Well, Wallace was a neutral factor. In '62 Jim Martin ran against Lister Hill for United States Senate. Coming from out of no-- he'd never run for political office before and he came within 7,000 votes of being elected. Actually I suspect he got the majority of the votes but he wasn't counted, he was counted out. Being that close, with the

Democratic control over the state and the kind of politics that had existed

at that time, I'm sure he probably got more votes. Wallace was very helpful to Martin in that campaign. While he would be on the stump with Lister Hill, he would start slashing away at that Washington crowd. Well, when you slash away at the Washington crowd, you're slashing away at Lister Hill. And I'm sure it was quite helpful to Jim Martin in that campaign, that race. So I think that if Martin had run for the United States Senate in 1966, instead of running for governor against Laurleen, he would have neutralized George Wallace ~~[static]~~ *[and would have defeated Sparkman]*

So then the party would have had a United States Senator, four United States Congressmen and numerous local offices and I think that would have been a great base to build on. Since that time, of course, you know how things have developed. The Wallace. . . Laurleen was elected. And Wallace had no kind word for Republicans from then on, because Jim Martin ran a campaign, a rather vigorous campaign, against his wife. And got beat very badly.

W.D.V.: Running against her was in effect running against him.

Blount: Sure.

W.D.V.: At that time, right?

Blount: Sure. And that just hurt the party very much, set it back.

J.B.: Would Grunniere have won as well against Sparkman as Martin would have if there had been no Republican candidate for governor?

Blount: Grunniere was not the campaigner that Martin was. Martin was a very colorful, good campaigner. And I think he would have done better because. . . he would have been a better campaigner and probably would have done better than Grunnier. Grunnier. . . . Let me say this. I argued in a meeting with Martin and Grunnier and other Republican leaders that the best thing for the party was for Martin to run against

John Sparkman and no candidate against Wallace. If they insisted that ~~Grenier~~ <sup>Grenier</sup> was going to run against John Sparkman, the next best thing for the party was for Martin not to run against Wallace--Laurleen--but to run for his old House seat again and let ~~Grenier~~ <sup>Grenier</sup> run against Sparkman. ~~Grenier~~ <sup>Grenier</sup> might could have won under those circumstances. But he wasn't much of a campaigner. Great organizer. But he just wasn't much of a campaigner. The name ~~Grenier~~ <sup>Grenier</sup> in Alabama, it's just like your name. It just wouldn't go very much with the electorate. And I think that Martin would have done better in that race.

W.D.V.: Why did they go with that strategy?

Blount: Well, ~~Grenier~~ <sup>Grenier</sup> is the one that forced it. John. . . . Going back earlier in the year, in January. . . . Well, back up to November of the year before. Martin went off on a trip. He was then United States Congressman. Jim Martin was a Congressman. Went off on a trip to the Far East. He came back and he came down here to see me because there'd been some idle speculation that I might run for governor. And he came down to see me and asked me if I wanted to run for governor. Said if I did he wanted to run for the Senate, but he wanted to know what I wanted to do. And I told him that I didn't want to run at that time. So he decided that he would run for governor. We talked about that as being the best thing for him to do. Again, mind you, at that point, nobody thought that Laurleen Wallace was going to be in the race, even though there was some talk about it. The best thinking was that Laurleen would not be in the race. And he'd be running against. . . . ~~Ryan~~ <sup>Ryan</sup> ~~Ron~~ de Graffenreid would be the strongest candidate. There were some meetings in the Republican heirarchy, leadership and I attended a couple of them in Birmingham in January in which this was fought out. Martin said he was going to run for governor. There was no talk about running

against Sparkman at that point.

[Phone interruption on tape.]

Party leadership came down on Martin's side

So Martin kept talking about running for governor and when de Graffenreid was killed, Laurleen got in the race and he continued to talk about it. Some of us tried to keep him from talking about it. But immediately after the primary, on Tuesday, the first Tuesday in May. . . I think it was a Friday that there was a meeting held in Birmingham at the airport. The motel out there. Some of the Republican leadership that I referred to earlier. Martin, <sup>Grenier</sup>~~Grunnier~~, several of the Republican leaders. And I was there. Martin had asked me to come. And I argued very strongly for the party not to get into that box of running against Laurleen and this was the time to make the decision. If she had run and won in the first primary without a run off against four or five candidates, she would obviously be elected in the fall and I think it would just be stupid for us to run. But <sup>Grenier</sup>~~Grunnier~~ came into that meeting and said he had just firmly decided he was going to run. Martin had made a commitment to run for governor and he was going to run for the Senate. And that's when this discussion all took place that I told you about earlier.

W.D.V.: Did he really believe that Wallace could be beaten?

Blount: Well, he said so. I didn't think so. But he thought it . . . could. . . . He also thought it was a race that ought to be run. And he's said that since then a number of times. Whether or not you could win, he thought you should run it. I disagree with that and disagreed with it at the time.

J.B.: Why did he think it should have been run?

Blount: Well, because he thought that the party leadership needed to be alerted to the dangers of George Wallace. Again, he thought the idea of beating Wallace, or Laurleen--in effect beating George at that point--would head off a presidential effort on his part. As a matter of fact I took him up to see Gen Eisenhower and Dick Nixon. Dick Nixon was then in New York. Made a trip up to see Eisenhower in Gettysburg and Nixon in New York. Trying to get their interest in this thing on a national level.

I just thought it was disaster for the party.

W.D.V.: How would you describe the party ideologically in Alabama? Is it moving in any direction? Or isn't there any ideology?

Blount: Well, Alabama's problem is George Wallace. I mean in the Republican party. You just can't. . . . The party has just come forth in the 1964 election with Goldwater. And from '64 to '74 this state's been dominated by Wallace one way or another. And the party has really had to kind of maneuver around him. I think that there is not the kind of direction there ought to be in the Republican party in Alabama. But I think also for good and practical reasons. I think that until the Wallace phenomenon runs its course in Alabama--particularly since he was shot--there's no opportunity to do anything about it.

W.D.V.: Is it fair to say that 12 years of George Wallace has arrested the growth of the party, Republican party?

Blount: Oh yes. Yes indeed.

W.D.V.: Until he leaves, it's sort of in comatose.

Blount: I would think that's right.

W.D.V.: Because you have what? Two state representatives.

Blount: Three.

W.D.V.: Three? In the other southern states, with maybe one other

exception, there's been growth in the party.

Blount: You don't have Wallace in those other southern states, either.

W.D.V.: Why does he have such--

Blount: Let me say this. You've had growth in this party, too. In this state. But at the local level rather than at the national level. Your governors or Senators. Of course you don't have governors in other southern states. Arkansas's the exception. And Tennessee. Of course that's a border state.

W.D.V.: No, but you have more representation in the legislatures.

Blount: In most instances that's true.

W.D.V.: What's his hold on the state?

Blount: Wallace? Oh well, he's been able to articulate the feelings of I guess the majority of the people. Well, without question the majority of the people in this state. But again, you have to get back to his wounding. Up until then. . . you know, Brewer. . . . You know how that race was. Brewer damn near beat him. Wallace was hanging on the ropes. Even in the Democratic primaries in '72, when he was winning these primaries in other states, he was losing the battles to the legislature all the time. He was not very solidly entrenched at that point. Brewer, as you know, led him by 10,000 votes in the first primary. And lost by 30,000 in the second. That's hanging on the ropes for George Wallace in Alabama. Him being wounded obviously deified him. Not only in Alabama. I think in the rest of the nation as a matter of fact. And with good reason. You know, here's a man that. . . it's a terrible thing what happened to him. And generates great sympathy on everybody's part including mine. So I think that that's understandable.

W.D.V.: Is that basically the hold?



Blount: Oh I think today it is. The massive hold that he's got today is because of that reason. Again, you go back to the 1970 governor's race and he was hanging on the ropes and damn near beat.

W.D.V.: Because he's hung on longer than any other southern governor in terms of power.

Blount: Sure. But I guess it's my view that had he not been shot, the question of whether he would have won in the 1974 primary, like he did, would be very much of a question. I wouldn't think that would be true but you can't predict that . No positive statement, just my own view.

W.D.V.: Has he been good for the state?

Blount: Well, Wallace, of course. . . is a demagogue and there are many things that he's been very bad for the state on. On the other hand, I think that he's making a lot of contributions to the state now. I think his posture now, nationally. . . . He's got respectability nationally now. That's reflecting well on the state, I think. I think that in his prior years he was not good for the state. Early years I think he was very bad for the state. I think when we were having all our civil rights problems, he could have exerted some enormous leadership and been very helpful. But he was just the opposite.

J.B.: In so far as industrial development and economic growth in the state, has that development been because of Wallace or despite Wallace?  
[Interruption by phone.]

Blount: You were asking if the industrial development was because of Wallace or in spite of Wallace. I don't know how you answer that question. I think today Wallace is a plus factor in industrial development. Wallace, you know, speaks the free enterprise language. That's

been good. On the other hand he's the one that initiated the tax on the

utilities and utilities are under enormous pressures today. I don't think that's been really a very helpful thing as far as industrial development is concerned. So I don't know how you answer that.

JB.: What's going to be the impact of this Tennessee Tom Bigby project?

Blount: I think very good. You know, it's going to be 6- 700 miles shorter than from the midwest, Chicago, to the gulf. It will be 600 miles shorter than going through New Orleans and therefore that much closer to the world markets. I think that. . . great impact on the port of Mobile. And I think it will also have impact on industrial development up and down the waterway because, you know, companies can locate there and get the raw materials or whatever from the other parts into that area. And then particularly those oriented toward export.

J.B.: What do you think the long range political impact of that's going to be?

Blount: Political impact? Oh, I don't really see much political impact. . . . I see industrial impact. It may in turn have a political impact because of industrialization, but as far as direct political--

J.B.: I mean in the long run. What will be the political impact of that industrialization?

Blount: Well, I think Alabama will become a more developed state. You'll have higher per capital income. How you assess how that's going to come out politically. . . . And again, you're talking about 10 or 20 years downstream and that's pretty hard to. . . . I don't see any immediate political impact.

[Phone interruption.]

W.D.V.: Deliberate strategy by the Republican party in Alabama to

attract conservative white Democrats to the party that are disenchanted with the Democratic party?

Blount: Oh yes. I wouldn't limit it to white, as far as I'm concerned, or conservative. But we obviously. . . the only way for the Republican party to grow is by getting Democrats to come into it. That's the only way you're going to win any elections down here as a Republican is to get Democrats to vote for you. You don't register by party down here in Alabama. Most of the people consider themselves Democrats. The only way you're going to win as a Republican is get the Democrats to vote for you.

W.D.V.: I'm thinking of conservative Democrats.

Blount: Well, there are those that appeal principally to conservative Democrats. For instance, I think that Jim Martin would be in that category. Course Jim Martin. . . I doubt if he'll run for any political office again.

W.D.V.: Do you see the party building very slowly or do you see any major breakthroughs in the next ten years?

Blount: Well, I think, again, when the Wallace phenomenon fades in Alabama--as it will--I think that there'll be great growth here. I think there's a real possibility. . . . What the party's got to do in my opinion to have real growth is to elect a state wide office. You've got to win either governor or one of the United States Senator's jobs. And I think that that really will be the next breakthrough for the party itself. Yeah, when you talk about trends, there's no question the trend being toward the Republican party--in the South. I think it's true in Alabama except that that's been dampened by the Wallace impact. That trend will resurface and emerge here when the Wallace phenomenon changes.

I don't think it will be any different here than it is in any other states.

But I think that's the real breakthrough that the party's got to have. Is to win a state wide office.

W.D.V.: When do you see that?

Blount: '78's the next opportunity. John Sparkman's seat will be up then. He said. . . I guess he wasn't going to run again. He said he wasn't. Whether he did or not, it would still be up. And George Wallace cannot succeed himself under the law. So there, you know, you got both the governor's job and the Senator's job opening there and I think there's a real opportunity at that point.

W.D.V.: You thinking about running?

Blount: No.

W.D.V.: Why'd you lose?

Blount: [Laughter.] People didn't vote for me.

W.D.V.: I mean now that you have 20-20 hindsight, why did you lose?

Blount: Well, I campaigned as a Nixon-Blount candidate. That's what our billboards were saying: Nixon-Blount. Obviously, being in the president's cabinet, I was a Nixon man. I didn't get much Nixon support. Got a lot of people to come down here, including the vice president. But he came down here and avowedly said, you know, he wasn't campaigning against John Sparkman. He was just here to support his friend Red Blount. Again, I'm campaigning as a Nixon-Blount candidate and in August, first of September, John Sparkman released a letter to the newspapers from the president saying that he was a great statesman and he could use him back in the Senate. He needed him in the Senate and that kind of thing. And two weeks later, in mid September, they sent a presidential plane down here to get John Sparkman to go back to Washington to cast a vote. It wasn't a close vote. It was 55-35 or something like that. But obviously with all the newsreels running on the

president's plane coming to pick up John Sparkman to bring him back to Washington to show his importance to him to his face. Then in October Ron Zeigler, in one of his press conferences up there, briefings, was asked directly by one of the national. . . people at the briefing "Does the president support Red Blount?" And his answer was "Well, he doesn't oppose him." And the reporter came back and said "Well, that wasn't the question. Does he support Red Blount?" "Well I've answered your question." And that obviously was played on all the media down here and my credibility as a Nixon-Blount candidate. . . the guy that could do things for Alabama with Nixon. . . was pretty well shot in the head. Then George Wallace came out. George Wallace, who was not in control much at that time. He was very ill; he was wounded. But they played a tape in which George Wallace said that Mr Blount said that the working man causes inflation, and that kind of thing. That had an enormous impact on my race. For me to have beat John Sparkman. . . . We knew it was a close race to begin with. We had an up hill fight from the very beginning. Felt that if we got the Nixon support and could neutralize Wallace then we had a real fighting chance at it.

W.D.V.: Hadn't you been assured of that?

Blount: Of what?

W.D.V.: Of the Nixon support.

Blount: No. Never had any discussions with Nixon about it. But Wallace had never entered anybody else's political race. Never been involved in anybody's race but his own.

J.B.: Did you have any discussions with anyone in the White House before you entered the race?

Blount: About whether I should or not? No.

J.B.: You didn't talk to Harry Dent at all?

Blount: They knew I was thinking about running.

J.B.: In other words, just your assumption that you'd get their support as a Republican candidate? Member of his cabinet.

Blount: You know, I would not expect him to support a Democratic opponent. But the Wallace thing was really the crusher. Wallace was. . . . Again, you've got to remember the times. Here was a man that was out campaigning for the presidency in the American tradition and was shot down, almost killed, paralyzed for life. Anything he says in the state in that point in history. . . . And they broadcast it from his voice. I mean they picked it up from a speech he'd made in the 1970 governor's race. He was using me as one of his whipping boys. And they played this thing. . . . Saturated the air with it the last two or three weeks of the campaign and there was devastation. No question about it.

I think that it would have been much closer because we had to get the Wallace vote. Now how you define the Wallace vote is another question. The blacks. . . we didn't think we had a chance to get the black vote because you had a national presidential race on and they oriented very strongly to the national Democratic party and voted that way. And while, in my opinion, I really had far better credentials for getting the black vote than did John Sparkman--far better, without. . . even in the ball park. But we got beat ten to one in the black vote. And knew that was going to happen. So we had to get the working man's vote, if you will, and that's what we went out after. But when Wallace came out it[was clear they'd barred the door.?] And I guess that's my answer.

W.D.V.: How do you feel about it now? About that campaign.

Blount: What do you mean, feel about it?

W.D.V.: Are you sanguine about it? About the fact that you didn't

get the president's support?

Blount: I don't like to lose. [Unclear.]

W.D.V.: That's what I mean.

J.B.: Did you feel a sense of betrayal?

Blount: Oh, I wouldn't put it that way. I mean politics is a pretty tough game and I'm a grown boy. I understand that. I didn't like it. But betrayal is not the. . . . You know, this doesn't just happen here. Hell. . . .

J.B.: Well, Gil Carmichael didn't even get as much support as you.

Blount: That's right. Well, you know, what's his name. . . . [Says a first name which I think should be Hale, but that's not what he says] Boggs, who's a two term United States Senator, two term governor of Delaware, trying to get Nixon to come there. He lost by 500 votes. Nixon had just gone to Wilmington one time, he'd of gotten those votes. Gordon Allen, who was chairman of the Republican policy committee in the Senate, tried to get him out to Colorado. Lost by 3,000 votes. If he'd gone out to Colorado, Denver, one time, he'd of won that race. I just think it was bad policy decisions. Well. . . there it is.

J.B.: What do you think of the. . . what has become known as the southern strategy . . . develop in the Republican party in the South?

Blount: What do you think has become of it?

J.B.: What do you think has been the effect of it?

Blount: Well. . . the southern strategy, I guess. . . I don't know really what that means. It was a misnomer in my opinion all the time. The president did in fact say that we're going to treat the South like we treat the rest of the country. And if that's a southern strategy then so be it. I think the South ought to be treated like the rest of the

to support that policy. And that got him support on both sides of the aisle. Republican and Democrat. You know, again, when you talk about Alabama, you just can't divorce it from the Wallace factor. The impact here. . . everything here vis-a-vis the Republican party is impacted on by Wallace.

J.B.: What do you think is going to be the effect of Watergate on Republican growth in Alabama and the South?

Blount: I don't think it will have any impact in Alabama. I think there's very strong support of the president here now. I think that any members of Congress. . . under today's circumstances. . . with today's knowledge. . . that voted for impeachment would have a very difficult time at the polls. Don't care who they are. And I don't believe any of them will vote that way.

J.B.: Were you involved in the money that went from the re-elect committee to the Brewer campaign in 1970? Is that a source of Wallace's attack on you?

Blount: You're not the first newsman. . . or you're not a newsman I don't guess, but you're not the first person to ask me that question. And you're also not the first person that I'm not going to answer it to. [Laughter.]

[Phone interruption.]

J.B.: We heard from one source that Judge Frank Johnson was considered very seriously for a Supreme Court appointment and that John Mitchell was looking with some favor upon it and then that it was blocked by the Alabama Congressional delegation, or the Republicans in the Alabama Congressional delegation. Do you have any insight into that?

Blount: I wouldn't really have any comment about that. I don't really know about that.



J.B.: Were you ever consulted on something like that?

Blount: Oh, from time to time, yeah.

J.B.: Would you have supported him for such an appointment?

Blount: [Laughing] You know, how you going to answer a question like that?

J.B.: Oh, yes or no. [Laughter.]

Blount: Sort of a question I don't really know. I never got to that point of giving it any thought.

W.D.V.: Are you still pretty active in Republican politics?

Blount: I haven't been very active. I'm on the state committee. First time I've ever been on a state committee. They put me on it last year after the election.

W.D.V.: I mean in terms of the national committee.

Blount: Well, I'm not on the national committee. I see a lot of them from time to time. [Unclear.]

W.D.V.: You going to stay active in the party?

Blount: Oh, I'm sure I will. You know, I've always been interested in politics. I licked my wounds a little bit last year and kind of took off. Got back in my business this year. And I'll be active and involved and interested. I've always tried to give leadership, take a leadership position. Not only in politics, but in the '60s when we had our civil rights problems I took a forthright type role in trying to accommodate ourselves to the change in many ways. And always was outspoken and intend to continue to be that way, I'm sure, in the future. Though I don't know where that will lead.

J.B.: If events and circumstances would create a situation where you thought you could get elected to a state wide office in 1978, would you give it strong consideration?

Blount: I expect so. And, you know, events and circumstances are very important. Who knows how that's going to come out. You know, I've always urged people to take active political part. Always urged business people to do it. And I've done it myself. Left my business and went to Washington and wanted to serve the people in the. . . . And chose to run for the Senate. Matter of fact, in '72, I suspect that if the option had been available, running for governor or for the Senate

[End of side of tape.]

I don't have any thoughts about it. Don't have any plans for it. I'm not thinking about doing it at this point in time.

J.B.: Any regrets?

Blount: Not at all. No. In fact I enjoyed the hell out of the campaign, up until the time that they started counting the votes.

[Laughter.]

W.D.V.: That get's traumatic.

J.B.: Is there anything you wanted to add, Mr Blount, that we haven't discussed? Comment on.

Blount: Don't know. Don't think so. You know, it's a hell of an interesting state, politically. You talk about southern politics. You've got to devote an awful lot of attention to this state, particularly what's happened to it in the last decade and what's going to be happening in this decade. Alabama's a kind of a keystone of the southern political system. I think again that the impact of Wallace in this state has been so. . . makes the Republican trend substantially different here than it is from other places. But I don't believe that long range that it's any different. You know, if you take 1960 and put the number of Republican office holders on a chart in the South and then put

the number of Republican office holders on the chart in 1974, you'll see a line that's going up there rapidly and I think that's going to continue into the future. Someday I suspect that the Republican party will be the majority party in the South. Wallace has slowed it down. I don't know how it's going to progress but I think that's going to continue.

J.B.: But compared with the neighboring states the Republican party in Alabama is not any weaker, and perhaps a little stronger except for Florida. But Mississippi Republican party has. . . well, no, Mississippi is stronger, in one sense. It doesn't have as many office holders.

Blount: That's right.

W.D.V.: It is in terms of organization.

J.B.: In Arkansas there's really. . . weaker. Georgia Republican party is not very strong at the moment. Alabama seems to have a fairly strong--

Blount: How do you see the governor's race in South--

[End of interview.]