

This is an interview with State Representative Benjamin Brown, conducted in Atlanta, Georgia on May 1, 1974 by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries. Transcribed by Sarah Geer.

J.B.: Why don't you tell us a little bit just about your own background, first. Where you grew up.

Brown: That's the hardest thing in the world for me to talk about. I was born in Montezuma, Georgia, which is a small town down south central Georgia. About 8,000 people. I'm the fourth of five children into the family, three boys and two girls. My father was at that time an embalmer of the old school and my mother was a housewife. They moved to Atlanta when I was three. Actually to College Park, which is right here in the Atlanta area. And when I was three years old, my father then began to work at the Railway Express Company, where he worked until he retired five years ago. Worked there for about thirty-five years. And I grew up in the College Park community during my adolescent years and high school. Went to East... South Fulton High School. And went from there on to Clark College. From there to Howard University School of Law. Now, a lot happened between those years. I'm going kind of fast...

J.B.: And you were born when?

Brown: You slow me up. November 14, 1939, during that rough period. I was a war baby, they say.

J.B.: You finished law school?

Brown: Yeah. '64. From Howard University. I'd rather for you to ask me more specific questions. I will be rambling all over the house.

J.B.: Did you practice law here?

Brown: I never practiced in Georgia. I finished Howard in '64, I came home, I took the bar and flunked it. And that... you know, I just decided that was... I didn't have time to be studying for no damn bar. Because at the time I was very much involved in political things, and I made a judgment - which I'd probably go back and re-do if I had it all to do all over again - but I made a judgment that I wanted to go on and pursue a political career without even considering the practice of the law. So, in '64, I got involved... after three months of law clerking, which absolutely drove me up the wall, I ventured out into politics by managing Horace Ward's campaign for the state senate. And, of course, that was successful. At the same time, during the 1964 session of the legislature, the re-apportionment question was being considered, and Georgia was in the process of re-mapping the house. And as a result of that re-mapping plan, I offered for the legislature. This was in '65, less than a year after I was out of school. And I offered and won in a special election that was held in '65. Then I went on to win a full term in '66, and I've been there since. So I never really got around... it never was a part of my agenda after that first try. And I just never dealt with it.

J.B.: Your title here is what? Director of...

Brown: I'm the director of the foundation, right. I've had other jobs. The first professional job I had was Community Services Director

for the Atlanta Urban League. I say professional, but in fact it wasn't. I guess being a law clerk was a professional job, but it was one that I just didn't like at all. I was horrified by the thought of sitting there dealing in books, and it just didn't impress me at all. That was the most disappointing job I ever had in my life. But I moved from there to do a six month stint with the NAACP as its executive director. And I would have kept that job except that the national NAACP said that I could not keep it and hold elected office, which I did not understand at all. And I, of course, had to resign from that job so the Urban League did hire me. And that was the first job that paid a decent salary... that I'd been paid a decent salary on. And I stayed with the Urban League for four years, until I went into business. I helped develop the P.R. firm. That's where you met me, Walter. Which I'd say roughly five years, which ended in total disaster financially. It just was a trip. But it was one of those learning experiences that I have to have, I guess, in my lifetime. And, of course, I was able to get this job because people believed in me in spite of my business failure. And so here I am. That's my employment history.

W.D.V.: Were you involved in the movement other than the NAACP?

Brown: Oh, yeah, well, that's... that's what I forgot all about. Not forgot, I just didn't... I find it difficult to talk about.

I was very much involved in the student movement. I was a student at Clark College when the sit-ins started in North Carolina. They started in North Carolina on February the first, and by March first they had come to Atlanta. And I was a part of the original group that

became involved with the Atlanta group. We established...

J.B.: Were you... were you with... was Jim Felder in that group?

Brown: Yeah. Jim and I were classmates. Jim was president of the student body at Clark, and I was his vice-president, as juniors. We both were juniors and we took over the student government politics at that time, which was history making for Clark College. Cause usually the president was a senior and the vice-president was a senior. But we had all junior officers. My wife - the lady who is now my wife - was secretary of that, as a junior. So Jim and I were the representatives to the University Synod Council which finally became known as the Atlanta Committee on Appeal for Human Rights, Committee on Appeal for Human Rights. We wrote a document which spelled out grievances, complaints that we had. It was a beautiful document. And the facts in that document were based on a publication called A Second Look, which had been published by Carl Homan, Whitney Young, Vernon Jordan, Clarence Colman and Dr. Albert Davis. This group of guys who called themselves ACCA - Atlanta Committee on Corporative Action. They had done this research and the students took that publication and let that be the basis of our appeal. Of course, it was a celebrated document once it was published in the New York Times, the Congressional Record, a lot of newspapers across the country. We were said to be the more organized or the more sophisticated student movement of all of the different groups. And I don't know whether that's true or not, that's just an evaluation that I heard. I was very much involved in that. Matter of fact, I served as Action Chairman,

the person responsible for coordinating all of the action. At one point I also served as treasurer of the organization. And one of those very interesting points during the student movement of 1960-61 was the famous compromise that came about during the negotiations with Richards and all their stores. And some of the students felt that Lonnie King, our head, our chairman, had sold them out. And they requested his resignation. And for a moment, I had been drafted as the chairman, which I refused to accept. I accepted it long enough to quiet them down and let them know that this was no time to split ranks, you know, and distrust the leadership. So that was one of those real emotional moments in the whole movement. People crying and carrying on, you know. Cause we were all on a high, you know. Emotionally we were all up there on cloud nine, just absolutely absorbed in this whole thing about protest and, you know, getting it done. Really fanatical at that point. But I think there were a few of us who were trying to keep our cool. And that was one of those moments that really was... meant a lot to me, especially because I didn't know that students had that much respect, you know, confidence in me. You know, it really made me feel good, but at the same time I knew it wasn't good for the group to depose a leader just because people were reacting emotionally to something, without really giving thought to what they were doing. So the movement did bring a lot of stimulating experiences. I was a delegate to the convention at Shaw University, which was in April of 1960, I think, and... at which time SNCC was founded. That conference was put on by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, I think. Miss Ellen Baker was

primarily the instigator in getting it together. Dr. King was there and a lot of other folk who were identified with the movement were there at the time. And it was there that the basic structure for SNCC developed. Now, if I'm not mistaken, the name of SNCC came out of a sort of task force. We organized the conference into task forces, and each task force had a specific responsibility. The task force that I was head of had the responsibility of coming up with a name, and it came out of our little group - Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee.

But... then, of course, I was in jail several times. I was in jail with Dr. King when the famous telephone call was made to the jail.

J.B.: That was from John Kennedy?

Brown: Yeah.

J.B.: What was your reaction at that time to it?

Brown: Well, I didn't know the call had been made until later, but my reaction was great. Well, now, of course, I didn't have to be convinced to be a Kennedy man. I was one of the few blacks around here who was saying that he was a better man. Of course, I was in the minority. Matter of fact, I was... this was in... yeah, this was still in '60. I was pushing for... this was a new school year, '60-'61, I was president of the student body at that time, succeeding Jim Felder. And we had a straw poll on the campus, and Nixon won the straw poll. by two votes. And Jimmy and I were embarrassed because we were strong Kennedy men. But I say that to say that I was not converted by the phone call. My conviction and my belief in him was substantuated by the phone call.

J.B.: Were many people converted by the phone call?

Brown: Yes. Yes. And it had more positive effect outside Atlanta than inside Atlanta. See, the black Republicans were so much better organized than the black Democrats, Atlanta blacks voted a majority for Nixon in spite of that phone call. But in the areas outside of Atlanta where blacks are heavily concentrated, there was an overwhelming black vote for John Kennedy. And much of it was owed to that one phone call.

W.D.V.: Was that the last time there was any significant black vote for a Republican candidate for president?

Brown: That was it. That was it. Of course, Atlanta just completely turned around... Atlanta blacks were completely...

W.D.V.: Can you think back... I know you can't go back to 1948, but what would have made the basic changes in terms of black Republican activity from '48 on, and if the turning point proves to be 1960?

Brown: Well, there was beginning of... I'm thinking primarily of Atlanta. Atlanta had a very sophisticated Republican group that knew how to organize, and that was basically John Calhoun. And he was turning those folk out. Now there was still a strong Democratic pull, but they were still in a minority. That pull was led by people like Warren Cocker and A. T. Walden, who were very... and Chief Aiken, Walter Aiken, who were very strong Democrats and identified with Truman. And I do remember vaguely the '48 elections... I don't know all the dynamics behind it, but my mother was talking about Truman - I remember that much. And I don't know why she was talking about Truman. But I would say that there was a significant identification with the New Deal and all that Truman stuff. But at the same time, in the city of Atlanta, where you had organized politics, they

Republican. Now close analyses show that the majority of the blacks throughout the state went Democratic. It was through the state that the Democratic leaders had more control. But the city Republicans had Atlanta, and that's the distinction I'm making. Now, the city of Atlanta and the state became predominantly Democratic after '60. I mean, there was just no contest with the Republicans. Republicans were ashamed.

W.D.V.: But the Republicans did have some black strength outside of Atlanta? Before 1960?

Brown: Republican or Democratic?

W.D.V.: The Republicans.

Brown: They had a little, but it wasn't as strong.

W.D.V.: So the basic change was in Atlanta. It wasn't...

Brown: Basically it was, right. The basic change was in Atlanta.

W.D.V.: And that started in 1960.

(Interruption in recording.)

J.B.: ... pick up side. Just a minute. It's on.

W.D.V.: Is there any... do you think... well, then you had '64 with Goldwater, and then '68 with Nixon and Humphrey. Is there any chance Republicans will pick up some of that black strength again? Either in the city or outside of it.

Brown: It's going to be a long time, because I think the Nixon thing is going to be... have far-reaching negative effects. Not only on the black voter but on the white voter too. I just think it's going to take them a while for the Republicans to clean up. I mean, it's just a bloody mess.

W.D.V.: We heard a lot in 1968 about the Republican southern strategy. Did any of that sink through to blacks, that there was a conscious strategy working?

Brown: Well, it certainly sank through to me. I could very well see what the Nixon people were doing, and they just used the southern whites very effectively. They used the right kind of psychology and they appeared sincere... they appealed to the fears of not only the white southerner, the... what they really should have been saying is that they were... they had a white southern mentality strategy, which did not necessarily reside in the South. Because it certainly resided in other parts of the country. Because the same fear that they raise in a southern white man can be raised in a Michigan

. So I think the clear... the best way to describe the phenomenon of '68 was to say that it was a southern white mentality of 1860 that got Richard Nixon elected president of the United States. And that was very clear to me.

W.D.V.: How about in his re-election in '72? We're talking about the southern strategy.

Brown: Oh, of course, the Democratic party... well, even in '68 the Democratic party... the Democratic party will have to take blame for losing the election, you know, notwithstanding the southern mentality strategy. Had we been able to coalesce and... you know, behind Hubert Humphrey, he would have been president. But it was just stupid for the so-called liberals to go around talking about there's no difference between Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon. I mean, it's just obvious, now more than ever, to have made that resolve. And that's

what did us in. Eugene McCarthy with his idiotic... I don't know how you felt about Gene, but I thought he was stupid the way he... the way he defeated us. Eugene McCarthy defeated us. In 1968.

W.D.V.: Well, if it's obvious to Republicans, as it is to you, that there's very little chance to get blacks in the future, then it would make sense to stay with the present strategy, what you call the southern white mentality.

Brown: Except that... well, that was enough to get them solidified enough to cause proliferation of the Democratic force, which was traditionally the Democratic force. I'm not sure that the Republicans can maintain that credibility. I know they can't. Because they've been in the driver's seat and caused economic repression to those same folks that they said they was helping. Those are the guys who are getting the pinch now. Now, I'm thinking that those people have enough sense to peek through the strategy. You know, when they go down to the store and have to pay two dollars for a gallon of milk. I'm thinking that what has happened since 1968 will cause those people, those marginal voters, reason to want to look toward supporting another administration with a different kind of economic policy. They found out that the black ~~men~~ ^[mah woi't] come in and rape all of them. That they weren't going to burn out all of the towns. But they've also found out that with the Republicans in office, their taxes'll soar, their prices of food will soar, all of the health programs are dry, you know. They're messed up.

W.D.V.: What you're saying is that there's very little opportunity for Republicans to make gains among blacks, but also among lower

middle class and middle class whites, for whom race may have been a factor in '68 and '72, but now economics are more important, and they think they're more important.

Brown: That's precisely what I'm...

W.D.V.: That doesn't leave them much opportunity for growth, then, in this state?

Brown: In the state of Georgia? No, it doesn't. It doesn't leave much growth for the Republicans anywhere except where you've got organizational Republicans who control county courthouses and state houses where you've got the patronage, where it can be more real. Politics can be more real. Then you can very well see some kind of Republican allegiances. Thirty per cent of any given community is going to be basically Republican in most instances. Thirty per cent is going to be basically Democrat.

J.B.: When did you...

Brown: When you're talking about sixty...

J.B.: Go ahead. I'm sorry.

Brown: You're talking about a forty per cent grouping in there that can go either way, basically. Based on whatever their personal problems are. Their personal fears are. And if that was the basket in which the Republicans put together their strategy.... Excuse me.

J.B.: I was going to.... Did you want to follow up on that?

W.D.V.: No. Move on to something else.

J.B.: When did you decide you wanted a political career?

Brown: It sounds storybookish, but I had a high school civics teacher named Harriet Mitchell Moore - or, she was Harriet Mitchell at that

time - a young gal from Spellman. And she took an interest in me, and of course I had an interest in her for some reason. We used to talk about news and things. I used to read the newspapers and read about politics and I asked questions about it. And, you know, she took an interest and she stimulated me to read more. And I started doing biographies of political figures. This was ninth grade. And I remember still, very distinctly, that I said I was going to be in politics. I mean, I was going to be a great senator or something. That was long before we had any blacks in Georgia politics. Well, that was the period. I knew where I was going and everything I've done has been in progression. It's been right along those same lines. I knew that the re-apportionment was coming and that I was going to be right of school and going to walk right into it. I don't know. Some people say that's clairvoyance, but... and I have been accused of being very psychic. But it was an early ambition, and I just, you know, followed in place.

J.B.: LeRoy Johnson was the first black in the legislature. Is that right? 1960? State senate?

Brown: 1962.

J.B.: Were you one of the first in the House? The first?

Brown: One of the first. There were eight of us who went in in '65.

J.B.: In that special election?

Brown: Yes. Which included Grace Hamilton, Reverend J. D. Greer, John Hood, Albert Thompson, J. C. Dougherty, W. H. Alexander, Julian Bond, and myself.

J.B.: How many of that original group are still serving in the legislature?

Brown: All but one. J. D. Greer, he voluntarily...

J.B.: Well, was the principal factor the re-apportionment?

Brown: That was the factor.

J.B.: That was the factor.

Brown: Heretofore, or prior to that time, Fulton County was most disproportionately represented. There were three representatives from Fulton County, which was the largest number of representatives any one county had. Every county had at least one, regardless to the size. It was a, you know, corresponding structure to the county unit system voting process, where every county was ascribed... assigned two county unit votes based on... just arbitrarily assigned two county unit votes. And as your population grew you could get up to a maximum of six, based on...

W.D.V.: How have things changed for you in the legislature since 1965?

Brown: Well, I think that the atmosphere there has been much better than people would have expected. The level of acceptance has been good. Many of the white legislators have become educated and more intelligent because we've been there. It has improved generally the race relations across the state, the fact that we've been functioning in the legislature. There's been no overt hostility expressed to me personally. I think what they've found out is that there are blacks who can operate just like they can operate. And many of these folks, they're still make admissions today, like "I just didn't know..." They really admit their ignorance. And the main thing is that when we get in those committees and when the bill goes down about whether

or not a bill is going to come out. Our vote is just as important as the other fellow's vote, and that's the way they look at it. On the Education Committee, which I serve, there are about thirty members. Fifteen... well, you have thirty members. There're six blacks out of the thirty, which leaves about twenty-four. And the whites are invariably split right down the middle on issues. And we can determine anything, whether it can pass or do not pass...

J.B.: Did you foresee that in 1965?

Brown: No, I didn't know what to foresee...

J.B.: Well, you said you were psychic.

Brown: I know, but I'm not that psychic. I mean, you know. Hadn't thought about it. If I think about it, I can foresee it. But I had not thought about what role... I looked at it as... well, I thought about what role we would play, but I didn't know what response we would get. And I said, "Well, I'll take it as it comes." And it came much more smoothly than I thought. After we got over that Julian Bond thing about the seating, things began to just relax and move on.

W.D.V.: Have there been any tense moments like that since then?

Brown: Not over race. I guess the closest thing...

W.D.V.: The portrait?

Brown: Hmm?

W.D.V.: The Martin Luther...

Brown: That thing didn't bother me. It didn't do nothing to me. I mean, you know, I didn't feel anything about that, but the legislature... Jimmy Carter handled that very smoothly. He did it very smoothly.

For one thing, he waited until we got out of town

I think we were out. It was over a week-end or something like that.

I mean, it was real well orchestrated, and it did not cause any speech-making, nobody got on the floor to condemn the governor or to condemn Martin Luther King. Just the opposite. We had speeches on Dr. King on his birthday and during Black History Week and had black choirs down there doing black heritage stuff like that.

W.D.V.: Were there any other tense moments, were you rebuffed...?

Brown: Oh, the other moment that could be considered tense... the Attica... when the Attica thing came down. When that little... not little, but that big incident occurred, there was all this sympathetic marching and everything across the country. So some of the students of the Attica Support Committee from Atlanta marched on the Capitol. And the people round there got a little nervous about them coming. And I meet them, and told them, you know, "Don't do it. Let me handle it." I just took it on as a personal challenge. And they were fussing there, had picket signs and everything. They were just getting ready to jump on the black legislators for not raising hell about Attica. They wanted to storm the House chamber. It's never hit the newspapers. I never wanted to make a news story out of it. They wanted to storm the House chamber, and I... the speaker had gotten word, and I just told him to cool it, don't get excited. Just go on and run the House and let me run this. So I was successful in getting the protesters to just come to the Capitol and go into the Appropriations Chamber, which is a big room. You're familiar with that room over there? And I called all the black members of

legislature out to talk to them. And we had an exchange. It was high and low, you know. We were just doing our thing. We had security. I wouldn't let anybody in that room until they locked the door. Let us have it. And we were in there for about an hour and a half, and later Sloppy Floyd, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, from Tryon, Georgia, wanted to raise a ruckus about using the room. And I just had to let him have a piece of my mind. He had... he did not know the background of what was going on. So I just told him it was no disrespect for the chairman of the committee, but, you know, sometimes you have to expedite and you do what you think's best at the time for the good of the whole. And that was a little public flak over our argument, because we were there exchanging some very harsh words. But the point that I'm making is that potential was diffused by just going in the room and discussing it with them, and they left very orderly. State troopers in a line

But it was just that quick thinking and organizing them into something positive. So we got a committee established and we looked at their complaints. And got the government, state government, involved in their concerns. And it dissipated. And then we got some things accomplished. We got library services in the jails...anyway, there was enough accommodation... concessions made on the Department of Corrections to satisfy the protesters. That was a very tense moment for me. But other than that, it's been very interesting. There're many... even the white folk over there that... you know, that I don't care to be bothered with. But that's natural, that's normal. There some even the black ones that I don't care to be bothered with too,

over there. But it all balances out. There is a core of people there that work and try to get it done. And I enjoy working with that core.

J.B.: How do you assess Carter as governor?

Brown: Well, Jimmy has been an excellent governor. He's a terrible politician, but he's an excellent governor because he has brought a new level of thinking to the state, not been afraid to look at new ideas, and to try to put them to work. He has brought some very capable people to state government who ordinarily wouldn't come, and just been a... dynamite in that regard. I think he has been miles and miles ahead of the legislature, in terms of his programmatic goals and desires. I just think he's been good. I didn't support him, but I think he's been a good governor. And he's not... he has not let all of the marks for being a great politician.

J.B.: What do you think are his shortcomings? How do you assess his shortcomings as a politician?

Brown: His only shortcoming is that he's too smart for most politicians and he's honest. He's a basically honest man, and most of them folk over there I know are a bunch of crooks. I mean, you know. I shouldn't have said that. I forgot you got on that tape. I'm not really saying they're crooks. What I'm saying is that so many guys, you know, they just... they double-deal themselves into a state of... I don't know how you'd describe it, but they're not concerned about people. A lot of them are not concerned about people. And I just... you know, people probably accuse me of the same thing, but some of those guys are over there dealing for special interests, only for special interests, for their own personal gain. And have not the slightest

desire to do anything for the people. Jimmy Carter's not that kind of guy. He will not make a political deal to compromise something that he thinks is designed to improve the quality of life for the people. He will not do it. And that's a bad politician. Because most people move out on the presumption that politics is the art of compromise. Now, I can buy that to some extent. But I do have a problem where it gets down to the not letting, when you're talking about short-changing the project or the program that is designed to do some one thing in order to help another cat do something that ain't necessarily important. Or certainly will represent a lower priority. Now you... sometimes you're forced to make compromises, and that's where Jimmy comes up short. He's got... he doesn't... he will not make those compromises, but I think that's a plus for him, myself. But most politicians think it's his weakness. I think it's his plus.

J.B.: Does he have an image among most politicians of being somewhat devious?

Brown: No, I don't think so. Certainly not from my perspective. I say he's smart, but I don't think he's devious. Devious, to me, denotes...

J.B.: I'm not asking is he devious, but I'm asking is he perceived by many politicians as being devious?

Brown: Yeah, well, I understand your carefully worded question.

J.B.: And I didn't mean you. I meant among other politicians.

Brown: No, I understand what you're saying, but I could not make that conclusion. I just think he's just good, and I mean, his ideas,

his basic philosophy of government, are compatible to mine.

J.B.: Did you... why did you support Sanders?

Brown: I supported Sanders.

J.B.: Why?

Brown: I supported Carl, number one, because he did have a record.

I think he and Jimmy are very much alike except that he has one quality that Jimmy doesn't have. He is a good politician. He's an excellent politician, who had a proven record of progressiveness.

And I just thought he could win, with all the ingredients to make for an even more progressive state. I... you know, that was just my... I had supported Carl before, and I just thought he would be great right along in now. But Jimmy's proven to be just as great if not greater.

J.B.: Who do you think's going to be the next governor?

Brown: I don't know. I think I can more safely say that Lester Maddox will not be the next governor.

J.B.: What was the effect... let me ask you a two part question. One, five months ago, how much support would you have predicted for Lester Maddox among blacks, and, two, what was the effect of his attack on the King portrait?

Brown: Are you asking me what was his... would his support have been prior to the attack on King?

J.B.: Right.

Brown: I would say absolutely nothing, you know. Wouldn't even be a one per cent. And it hasn't improved after the King thing. No, I... a lot of people go around talking about what Lester did for black people.

Lester hasn't done a damn thing for black folks. Some things happened when he was governor, but they were not out of the volition of Lester Maddox. And I don't think he... I mean, I don't... he's not going to get any appreciable black vote.

W.D.V.: Didn't the Bill Hamilton poll we looked at from last fall show that fifteen per cent of the blacks were for Maddox? That was about a twenty-eight per cent approval rate.

Brown: Well, there're a lot of people who say that Lester Maddox was not a bad governor, but that's a hell of a lot different from saying they'll vote for him.

W.D.V.: It's basically Democratic politics right now, Maddox and anti-Maddox forces?

Brown: Yeah. But I really don't think Maddox will be in the run-off. I think the day of Lester Maddox is gone, and it never would have arose if the Georgia law had not been so screwed up. People forget...

W.D.V.: You mean the election by legislature?

Brown: Right. People forget that Lester Maddox was not elected governor by the majority of the people of the state.

W.D.V.: So you think he is the last of his kind?

Brown: Oh, yes.

J.B.: If Beau Callaway have made any sort of overtures toward the black voters, do you think he would have won in that race?

Brown: Sure. He could have won it hands down. But he was stupid, too. And I didn't vote for him. I didn't vote for Lester Maddox either.

J.B.: Did you write in for ~~Arnold~~ *Arnall*?

Brown: Yeah. I just couldn't do it.

J.B.: V. O. Key in his book on southern politics says in Georgia that two things are outstanding. One is the sectionalized politics and secondly, if you understand the politics of race, you understand the politics of the state. Is that still true?

Brown: I don't think so. I think race is a secondary issue in this gubernatorial race because what has really happened is that there were forces in the state like George L. Smith who is deceased now, who represent a real significant political apparatus. George L. and those guys sat back and let Lester Maddox happen. They weren't sure where Georgia was on the race question. It could have gone either way and made the difference. But they sat back and let it happen. But those same forces that George L. Smith represented - the silent force in this state - have decided that Lester Maddox will not be the man. And they're going to work to see that he's not the man. And this is something that did not happen in the race for governor, nor in his race for lieutenant governor, which he won by 50.1 per cent.

J.B.: Who are those forces?

Brown: Well, it's hard, you know. Henry Bowens... I don't know whether these names mean a damn thing to you, but a guy like, well, George L. Smith was the speaker of the House and had a network of folks, you know, legislators, that he had... that were owing to him. And he could call the signal any time he wanted to. He was one of the most powerful men in the state. Herman Talmadge was one of those men, and you can see where Herman has gone. Sam ^{Caldwell}~~Carr~~well, who is a silent giant in this state. Of course, Sam is not that silent. He

was very much on the other side of Lester. But a combination of all of these active forces in opposition to Maddox convinces me... that convince me that Lester Maddox is being defeated and all of his kind. Those guys are looking at that dollar bill, man, the industry stuff. And Jimmy Carter's helped them a lot. He's brought us to a new level of anticipation, the whole international thrust, the whole national scope, this p.r. that he brought to Georgia from the national thing. And they're ready to move. The big companies, Southern Railroad, Coca Cola, Georgia Power, and all those people. Those are the silent... that's that third force. And they've made that decision, and that's why... I'm about to answer your question. That's why Mr. Maddox will not be the governor of Georgia.

W.D.V.: Suppose the voting rights act were not extended, and the busing legislation you have pending before the congress passes. Will you ever go back to where you were, so to speak, before this time, in the early sixties, in terms of race relations?

Brown: Oh, no. I don't think... busing, that's such a superficial issue. I don't think we'll ever go back, notwithstanding the busing thing. That's really superficial. I mean, I don't give a damn what congress does on that. I ain't going to bus my kids either, you know. I don't... I just don't think that my kids are going to learn any more by being in a school with white children.

W.D.V.: Forget that for a moment. Let's take the voting rights act, or take off all the compulsions, legal compulsions. Would you have a basic change in attitude again? Or would you revert back...

Brown: I don't think so. I really don't think... I think we're in

a irrevocable growth pattern, mental growth pattern here, and I don't see it going back.

J.B.: To what do you attribute that change, that growth?

Brown: I attribute it to the fact that the industrial leadership has made that decision. It's like in Atlanta, 1960, when Ivan Allen ~~lower~~ and those guys got together and made the decision that they were going to open this town. They were going to open their minds. They were going to be progressive. See, we could have made the same decision that Birmingham, Alabama made, which delayed their growth and development for fifteen years, you know. We could have made the same decision that Jacksonville made. We just... and we did. And when that tender marriage is formed, whatever level of government, then you're going to have positive progression toward something good. And I think that's where we are in Georgia. I just don't think we can go back. I really don't. And that's why Lester Maddox was not as damaging as a lot of people wanted him to be. Or thought he would be. Carl Sanders had brought us to a certain stage, and we stayed there, now... we didn't go back... we stayed on that stage. We didn't go forward either, but at least we didn't revert to the Marlon Griffin mentality. And it's been a natural progression, and now Jimmy Carter picked up on the same stage and started moving us forward, where Carl left off. Now I think I like George ~~Bush~~ *Busbee*. He's going to come in and take us right on up too. And Lacey's going to be more secondary than he was in the previous...

W.D.V.: Is that... would that be true of any of the nine candidates?

Brown: I think it would be true of all of them except Lester. Lester with nothing. I mean, he just doesn't have the wherewithall to move it. People look at him and laugh at him, and they're tired of that. I mean, the performance is over. 'Cause he ain't turned no money for the (End of side one.)... guy that I would... that would really be dynamite would be Bobby Rowan, but he can't pull it together. David Gambrell, I don't know where he is. He's... I don't know. I like David, but he doesn't know where he is either. He would be the most dangerous one we could get, because he would think that he has to accommodate things that took place fifteen, twenty years ago. Just because he is...

J.B.: Why do you say Rowan would be the best?

Brown: Well, I didn't say the best. I said he was... I didn't say he would be the best.

J.B.: You said he'd be dynamite.

Brown: Right. Bobby's... you know, he's out there, he's on the... he's issue oriented. He has a real commitment to people, I'd say.

It comes through a little better than the other guys. Now George ~~Busby~~ *Busbee* is probably the most capable of all of them, because of his experience. He's a workman, and he works and he likes to work. You know, he just enjoys doing things. And the things that he does are basically good things for people consumer oriented stuff. George T. Smith has probably got the best heart of all of them. He's just a sweet man, you know. But it seems though time has passed George T. by. You know, he's served as speaker of the house, he's served as lieutenant governor, he's got defeated in running for re-election as lieutenant

governor. And when.... probably when he went back he should have run for governor right after lieutenant governor. So, people are just starting to say, "Well, time is passing you by, George. It's somebody else for today." I like... I have an emotional tie to him, but, anyway... then there's Bert *Lance*. I really don't know where Bert is coming from. I just don't know. He's a nice guy, he's a banker. But I don't know what he's about. I don't know where he's making inroads. People say he has something going, but I don't know where it is. And who else do we have?

J.B.: Jackson. Hilary Jackson.

Brown: A very prince of a man. Yeah, just a great guy. But damn if I know where Jackson's... I don't know where he's getting any support from. I mean, you know, he's got Columbus, Georgia locked up. He bought that, probably. Not literally bought it, but he's such a rich man. He probably could be very formidable if there weren't so many folk in the race. I don't know. I just don't know where his base is either. I can't say nothing bad about any of those guys. I mean...

W.D.V.: Isn't that unusual?

Brown: Yes! Most unusual!

W.D.V.: Doesn't that disturb you?

Brown: Well,...

W.D.V.: How can you... such a proliferate... there are more candidates running for governor this year, we hear, than ever before. All right?

Brown: Yeah.

W.D.V.: And you can't really find - except for Maddox - anything bad to

say about all of them.

Brown: It doesn't bother me because I'm... I don't... I don't buy that theory that...

W.D.V.: I didn't mean bother you. I just had a sense... does that suggest something to you about Georgia politics that may be different now, or doesn't it?

Brown: Well, I've admitted that race is secondary. And we're getting a better stock to choose from.

J.B.: If race has moved or at least submerged as an issue, what... what... what are the issues?

Brown: Okay. Race is... race... let me say it this way. Race is a... and this may be a... might be thing of mine... race is a secondary issue. Race factor is going to be very important for the outcome of the race. Let me see if I can explain the difference. Nobody, you know, is trying to pit black against black. And that's what I would probably call racism. But everybody knows that the black vote is going to be one way or the other. The most could happen is a two way split. That is, a significant proportion of the vote. The black vote will determine who's in the run-off. Now, looking at race at that level, it's very key.

W.D.V.: Almost a strategic point of view in terms of the campaign.

Brown: Right.

J.B.: This goes back to one of my theories. V. O. Key said that understanding the politics of race is the key to understanding that... in a sense, it's still true, but from the other side of the coin.

Brown: It's not racism any more.

J.B.: No, it's not racism, still... but race... it's still the politics of race, but it's entirely different. Now you're talking about the fact that blacks vote and they tend... they tend frequently to vote together.

Brown: That's right.

J.B.: Is there any sort of effective statewide political... black political organization in Georgia. How effective is the Statewide Black Elected Officials Association?

Brown: The SBEO is a non-partisan organization. It's basic purpose is not to get involved in electoral politics. But we know that, through that network, that the messages can be passed. We don't have to meet and endorse candidates, you know, but the message is passed. So, to that extent, it will determine pretty much how the black vote goes.

J.B.: Is it much more of a sense of reaching a concensus that anything else?

Brown: We won't ever discuss it. It will never come up for debate.

J.B.: Just informally?

W.D.V.: It will be there, however.

Brown: It will be there.

J.B.: It will be discussed informally.

Brown: But not in session. Because the death of the organization will be immediate if we ever decide to endorse candidates.

J.B.: But it's discussed at lunch breaks... this sort of thing.

Brown: Coffee breaks and everything. But we don't have a Voter's League or any other kind of organization like that. Those organizations serve the purpose, I guess, of they created a certain class of black leadership

that has been... well, it's outmoded. I mean, you know. The time and the place. Politicians would take money down and pay a guy and put out a ticket for him and the vote. That is kind of over with. We don't like that any more. There are people who can endorse candidates and people will follow. But it's a little more complicated now. People have to have a level of acceptance before they even listen to you if you're endorsing anymore. They just don't take you for granted, that your endorsement is the endorsement. If they have some idea that this might be a good thing, then your endorsement only corroborates what they are thinking. And that will help them go on and make up their minds. But if they are completely opposed, you will know it. I mean, you can pick it up. The black leadership ain't going to support nobody that's just absolutely obnoxious to their constituency. Except in situations like the city race when some of us, you know, knew very well in the fact of the movement that certain people would lose, like LeRoy Johnson, whom I supported. Because I had a personal fondness, you know, with LeRoy Johnson. And I just felt it was one of those instances where I just had to stand out like a sore thumb and stick with my basic philosophy. I thought Le Roy would make a better mayor. But the movement... I knew the movement was going the way it was going. I mean, I would have been stupid to think otherwise.

J.B.: Why was LeRoy in that race?

Brown: I hadn't . I wish he had not been.

W.D.V.: Does anybody know?

Brown: I don't know. I'm not that close to him. I was much closer to Maynard personally than LeRoy Johnson. LeRoy is an adversary... at least, I've been an adversary to him. He put up somebody against me when I first ran. And he always looked to me as a threat to him. But I don't hold that against him. I still think he's a great legislator, and I thought he had the wherewithall to make a better mayor. I still hold to that.

J.B.: Why?

Brown: Well, you want to turn your tape off? (Interruption in tape.)

J.B.: Where do you see blacks in Georgia politics? That's at the state level in ten years.

Brown: Well, I think that there will be statewide elected people. I think the first job probably would be somebody at the Public Service Commission, or possibly Secretary of State when Mr. Ben decides to give it up. I think the necessity of that will be more clear as the Republicans sort of get themselves re-constructed. They were well on their way towards becoming a very significant entity in Georgia politics. I mean, they were really on their way. But I think the Nixon thing has really hurt them all over. So, the sooner we get a two-party system, the better the black picture's going to be. And it might just necessitate losing the state capitol in order to get us where we need to be.

J.B.: Yes, but you don't see any immediate growth in the Republican party?

Brown: No, no. That's complicating my thought.

J.B.: Yeah.

Brown: But... see, I had planned - planned! - but I had envisioned by 1976 that we would be at a point where the Republican party in Georgia would be so strong that the Republicans would be offering a black candidate for a statewide position. And then we would have to work it out with the Democrats to...

J.B.: Yeah.

Brown: You know how they do it in Connecticut. There's a slot just for the black vote. I mean, you know, I understand how that works. But it's only because there's a balancing out of the party that... and they're both having to quid pro quo. So I had sort of envisioned that being the case by now. But the Republicans sort of disappointed me because they come up with no-no's like Richard Nixon and Hal Suit and people who just completely washed them out.

J.B.: If Bentley had gotten the Republican nomination, would he have been a formidable candidate for governor?

Brown: No. No. One thing about these Democrats in Georgia is they don't like for you to switch. There has never been a Republican who switched and won, at the state level. All of them got soundly defeated.

W.D.V.: Wouldn't the way to achieve this be to get some good blacks into the Republican party?

Brown: How can you do it? I mean, you know...

J.B.: There are a few aren't they?

Brown: They're... yeah, but they're... they aren't good. I guess some of them are good. How do you do it? I don't know. One time I was involved in a two-party club, trying to do just that. And I found my...

found my bias was too strong... that I couldn't adequately encourage anybody to go the other way.

J.B.: Is there a feeling among black politicians in Georgia, because I picked up some of this in other states, is there a feeling among black politicians in Georgia that they wish there were more blacks active in the Republican party? Simply to have a voice and say-so?

Brown: It would be to our advantage to have more blacks involved in the Republican party, you know, for the simple reason that the Democrats would be more inclined to consider our concerns.

J.B.: There's never been any third party black movement in Georgia. Am I correct? I mean, in recent years.

Brown: Nothing of any consequence. C. B. King's effort for governor, I guess, could be considered a preliminary step in that way, but it didn't really materialize. I'm opposed to a third party movement right now. That is, all black. I could go along with a third party movement that's all-encompassing, but I just think it's suicidal to talk about a third party movement, if your goal is to have... you know, to get folks involved in the electoral process. Now, if your goal is something else, then I will re-consider it on that basis. But it's just foolhardy to think that we can elect new people in a third party movement. It's just too complicated for folks to digest. I mean, to un-brainwash them of those labels. As long as they are there for them to choose from, they are going to choose the one that's most familiar.

J.B.: Do you see Georgia sort of moving toward any change in the election system? Doing away with paper ballots, for example? Going to voting machines statewide?

Brown: That's a long time coming. Yeah, you couldn't change some of them country bumps without... you know, that's a long time coming. In the urban areas, yes. But in rural Georgia, no. I do see change coming in regard to... of course, change is upon us, really, about the primary elections. And I do see eventually party registration, which I think is very crucial. If you're going to have any kind of primary system you've got to have party registration, I would say.

W.D.V.: Do you see more blacks in the legislature?

Brown: Yes.

W.D.V.: From the single-member districts?

Brown: Yes. We should increase by at least nine this year. As a result of the '74 elections.

J.B.: And there're what now? Fourteen?

Brown: Fourteen.

J.B.: Fourteen total or fourteen in the house?

Brown: Fourteen in the house, two senators. We should pick up at least nine more house members and possibly two senators. The potential is there. It just requires a little work and some of us are trying to work on that to stimulate persons to run.

J.B.: How effective is... well, how effective is, one, the Black Caucus in the legislature, and, two, the Urban Caucus in the house?

Brown: Well, the Black Caucus is effective to the extent that it gives us an opportunity to sit down and discover what each is doing in the various committees. We don't try to discipline our caucus members, but fortunately after we discuss issues and we look at the pros and the cons, we usually vote - that is, on major issues - we usually vote a certain...

well, we usually vote together, on major issues. Of course, there have been some marked opposing differences between the different members on the... in the caucus, particularly on the question of capital punishment. You know, I... of course, there's either-or... it's just an either-or situation. You're for it or you're against it. But then there're all different levels of justification and reasons. We have the whole gamut on that.

J.B.: How about E.R.A.?

Brown: E.R.A. there was no problem. Everybody was for that. Well, ninety-five per cent of us were for it. Banking, the holding company legislation, all of us supported that. Re-apportionment we were pretty much in unity. So, it represents a very important... very important vehicle for us. Now, the Urban Caucus is not nearly as effective as it should be, and that's because we just haven't had the kind of leadership that an Urban Caucus requires. Now, there are more urban legislators than rural legislators by definition. But we have never been able to pull that together.

J.B.: Are there issues, or frequent issues, in which blacks and urban Republicans get together on?

Brown: There are many.

J.B.: What would be some of them?

Brown: Well, usually on issues like... matters affecting, well, re-apportionment and stuff where you've got to draw lines and stuff. The Republican's interest is about the same as ours. They want certain districts so they can elect Republicans. We want certain districts so we can elect Democrats. The classic example, of course,

was the county commission lines, where we are now moving from a three man commission elected at large to a seven man commission, three of whom can be elected at large. Drawing those lines came... and gave us an opportunity to work with the Republicans. They were concerned about having a district or two, and we were concerned about having our districts, so...

J.B.: Is this a local thing, or...?

Brown: This was a local example.

J.B.: This was what? Fulton County?

Brown: Right.

J.B.: Commission?

Brown: Right. But on the whole the Republicans and the Demo... and the blacks usually share the minority mentality.

J.B.: What would happen if the Republicans were to nominate someone like Mike Egan for governor?

Brown: Mike Egan would be a very... very much acceptable candidate. And if he were in the general election against Lester Maddox, I would stump the state for him.

J.B.: All right, suppose he were in the general against whatever anti-Maddox candidate emerges in the...

Brown: He wouldn't have a ghost of a chance. He'd get wiped out, creamed.

J.B.: Given a choice between a moderate Republican and a moderate Democrat, do you think black voters will vote over-whelmingly for the Democrat?

Brown: Oh, yes. Yes. They would have to be hypnotized to vote for Mike Egan, even over Lester Maddox. It would take a massive effort.

J.B.: Is this simply because of the image that the Republican has among blacks?

Brown: Oh, it's... I'd rather say it the other way. It's so much a part of the way of life for them to vote Democrat, without even really considering the Republicans. There are some people who would be affected by the negativism of the Republicans, when it's more pro-Democrat.

J.B.: Is this just an outgrowth of what began with Goldwater? Was that the start of it?

Brown: No, the start of it is the whole... John F. Kennedy, which was a re-birth of Roosevelt and Truman and all that put together.

J.B.: We kind of covered that when you were... What do you find among young blacks in terms of attitudes toward politics?

Brown: Well...

J.B.: And comparing it, say, from five or ten years ago to now, and where you project it.

Brown: Oh, yeah. I think it's much more interesting and much more active. The young folk all want to get involved. They want to run for office, stuff like that.

J.B.: Is this...

Brown: This was not the case... this was not the case when I was... well, younger. Nobody envisioned or talked about politics but a few of us. When I was sitting around drinking beer and stuff, we never talked about getting elected to office or nothing. But these guys are keyed up. Should you worry about whether they're going to run against you? Everywhere you turn, somebody's running for something. And I think that's

good. I just wish some of it was spread out across the state.

J.B.: That was going to be my question. Is this as true outside Atlanta as it is inside?

Brown: It's not true outside of Atlanta. But I wish it were... I wish we could interest some of the young folk to go to places like Stevens and Hancock County, you know, and be another John McCowan and get going. There're many places like that. My little home county, Macon, Georgia... Macon County, rather,... is ninety... eighty per cent black. They don't have a black elected official down there. I kid my wife now about going back down there and becoming a county commission chairman. That's the kind of thing that needs to happen. But the interest and enthusiasm is definitely there.

J.B.: Do you see that happening? People going back to these small counties?

Brown: I have no real measure of that right now. I think it will happen. I really think it will. Cause Atlanta's going to reach its saturation and, you know, with, oh, ten or fifteen more years and then we're going to be downhill.

J.B.: Hancock County has no... there's no legislators from there. It's part of a legislative district, I presume.

Brown: There are... the chairman of the Democratic Caucus is from that area. He is vulnerable only because of the statistics, and we can defeat him, really, if we wanted to. But we're going to try to keep him and use him for leverage for some things.

J.B.: Who is that?

Brown: Rory Lambert.

J.B.: What was the reaction, or how split was it, when LeRoy Johnson went and campaigned for Hugh Gillis, among the black legislators?

Brown: He didn't campaign for him among us.

J.B.: No. When he campaigned for Gillis, what...

Brown: Oh, you mean what was the reaction on the part of the legislators to him...

J.B.: Right.

Brown: ... for having done that. Oh. Well, excuse me for stretching, gentlemen. LeRoy is a master politician and I'm sure he had reasons for doing it. And his reasons maybe became apparent when Hugh Gillis won, and Lester... and LeRoy became chairman of the Judiciary...

That's the name of the game.

W.D.V.: There's your quid pro quo.

J.B.: Okay, I was... I didn't... I've been trying to find out what he got out of it.

Brown: It's pretty simple. That's the name of the game.

J.B.: So he's now chairman of the Judiciary Committee?

Brown: Yes.

J.B.: How powerful is the Judiciary Committee in the senate here?

Brown: Well, no committee's forward in the senate the way that damn place operates. But it can be, as long as the... as long as the... presiding officer and the chairman are together. But whenever the chairman and the presiding officer break, then the effectiveness of that committee is correspondingly weakened. It's proportionate. The presiding officer has the right to channel legislation to any

committee he wants to. He doesn't have to send it because it's germane or not germane. And Lester... if a bill is assigned to LeRoy and LeRoy acts on it one way and in opposition to what Lester wants, and I'm using the personalities because they fill those roles right now. Then Lester has to do... all he has to do is stop it in the Rules Committee, if it passes out. And if it doesn't pass out, all he has to do is get another bill drawn up, and then he assigns it to a committee that he knows is going to... he'll assign it to 's committee, and is going to do what he tells him to do. So it's relative, you know, to...

J.B.: Are there any black judges on the state level in Georgia?

Brown: No.

J.B.: Is this considered an issue among blacks, the absence of such?

Brown: Oh, yes. This is very much an issue and we dealt with it as best we can. We think that... well, it's not going to be on the state level. It's in the state system. We think we will get a judge before the Carter administration ceases. We've worked on it for years. But nothing has happened. Probably have to end up running somebody, and that's... that would be one of those symbolic things, because I don't think we can elect anybody statewide for judge right now. But we could elect judges here in Fulton County.

J.B.: That would be at what level?

Brown: Superior Court, which is the... which is our...

J.B.: That's the trial.

Brown: Yeah. It's the trial level. It's the court of first instance, really, in terms of the state structure.

J.B.: It goes from Superior to Appeals Court to Supreme Court.

Brown: Right. Right. And, of course, we have a glorified J.P. Court here, which we call the Fulton County Civil Criminal Court. Which in most cities would be the Justice of the Peace, or the lower level...

J.B.: Recorder's Court.

Brown: Well, it's a little more than Recorder's Court, because we do have a city court which is like the magistrate, commitment, you know. And you can be bound over either to the Superior Court or to the Recorder's... Civil and Criminal Court. And we have nobody at that level. We do have black judges at the city magistrate level.

J.B.: Where is Andy Young's role in black politics in Georgia?

Brown: Well, he's a movement leader, and he's a congressman.

That's where I would guess that he wanted to be.

J.B.: Is he a member of the Black Elected Officials Association?

Brown: Sure.

J.B.: Is he active and does he attend meetings?

Brown: Well, he made the last one. Yes, he's active. As active as the group is. (Interruption for phone call.) ... I'm sure that as long as you've got, we can talk.

J.B.: We're going to have to go soon. Do you have anything else you wanted to ask?

W.D.V.: Don't think so.

J.B.: I have one last question I want to ask.

W.D.V.: What haven't you told us that we ought to know?

Brown: I don't know. I'm not the talkative type.

J.B.: One last question I wanted to ask is the... how much importance do you place on the hanging of the portrait of Martin Luther King at the state capital?

See

Brown: /how important I think it is? I think it's very significant.

J.B.: All right. You sort of... here you pointed to a picture on the wall of you. Is that your family?

Brown: That's my family.

J.B.: Would... was that at the unveiling of the portrait?

Brown: Yes. I think it was very significant. I think it was very symbolic of years of... two hundred years of... two hundred and one years, to be exact, that Georgia was chartered in 1773.

W.D.V.: I thought it was 1776.

Brown: The U. S. Congress... I mean, the United States was... we were already a colony.

W.D.V.: Oh, well, if you look on the capitol, the thing says 1776 in the floor there.

Brown: Well, I don't know. We are... we were one of the original colonies. But I think it's very significant that a black man's picture hangs in the Georgia State Capitol, because we know that blacks have contributed to the development of Georgia and the nation, and Georgians have contributed to the nation. And there's just no... you wouldn't know that if you didn't see it, because it's not taught in schools adequately. We hope that that's changing. They tell me it is, because of some of the things we've tried to do through the years to bring it about. You look around there and you see all those people, the Daughters of the American Revolution and all that kind of stuff, and you think

black folks just didn't live here. And not only in Georgia. There's not many places in the country where there's a black portrait hanging in the city hall or capitol. You know, do a survey. You'll find, you know, that this is just not the thing to do. It's just not a part of the process. So I think Jimmy started something here that has far-reaching implications for the young black kids that visit the capitol and see this portrait hanging. I mean, it's... they feel worthy, they feel a part of it. And this is part of the whole thing that we got to work on in this country, to eliminate all the vestiges of racial discrimination and denying historical recollection is one of the worst parts of it. Because you only secure people's hostilities that are born out of ignorance if you don't try to break that chain.

J.B.: How important was Rita Samuel^{ls} appointment to the executive office?

Brown: Great. I think she has been very effective. She's helped the government grow, to become more sensitive and more strategic in manifesting its sensitivity. And she... many of the things that might have happened the way it happened... they might have happened, but I think she has helped him make them happen more meaningfully.

J.B.: Is there anything else? You said... let me ask you just one more last question. Do you see... when do you see the more rural areas of Georgia sending black representatives... black legislators...?

Brown: We're going to have some coming up this year. Let's say the less urban areas of Georgia. We'll have some coming up. At least two from Macon, possibly have two from Albany, one extra from Screven County, that general area over there.

J.B.: What city is that?

Brown: I think Wadley, Georgia, Louisville, over in that general area. We're trying to get somebody over toward the Sandersville area.

have one. Down around Coweta County, possibility there. And then we'll pick up, probably pick up two seats in Atlanta that are now held by whites.

J.B.: ;What single thing that you've participating in in a political capacity has given you the most satisfaction?

Brown: Oh, wow. Getting that damn Georgia Residential Finance Agency bill passed. Course, I didn't get the credit for that. I...

but, I served as chairman of the Community Development and Housing Subcommittee, and we were responsible for getting a... the Georgia Residential Finance Agency passed after four years of work. It's really a state [housing] program. Provides mortgage money for the... for home construction and other technical assistance for developing housing for people in Georgia. It's an authority which will be self-generating, self . That's the most gratifying experience I've had as a legislator per se.

J.B.: When did that pass?

Brown: This year.

J.B.: How much authorization do they have in terms of money?

Brown: Unlimited. It's not under state coverage. It does not jeopardize the state bonding capacity, although there is an implied security on the part of the state. Anytime you've got a state agency...

J.B.: There's no full faith and credit?

Brown: There's no full faith and credit obligation.

sell

as many bonds as... we didn't have a limitation on it. It would set its own limitations and regulations.

J.B.: And this will be primarily for low income?

Brown: We're trying to... it's finance for low to moderate income, really, because we're not trying to pre-empt the federal government. They've already pre-empted us on public housing. We're not trying to provide public housing. We're just trying to provide low cost money to those people in the crunch. The guys who're ineligible to be in public housing, but don't have enough to... pardon me... to make the commercial rate. And they're shooting... and that's probably the guy that has an annual income of \$7500 up to about maybe \$15,000 or \$20,000. I'm told that a guy can borrow - or should be able to borrow - two and a half times his annual income for the purpose of mortgages. And that kind of money just ain't available today. So that's the group that we're... and that's the most gratifying thing that's happened. Now, another level of participation in politics which has offered me a great challenge was the Democratic National Convention in 1972. I spoke at that convention. I don't know whether you remember, but I spoke on the California challenge. I was supportive of the majority committee's report, which denied McGovern all of that California vote. And the position, of course, was that we had determined in '68 that no... no form of unit voting would be permitted in the Democratic party; although the California law permitted it, we were saying that the Democratic party has the last word. We were the supreme body, the convention, and we would make that determination. And that's what... the majority report was to apportion out the votes, the primary votes, the delegate votes, based on the number

or the percentage of votes received by each of the contenders of the Democratic primary in California. That was thrilling, to have been asked to do that at the National Convention. That was a real high-water mark. The person asked me to do it... well, they had to... they were looking for me for four hours that day, and I don't know where I was, caucusing here and there and they just didn't find me. I got to the Convention Hall at eight thirty that night, and I was fetched and told that I will be going on around twelve o'clock. And, of course, that was a real shock, and I immediately went to the rest room and I swear I stayed in there ten minutes getting my nerves together. I was just having... that was my reaction to it. I had to just start running off. So after that was over with, I got myself together and I jotted down some notes, and twelve o'clock came so fast. And that was exciting. The next most exciting time as in Chicago in '68, with the challenge of the Lester Maddox delegation. That story has really never been told, because, there again, my profile is very low. But I was very much instrumental in setting up that whole challenge process, along with Al Care and the Democratic party forum. We set up the rump session in Macon and, of course, history has it that it was a Julian Bond effort. It wasn't at all. But they did take over the convention, the rump convention, the McGovern people... not McGovern, McCarthy.

J.B.: McCarthy.

Brown: Same crowd. Anyway, they took over the damn thing and I was... and we were to blame, because we were... we just never... we were very immature, very naive, about the damn thing. And we didn't try to stack it, and we just were concerned about having a challenge. And we looked

up and there they were when we got to Macon. And I really have to laugh, I really have to laugh about it. And the only thing that hurt me is that I thought that Julian and I were close enough for him to have at least prepared me for it, you know? I thought he really... and here I am in direct competition or conflict with Julian, and that just... that did something to me emotionally. I mean, you just don't do that to people that're supposed to be your friends. I would've accommodated and facilitated them, because my purpose was not to take any delegate of any description to Chicago. I just wanted to make sure that there was a challenge to Lester Maddox and the hand-picked system. I didn't give a damn whether they were Humphrey or whomever. And it really hurt me when the McCarthy people, and Julian was right in there with them, took over. I mean, literally took over. And they tried to elect me chairman of the convention after they had thrown Al Care, and I said, "No, sir." I couldn't do it. I was just a wreck. I was an emotional wreck at that point. So, trying to keep myself together, I just... we left. We left the convention before it concluded. And I... I was selected a delegate in my absence, and I just had to give it up. 'Cause I figured they had it. Joe ~~Rile~~ *Rawh* told me absolutely everything. You know Joe?

J.B.: No.

Brown: Out of Washington. He's a big...

J.B.: Oh, yeah.

Brown: You know Joe ~~Rile~~ *Rawh*. Everybody knows Joe. But anyway, they really drove us through the mill, and I just left. And they named me vice-chairman of the delegation. Julian was chairman. But I immediately went to work, and, you know, I got back out over that. I went to work

to try to put the thing together and raise the money to help get the folks to Chicago. We had the great struggle of presenting the challenge, so I went... Julian and I went to present the challenge, I made testimony and all. And the thing that was most fascinating is that I was the liaison between the Julian Bond forces and the labor crowd and the National Committee. I don't know how I got in that whole thing. I was the facilitator for working out that whole compromise. And it was the most hectic thing, because there was Governor Hughes was the chairman, and everything had to filter through me. See, Georgia was so split up... the Georgia challenge was split, and it never came out that way. The people never know that, but the Georgia challenge itself was split. It was split between the McCarthy and the Humphrey forces, you know. In spite of the take-over we still had a significant block of Humphrey people, and I ended up being the facilitator between the Humphrey people and the McCarthy people. And the Committee. I remember calling Ivan Allen, he was in the shower, trying to get some information to convince the Committee that the challenge was legitimate. I had to put him in touch with Richard Hughes. It was really an exciting kind of thing. Julian and I went up there for what we thought would be a two day hearing before the Committee, and we ended up being there a whole week. We never got back home before the convention. So they ended up sending clothes up. And my wife, Elaine, had been pregnant for about nine months... she just had the baby. She just had the baby in May, and all of this was taking place in August. So... and you know, all the rest of that stuff is history, but that was exciting. Really. One day I'm going to write a book about the other workings of it that I didn't tell you about.

J.B.: Did that have any kind of long range effect on the Democratic party in Georgia?

Brown: Yeah. Well, it had a lot on the Democratic party in Georgia, but it had long range implications and effect on the national Democratic party itself.

J.B.: In adopting what became the McGovern guidelines.

Brown: Yeah.

J.B.: Anything else?

W.D.V.: I'm curious about this... (End of tape.)