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This is an interview with Ashley Davis conducted by Russell Rymer in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Mr. Davis was a leader in the Black Student Movement at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill during the spring of 1969.

Russell Rymer: . . . I think they feel that what they know about the strike is pretty much said by the newspaper accounts and all, which. . .

Ashley Davis: Right. Well, I'll tell you what. If sometime you want to ask a little question while I'm telling you this, you can just stop me and ask, O.K.?

R.R.: All right.

Davis: And there might be some people who would disagree with what I say, or what I think happened, and so that's the way they see it. But let me just say this, I came to Carolina in the fall of 1968, and already you could tell that we were going to get into a lot of things that were coming up, you know, with BSM activity. And I think that at that time, Black student movements thrived a little more on controversy.

That seemed to be a binding place for black kids, for controversy. It's a lot different than I say it is now, because it didn't have all the programs that it has now, that can keep people busy anyway. There was no choir, no nothing, no this and that. At that time, just an organization. And at that time, the political atmosphere was very high. Well, right after I had been here awhile, too, if I remember what happened correctly, what happened was there had been some funds. . . and like I say, this is what I know, and there might be something else. . . that some people in the Sociology Department had gotten together and people with BSM, Preston Dobbins, I believe, had gotten together some funds and hired a guy by the name of Light here in Chapel Hill, Otis Light. . . I think it was Otis that did it. . . who worked with the cafeteria workers. Now, the cafeteria workers and the janitorial workers and other workers here had considered a strike. They were dissatisfied. The situation was that in the cafeteria at that time, the University was running it, it was highly inefficient. It was obvious to everybody that it was inefficient. I mean, you come up for a soda, you'd have one black lady to dip the ice, hand it to one black lady to put the soda in and then give to one black lady at the counter and she'd give it to you. This kind of thing. I mean that it was really just prone to problems. But this was due to mismanagement by the University, from my understanding by talking to workers prior to the strike and all, they had had prisoners, for a few

guys that had just gotten out of prison and stuff, hired as managers in the cafeteria system and all. And these guys would call the ladies names, just treat them generally like dogs.

R.R.: When did Otis start. . .

Davis: Start working? Now, my problem here is that I get so confused with my years. I think that the first strike was in the spring of. . .

R.R.: The first one here was in the spring of '69.

Davis: Right. I think that was in the spring of '69. Because this is what I'm saying, Otis had started working in the fall of '68.

R.R.: And when he started working, he was hired specifically to work with. . .

Davis: . . .to work with the people. This is what I understand. Now, only on one or two conversations did I run into this, this is what Otis was hired to do. Just to work with them, helping them to get themselves together and talking. O.K. Now, in this talk, I must emphasize that there were two particular groups of workers who had high potential. The Monogram Club, which was on campus over there where the Admissions Office is now, groups of ladies that worked down there, very active and outspoken. And then you had a group of ladies who worked in the Pine Room, and I think that this was the major center of the strike right there. It started with these ladies in the Pine Room.

R.R.: Why were they more susceptible than others?

Davis: Well, because I tend to think that they had two or three combinations of people down there who were. . .a Mrs. Smith, you'll

probably interview her. . .

R.R.: Well, I haven't, but. . .

Davis: Well, someone probably will. . . Mrs. Smith and some other ladies down there, really seemed to be out with the system. They were actually running the Pine Room and all. Mrs. Smith, I think, was ordering stuff, she was generally doing the managing. What was happening was that these ladies were managing the cafeteria system, but none of them were made managers, you see. So, they had no black managers as such. They had four managers, but the managers that they did have were kind of mean to the ladies, talking mean and they were making people do all kinds of stuff, like they would make you come to work and work four hours in the morning, say from six to ten, split your day and then you would go back to work from two to six. Now, that's an eight hour day, sure, but what do you do from ten until two? You see, and what they would do is just sit around from ten o'clock until two o'clock, if they weren't working, because you had to go back to work at two o'clock. Well, a lot of these people lived in Durham. And I mean, these people, from my understanding, wrote letters to people in the University and you get the same old bull jive from people who would say, "Oh, yes, we understand." But I think that the real situation was that the people up in South Building, the Chancellor at that time, Chancellor Sitterson, I don't think really had a hold on what was going on with fiscal policy. With a school this size, a tremendous campus, it's hard to keep a hold on

what money is being spent for. And the cafeteria was constantly losing money and so it really got to where the workers were being oppressed, because the cafeteria was losing money and so when Otis worked with the people awhile, and so the people, Preston, and Preston told Jack and everybody that the ladies were thinking about a strike. And they talked with people who were in housekeeping early in the spring, late in the fall and early in the spring, about going on a strike with them. O.K. I think that in there, the Duke people had already struck. They struck in the spring of 1968, a very effective strike, they struck the whole campus, I mean everything. And just everything. Over in the hospital, all the people were on strike, all over.

R.R.: Howard Fuller was involved with that strike.

Davis: Sure, Howard Fuller.

R.R.: Was Dobbins at all?

Davis: Let me say this. Howard Fuller was involved with the strike, but I tend to not play up the role of Howard Fuller in stuff like this, because Fuller is more an. . .and other people might disagree with what Fuller does and doesn't do, but as far as I saw it, Fuller was more the kind of man who could come in and give a good speech. And I think this is what happened in part with Chapel Hill. Now, Fuller never really did play a part in the strike here. Fuller came and gave lip service on occasion. I think that what happens, though, is that, now, I'm in Communications and I see that where the media seeks

out, and this is something they are tremendously guilty of doing, of just overlooking people if they are not the names that they are looking for and go to the names that they are looking for. If Howard Fuller comes to Chapel Hill, then Howard Fuller is leading the strike. Well, Howard Fuller may have nothing to with the planning, organization or running of it. He just comes to Chapel Hill and give a speech. He stopped in Chapel Hill for a cup of coffee, and someone would say that Howard Fuller was in back of the strike. O.K. So, my understanding with the people in Durham is that they had internally sought leadership at Duke. So, they were successful and the workers here wanted to go. They tried to get the people on campus, the workers, to go with them, they wouldn't do it. All right, so then, they told us one day that they were going to go on strike and we had a meeting upstairs in Lenoir Hall, at the north end of Lenoir. This was a place up. . .it's an art studio now. . .and we all took our dinners up there and ate dinner and the ladies and Preston, Mrs. Smith and all of them were there, and they were saying that we were going. . .Mrs. Brooks from Hillsborough, said that "we want to go on strike and we want the BSM to help us and we want to start it tomorrow." And they made it quite clear, too, and let me make it clear, this was not a BSM led strike, we did not lead those strikes. Those people asked us and there was a vote taken, as I remember, a vote as to whether or not we would ass⁵ist them in the strike. No time during the strike, and I would like to make that very clear, because I

think that people tend to think otherwise, the leadership rested, and you'll see that later on in other consequences, I think., with the people in the cafeteria. And I think that this is the way we wanted it and this was the only equitable way for it to be.

R.R.: Right.

Davis: Well, they asked us the next day, I think that it was a Saturday or Sunday, would we come into the Pine Room and to slow service. And this would start the thing out. So, the next day in the Pine Room, we came in and slowed service to the point where they had to close the Pine Room that day. The ladies wouldn't work, the ladies came from behind the counter and people were standing around and they had to close the Pine Room. Then there were other meetings held to determine what type of strategy would be followed. So, for a while, you know, it mainly became a strategy of strike. You know, just march, march, march, march. Just marching around.

R.R.: Can I ask a question right now, about the beginnings of it? Do you think they would have struck without the guidance of say, Otis Light or other leaders?

Davis: I have no idea what Otis did with people. I know that he was not working when they started because I think that the funds he had gotten, by that time, they weren't there anymore. And I'm not sure where the funds came from. They might have come from certain individuals, whatever, you know. You'll have to ask Preston Dobbin about that. I'll tell you, I might do you a favor, too. I'm going

to Michigan and I might ask him for you. So, when the thing got started. . .and another question I think that is parallel, is do you think that the ladies would have gone without BSM? That, I really don't know. I know that people were really fired up. They might have gone, but I really don't know. It's really hazy and I would only be guessing. Like I say, you don't know whether they would or wouldn't, if people had voted not to support the strike. But, a meeting was held and the formal group was asked at this meeting there upstairs, would they support the strike, and they said ~~said~~ "yeah."

R.R.: So, when the BSM originally came in, they had no idea that there was necessarily going to be a strike. What kind of role did they see themselves playing?

Davis: Well, in terms of roles just as helpers. What could we do to help. O.K. And this is what came out in this meeting. People were going to picket the cafeteria, this kind of thing, so therefore, they wanted the BSM members to picket the cafeteria, collect money in support of the thing, just to support the general strike. People were told at this meeting that there was going to be a strike, but it had been intimated to people earlier that there was a strike being planned and all. I got the impression that the University was aware that a strike was in the making. If it wasn't. . .I'm going to be honest too, I'm going to say something that maybe I shouldn't say. But I had very little faith or very little respect for the administra-

tive ability of Chancellor Sitterson. I don't think he really, I think he tried to rule a big school like you rule a little school. You have to get a guy in there who is a real manager of people, for big schools. And Chancellor Sitterson seemed to be an academic sort of man, he was not. . .he was just a little too conservative and a little too oriented toward certain paths. Now, either that or he was corrupt in certain ways. Because there were certain things going on that the only way you could have not seen them, is that you were just blind, that you were narrow-sighted, unless you were just plain corrupt. Oh, yeah, now a major issue in that strike was back pay. Oh man, there was a big issue there. These people said that these people had worked them, had paid them, had cheated them on their overtime, they wouldn't put it on their checks, tell them that they were going to take it over to the next. . .I'll show you what I mean. These people would work sixty hours a week. The guy would do something like this. He would say, "O.K., I don't want to pay them overtime for these twenty hours. " He would then say, "Well, you won't get twenty hours of overtime this time, I'll put twenty hours on your next pay period." So, he constantly was advancing them pay period away from no overtime. You see what I mean? O.k. So, I mean, really, the way these workers were treated was just like dogs. These people were treated in, I mean in Chase Cafeteria and Lenoir Hall and all, these people were really being treated bad.

R.R.: Was it ~~ess~~entially a racial thing? I mean, that they thought they could put this over on the black workers and the white workers were not. . .

Davis: Well, there were very few white workers. In fact, to my knowledge, I don't think there was but maybe one or two white ladies who were cashiers, but just about everybody who worked in that kitchen in that cafeteria were black. Like I said, the black people really ran the cafeteria system. I mean they did, in essence. The~~y~~ people that they put down here as managers had no training. Whoever in this University was doing the buying and hiring really should be having his behind knocked to the wall. The University lost money in the cafeteria because they didn't know how to run a cafeteria. This was what I was saying when I first came in, about the waiting and too many people. So, the people had a lot of grievances, a letter was sent to different people in the University. The people, I think, who were involved in the strike were very formalized and they were very optimistic, whereas I think that some of us tended to be pessimistic. Because we had noticed already how the University had responded to this kind of thing. It seemed that whenever things would happen, the University would act just like it didn't care. I think perhaps, the University is more responsive~~en~~ow, because it's seen the problems that it had in the past, the real headaches that it got.

R.R.: Such as the strike.

Davis: Suck^h as the strikes, such as the problems with the BSM, such

as embarrassing situations that were caused by not trying to prevent things and not trying to get in and deal with it. O.K., so once the strike had begun, it became a thing of marching. We marched so much that it is just real hard to remember how much we did march. But I do know that we marched at one end, we marched from another end. So, things were getting bad, because at that time, there was no Union. And we were having meetings, I mean, we were missing class, Wholesale students were missing class, man, going out and marching and stuff, trying to get people to come out. And we were pretty upset at that time, because like I say, the University's response at that time to that sort of thing was absolutely nothing. If you wrote the Chancellor a letter, he wrote you back a letter that you would think came from some secretary. Because really, it had no knowledge of the situation, no understanding. He would never come down and talk to the workers, deal with the Board, or direct the situation. He wasn't that kind of man. Not as I know him. Now, this is all what I know of him. Now, they retained a lawyer, Julius Chambers to look into the thing. O.K. To look into the legal side, back pay issues and other ones. O.K. Someone came up with the idea. . .what had happened was, while we were having the strikes, there was a building right next to Lenoir Hall and people were going into this building to sit around and rest. This building was Manning Hall, which was the old Law School and people would go into what was the old main Law Library in there and sit around and rest and

someone got an idea. Why not us open up a cafeteria? A soul food cafeteria. So what happened was that the workers got together and people donated money and everything and the workers cooked food at home or at the Baptist Student Union, some at home, some over at the Baptist Student Union and all, would bring all their food there for lunch and bring all their food there for dinner and serve two meals a day. Running that day to day. And what the BSM did in that was just simply a matter of helping the people to get money to the bank, or getting people to help disperse the money. Really, it was a supportive role the whole time.

R.R.: Was it good?

Davis: The food?

R.R.: Yeah.

Davis: The food was very good. I think that anybody who knows anything about cafeteria management would tell you that if you go anywhere into a cafeteria, if the food is good, it tells you something about the staff in that cafeteria. The staff is happy. If the food is bad, the staff is unhappy. You see. I think that holds up generally down the line. Now, what we started doing is. . .and it really became an interesting thing, man, because like the students at that time. . . I think the students really got into it. They were looking, and this was something else for them to get into. This was something where there was no danger. One thing that has to be mentioned at this point is the question of what were dangerous situations and

split shift and all. . .so, we'd go out at four o'clock in the morning with the workers and all, to stop the people. To talk to the people before they went into the job. And of course, to hassle them a little bit and to give them a hard time, but of course, we couldn't stop them, because the campus police were out there. And they were out there in the morning too, all the time. And I think that everybody got edgy after a while, because we were getting tired, the campus police were getting tired. Four o'clock in the morning can really wear on you. I mean, it just wears on you. And cold, it was real cold. What we were doing is that we were sleeping in Manning Hall. Because what happened was, we found out that the Chancellor had told some guys. . .first the Chancellor had told us, at the very beginning of the strike, he says, "Nothing is happening in Manning Hall until next summer. You can stay there until then, as far as I care." That was what he said. Well, the strike progressed and finally, we got to one day where. . .we had students working with us on the strike, and these students belonged to SSOC, Southern Students Organizing Committee. And you know, this was a break-off of SNIC^t, and we had SSOC people working for us. And what was happening was that there were white kids who were intimidating the SSOC people who were working with us, in the dormitories. I mean, like, in Dorm and all, you had SSOC people handing out leaflets and you had students come out there and try to cram leaflets out the SSOC people's mouths

and kick them off the floor and this kind of thing. And well, since these people were working with us, we couldn't allow that to happen to them, because like I say, people didn't want dangerous things. If it proved dangerous, people would stop doing it. So, what we did, we would go up in the dorm and we would hand them out personally. We'd give our personal touch. We'd ask the people to take them personally. And people usually took them. And they took them personally. You know, after we had a few little discussions with people, then people got the idea that we didn't want them messing with the SSOC people working with us.

R.R.: Well, why this early aggression toward the SSOC people?

Davis: Well, because I think that the nature of the campus at that time. . . I think that now, this campus has changed and part of it. . . some people say it's the drug culture, some people say it's a lot of things, but at that time, people cared a lot about things, even if it was negative things. There were a lot of guys who were conservative and they meant to be conservative. They were honestly conservative. They didn't like black students. They thought it was a privilege for black students to be here. Black students should come here and be assimilated. And we had submitted a list of demands to the Chancellor before, you know. All these things are going along at one and the same time. The demand, this hassle and this hassle, so, it was a merry old time. And you can see the whole structure of Carolina, how it dealt with it. Like I say, Chancellor Sitterson, he was just a man

that didn't see it. He just did not respond. Now, the difference is this, we could go up there to Chancellor Sitterson, and Jack MacLane. . .you know how in the South, you know, in the old days, the good old days of the ante-bellum South, the white land-owners would choose a black who was extremely powerful, a bad man, and call him, "Nero" in fun, this would be a way to put a joke about him that would put him in his place, "Nero, bring me a piece of wood to throw in this fire, boy," That kind of thing. Well, Jack got the habit of calling Chancellor Sitterson, "Champ". Oh, whew, oh, man, you talk about flame on. We'd go up there to Chancellor Sitterson and Jack would say, "Well, Champ, I don't understand, what do you want to do. . ." and Chancellor Sitterson would just go out of his mind. Like I say, he wasn't prepared. This wasn't the kind of thing that he was very interested in. For one thing, I don't think that he was ready for minority problems. They had had the speaker ban disputes in years before, and stuff like this, but these kind of problems. People didn't even respect his office. I think that was the thing that really threw a lot of people. People still want you to remember that he is the Chancellor. So, if you go in there and say, "Chancellor Sitterson this, Chancellor Sitterson that. . ." and it did no good, it's still o.k. with him, because you are still remembering that he's the Chancellor. But people were so uptight at that time, generally pissed off at the University about the way they were treating the BSM, treating black people that were

working in the cafeterias, it became a racial matter in essence. Because people began to see that the University really oppressed the black people. What few white people there were that were working with the black people in the cafeterias moved out and they moved up with the white people. See what I mean?

R.R.: So, it was a racial matter before the BSM was ever involved?

Davis: Sure, I mean that it was racist in that you had the cafeteria workers that could not move up in the University hierarchy. They were not managers and you had these people sitting in the cafeterias working these split shifts. You had a Chancellor who, like I say, had a choice. He was either a criminal or he was negligent, you see, about running the fiscal policy of the University. Now what should have happened is that after that cafeteria fiasco, if it had been in private industry, a vice-president would have retired. But it didn't happen here. I think that nowadays you might have more retiring being done, because people can't play with that kind of thing anymore. Man, you start messing up money, they have to retire you. O.K. so anyway, the ~~SSOC~~ people were constantly being attacked and it finally came to a head one day, when we were having. . .oh yeah, we had to do a few things to in the wildness of the period. We would go in a few classes and ask people to strike classes, you know. And I remember one professor's class that we went in and I found out later that it was some guy who had been in Austria before the Germans came in, an old guy. And another

professor told me, he said, "Man, you guys shook that dude up. He hates any kind of social movement, anything. He doesn't want it." We really shook him up that day, and we just went in and talked to the class. Now, there were other professors who were really interested. You'd go into their class and they'd say, "O.K., we'll discuss it." Which is the way I would handle the situation, "We'll discuss it." Same thing with the Chancellor, see, I have more respect for this new guy, Ferebee Taylor, because I think he's a lot smarter guy about that kind of thing. If some students come in here with some complaints, "Come on in, ya'll, let's discuss it. Bring them newsmen with you. I agree that's fine, that's wonderful. What do you want. Man, I'll do everything I can. I'll see you later, I've got to go down to the Porthole to eat dinner." But see, this was the difference between two men. O.K., so, I'm trying to characterize it so that you can see the kind of men, and the students here were like I say, students with convictions who were conservative. Students don't seem to be like that now. You may have some students that play at being conservative, but most of them just don't give a damn about anything. I mean, they just don't seem to care. It's not a fact that they are more liberal about blacks, it's just that they don't care. It's not that they like blacks on campus, it's just that a lot of people don't care. And the difference is there. You see, kids were more involved with politics in the dorm at that time. The lower quad on campus, this whole kind of thing when I first came. This is

what made Carolina very nice. But you began to see as time passed, kids just didn't care anymore. But anyway, you had kids who were really conservative, and they were really getting SSOC. And the football boys were still in their glory then, and I think that you had a few football boys still. . .like I say, the University hadn't made this transition into the modern period, yet. Into the '60's yet. It was still kind of coming along very slowly. One day, what happened in Lenoir, it finally came to a head, because we had our people, something started in there and some football players came into the cafeteria and they began to. . .I think that it started out because we had SSOC people and some other people sitting in the cafeteria, just sitting in chairs, occupying seats. They would go up and buy a drink, or some crunch, or some dessert or something, just sitting in the seats. And we did fill half the cafeteria like that. And we had the cafeteria closed for awhile, and then they reopened and we had this other thing with people sitting in there and we were still picketing out around the cafeteria and going in the mornings and stuff. And then the major development that happened then, it got real bad when these football boys, and some other people, as I understand it, were going to eject some of the SSOC people and that came to a big head. It came down to the case where we understood that some white students were going to band together and attack us, like at Manning as such. You know what I mean?

R.R.: The BSM?

Davis: Yeah. Well, attack, like individually, that's what I mean. This is what we came to understand. And see, the way the University was handling this situation, the campus police, and the white students, and I still say this today, the white students could do about anything. Without question. It is my firm belief that if some white students attacked some black students and beat that black student to death. . . look at James Cates there. The University did nothing at all. I remember that even we had a hassle later on about that because if they had a list of black people in Chapel Hill that they wouldn't let come on campus and the names of the Storm Troopers wasn't up there. Now, we asked Dean specifically why those names weren't up there. In that one instance, I'm just trying to pick for you how. . . the administration then, you had in there as Dean of Students, and Dean , you'll get to see him in a minute, he really just was not responsive at all. His background was as a preacher and he just wasn't responsive. The University hierarchy was not responsive. Not at all. It didn't want to deal with the problem. It just wanted to forget the problem. Well, you don't forget problems, let me tell you. So, we came into the cafeteria, we came in there and we were pretty mad. We were told that these people were going to start some trouble and we were pretty mad. So, we went through from one end to the other end and just cleared the old cafeteria, a few tables

flying and the campus police were there, and they stood there.

R.R.: Would you really call it violence, though?

Davis: In terms of the system, sure it was violent. We didn't hurt anybody, we didn't plan to hurt anybody. We just wanted to let people know that we weren't going to let the people from SSOC, who worked with us, be hurt. We weren't going to let cafeteria workers be hurt, we had heard at that time that there were certain students who. . .and I believe that we had students with that mentality then and now, who would hurt a worker. Because I don't think that students really even attempted to understand. A lot of stuff was just plain reaction and the reaction is, "I'm not going to let you blacks come up here and take over our University. We were doing so well before you got here and we'll do well when you leave here. So, you're fortunate to be here, . . ." I think that's the main thing, the "fortunate to be here" part. It doesn't matter if your taxes are paying for it, or that the University is taking over black man's land through escheats or other things, it doesn't matter. "You are lucky to be here." And this attitude, I think it just prevailed on the whole campus, if not outwardly, then inwardly. Well, so we went through and a few chairs were thrown and tables were overturned and all the white students who were down there to make a big stand with pitchers and stuff, moved back out. O.K., and that was all. We came back through the cafeteria and went back over to Manning Hall.

R.R.: So, there was actually a confrontation down there?

Davis: It wasn't really a confrontation. The white kids didn't try to confront us. I think that what happened, the white kids, and I found this to be true at that time, that white people really bothered me so much then and I could hardly understand it, that they could be so insensitive to things and to have such great egos. I mean, they just would tear me up. How can people so insensitive, I mean, you can tell that there was real racism involved, people going into that cafeteria early, and people serving them food and stuff, and they don't even see them. For some of them, the people serving them in that cafeteria might as well be robots. They weren't even human to these people. And then that ego, "what are you doing to our University?" "Why do you students want to do this?" "Don't you know why you come to school?" Now, let me tell you though, after a basketball game, when Carolina would win, these students would go out and throw around over a thousand rolls of toilet paper across trees. O.K., now, these were the kinds of things that were being discussed in these meetings, "how could these white kids go out here and throw toilet paper over these trees?" All right, who cleaned up that toilet paper off the lawn and stuff? Black people! No consideration. And I think that to white kids then, and maybe one thing that is good about this energy crisis, maybe it has made white people appreciate the service people. Like the service station. You begin to appreciate people who serve you. People that you don't even see or consider human, you just used to say, "Fill'er up." "Gimme that." You know, this kind of

thing. Well, this was their attitude then toward those cafeteria workers. And we felt that they might do some harm to cafeteria workers. And let me tell you, it was mostly ladies, that's another thing. It was mostly ladies, and students would say intimidating things to them all the time. Insult the ladies, white girls would say intimidating things to them and insult them. There was an attitude of real hostility toward us about the strike. I think that the attitude was different at Duke the year before. I think those students over there acquiesced in the strike. They said, "O.K., we think maybe you people need to unionize, that's a good thing." And I think the kids didn't like it, but the kids didn't go against it. (end of side 1 of tape)

R.R.: The first instance of violence that really broke out was probably the turning over of the tables?

Davis: Yeah.

R.R.: Was that a spontaneous thing, or was there a method in the madness there. . . ?

Davis: Well, no, it was part spontaneous. See, this problem is like murder trials. What is violence, first of all? Well, when our SSOC people are hit in the head and we know that the SSOC people are supporting us, well, that's violence against us.

R.R.: Did you feel like this would counter the SSOC violence, the violence against the SSOC people?

Davis: Well, no, I think that what we had been telling people, we had been telling people that we were tired of that, like I say, certain students were actively hostile over this thing and the women and everybody and had certain comments. And we said that if things got that bad, we would come out and stand up for these people, even if it meant coming down to fistcuffs. Well, it had gotten to the point, I believe, where people wanted to test us. They didn't believe any more that we would do that. We could tell it, because once people started messing with the SSOC people and other people and threatening the ladies and stuff, this told us that people didn't take our word. So, in that sense, there was a support for doing the cafeteria thing, to illustrate to people, "Now, look here, we're not playing with you." But on the other hand, the fact that things that happened that day, there was a series of events, I say that the potential was there, and the activities, the kid getting hit in the head with a sugar shaker, he had to have about fourteen or fifteen stitches in his head, really set the thing on end to what happened that night.

R.R.: I don't know about the event with the sugar shaker.

Davis: It was during the day, like I say, the kids were sitting in the cafeteria, we had kids to sit in and get in line and go slow in line and stuff and my understanding was that football players, some football player came in there and got pissed off and football players by style at that time, they were supposed to get pissed because they

lost a game or something, and knock the shit out of somebody. See, and I've always said that as long as I was in academics, these kind of things happening at this school and others, have put in me a complete bias against those kinds of sports. So, a coach would have a rough time getting a kid of mine into football, he'd really have to brain me to get me down. . .this was the kind of thing, the football players would knock the hell out of anybody and Bill Dooley would go downtown and get them off, "Oh, he didn't mean that, he was a little mad, that's all." Three cheers for Carolina. This is the way that the campus was then, you know what I mean? So, the violence, when it started, that day, this kid got hit in the head with a shaker and a couple of other people got pushed and all. Well, the campus police were down there and guess what they did?

R.R.: Need I guess?

Davis: Need you guess? Not a thing. Nothing was done. The campus police did absolutely nothing. Now, if you are going to stop violence on one side, you stop violence on the other. The campus did not stop violence for people that were working for us, they did not stop people from insulting those workers, ;this kind of situation. So, that led up to that incidence that night, and the press you know, made a big play on that and everything. Then the question came up, for the University, "How do we handle this situation." After that night that the governor sent in the State Troopers, now that was mistake number one on the old governor's side. That was a big mistake.

Because when he sent in the State Troopers, a lot of students who never would have been involved, who were in the middle and passive, became involved in on the workers' side of the issue simply because of the State Troopers on campus. They did not like this idea. And the faculty members. Faculty people. . . people are always throwing about faculty and education. . . I don't think nothing about a faculty member. You give me a town like Raleigh or Durham and give me some real people. I don't like educated people much. Because they have a tendency to talk a lot, to theorize a lot, but don't do shit. When trouble was coming down there, you couldn't catch a University official out there to see what was going on. No witness to say that the campus police brutalized people. No witnesses to say that the people were being hurt. The only university people that they had down there were the campus police. And you know what story they are going to say. But none of these supposedly big-time faculty people made it their business down there to see. Now it seems to me that the AAUP or somebody would have said, "We want to keep somebody to watch everything that goes on down here at this strike. To watch so that we can report what we saw happened in that strike. Put an unbiased voice in this thing here." It seems to me that the faculty would have been interested in that, but you find out that the faculty is very conservative too, and there were a lot of faculty

members who felt the very same way, you know, "that we don't want to be involved. This is the kind of thing that we would like to shoo from our minds. Just get it out of here, it does not exist. These people down here are just in another world and I'll avoid it, just stay away from it and go downtown and eat." And this is what happened. O.K., well once the troopers came on campus, that really caused a stink, because that made national press and then the University's reputation nationally, and I think that the University is always reflecting in it's national reputation and it's local, well, Bob Scott, who I consider a very inept governor, too and I think that the people of North Carolina, it has increased my faith in them by giving him the lowest rating of any governor they've had, by the end of his term in office. He did absolutely nothing. Him and Dan K. Moore. The Democrats couldn't have won again, after they put DankK. Moore and Bob Scott in office during those two sessions. Both of them were just terrible. Now, Terry Sanford, he was a whole different way from what came after him. Well, he sent these State Troopers on campus. And we talked with some of these State Troopers, they'd say, "Look man," we'd be out in the morning and they'd have to come over there and push us back so that we couldn't talk to those workers going in and we talked to some of them and they'd say, "Look, we have no hassle with you. As far as we're concerned, you can have the damn cafeteria. I want to be home." I heard that a good number of State Troopers

quit behind that, I'm not sure. And I understand this caused a change in tactics, in which they would have a special unit out of Asheville to handle all these little problems. I guess that this is North Carolina's version of the tactical police. But a lot of people were very unhappy. Because they hated getting up at six o'clock in the morning, they didn't like it and they didn't want to be on campus. Because, number one, I think that some of them had kids on the campus and it proved very embarrassing for everybody, I believe. It proved embarrassing for the police, it proved embarrassing just for kids around on campus. It just was real bad for everybody. So, while this was going on, we got us a record player and we were over in Manning and we were laying it on them, "don't eat in the pig pen with the pigs" and all this kind of good old action. And oh, by the way, the governor called the Chancellor on the telephone and said, "I don't care what you said about that building, I want those students out of there." So, the Chancellor didn't want to look real bad, he didn't want to go back on his words, I guess. He didn't want to use force. So, what he did, he sent campus police over every night to come through the building and what they would attempt to do was to catch the building at one time. . .and they would come through there and lock doors systematically as they through and if they could catch that building empty, they would lock it up. You see what I mean? And lock people out and then arrest anybody that tried

to break back in. See, that was the strategy, to lock you out. So, we had to keep black students in there twenty-four hours a day, so we slept over there. A lot of us slept over there in order to keep the police from coming in and throwing people out. O.K., so like I say, this kind of generated things and we got more white kids involved, more involved in what was going on. Finally the decision came up, the thing came to a head. While all this was going on, by the way, let me tell you what was happening. The University, it was planned, certain things had been planned. Like when we got arrested at Lenoir, after Lenoir, warrants were being prepared and over in the PoliSci Department and over in the Institute of Government, strategy was being planned. "How can we punish these students and satisfy some people in Raleigh, but at the same time, not anger a lot of other people in North Carolina." Either way it was a touchy situation. "How can we punish these students involved in this cafeteria thing in a way that won't cause our normally passive faculty and staff to get up on end. If we punish these kids too hard, it might cause problems." This was the way that we saw it. It might cause a general strike, and that would be a problem. "And we have seen what has happened already by being inactive and not doing some things generally with these kids. We've seen what kinds of problems happened, so we need to do something." All right, so what they did, they worked on the strategy, and the word that come from Raleigh was

that we were supposed to be arrested. That was the word from Raleigh, "You arrest." Now, a couple of things they said. First of all, "Clear them kids out of Manning." I told you what his first strategy was. Second thing was, "Arrest those people in that cafeteria strike. Because no blacks in North Carolina are going to go up there and take over a state university cafeteria." I can see that echoing in the old halls of Raleigh right now. That was part of it. So, like I say, the people at this end were faced with the problem of how they could keep trouble from escalating. So, the word I got was that there was a strategy being planned and warrents were being drawn up over this period of time. This is right after the cafeteria strike and on. So, we had gone on for awhile for then, so finally, they really had the strategy and they had a big day they had planned and everything. So, what they did, on the morning of this particular day, the Chancellor of the University called Julius Chambers and told him that he ought to come to Chapel Hill. This is what I understand. The attorney. Because certain parties are going to be arrested. All right, the Chapel Hill police were out in battallions to serve some warrents. And I mean, they were in full battle dress to serve these warrents, by the way. I think they served ones to six people. All this is in one day now. I was in class that day. I had gone to class and a lot of white kids and everybody, and what the police had done. . . I didn't even know it was going on, but when I got out of class,

the State Troopers had Manning completely surrounded, see. We kept hearing noise and the kids pushing in and the State Troopers, "Get back, get back." You know. So, what had happened, this is when they took over the building. My understanding is that Howard Fuller just happened to be over here, I don't know how he was here. Somebody called him, or he showed up, I don't know what on that day. But Howard Fuller was going in and everybody made the assumption that the brothers in the building were going to stand there and try to hold the building against the armed with guns State Troopers. Which was foolish. I mean, this was foolish. People wondered what in the world. . .they laughed about that. That's foolish. You think we were going to stand out there and get shot? It's one thing to stand out there with some canes and all and talk junk with the police, I mean, all he's got is a stick and all you've got is a stick and ya'll out there battling. Now, we had one morning when we thought that the police were going to try and. . . and this is where I say that the tactics of making the legal illegal was first used on the strike when they had a group of people and what they would do, they closed off their end of the cafeteria and we came out, we were around at the northern end at this part, where you enter at that little back door at the side, marching. They said that we were marching too far out and they wanted to close us in to march some. So, they kept closing in the march and closing in the march. Well, it gets to a point where you can't close in

the march anymore, because the people involved in the march. Well, this is where the illegality comes in. So, a guy comes out with a megaphone and says, "Well, you marching there, I'm only going to tell you one more time, don't go out of the marching area." You couldn't understand the guy. "What we say is this, " is what he was saying, "when we see the opportunity, we're going to beat you." And you could look down the street and you could see the police cars sitting like this, you know, one on one side of the street and one on the other and if you have watched any movies about New York City, you know that when that happens. . . they had pulled the police cars down, they had barricaded all around the area, so when we went out there, we said, "These cats, man, they want to beat some ass this morning. They want to beat somebody." So, we went on into Manning and looked out and we wouldn't come out there. Anyway, so when I got out of there, I went running over to the middle of campus and there were a lot of students standing around in the middle of the campus. Things had really kind of come to a head and we found out that some warrants had been issued for some arrests and some of the kids who had heard that there were some warrants out for them had already kind of been ducked out and they went over to Michael Katz's house, who was an attorney, a law instructor in the Law School. And we all sat around at his house waiting for Chambers, who we found out the Chancellor had called already to come to Chapel Hill. So,

after that, it generally. . .the warrants were taken out and they had several warrants and they had one warrant, I think, against a lady out at Chase who had hit somebody in the head with a milk crate. Hit a policeman in the head with a milk crate. But to show the kind of thing that was going on, when the strike was going on. . .like I put this strike sign about the cafeteria out at Chase and here comes a North Carolina Forestry Service Ranger and this guy goes right by and kicks this sign. Now, if I had jumped over and knocked the hell out of him then, the campus police would have wanted to drag me away. You see what I mean? Now, if I went out there and he was putting up a Forestry Service sign, and I went over there and kicked his sign, he would knock the hell out of me and people would want to know why I did that crazy thing. You see what I mean?

R.R.: Right.

Davis: So, you see that there's no way, in terms of history, there's no way you can trust what is written in terms of legal history and documents, because that depends on who is being sounded out and what would be arrest for one person is not worthy of arrest for somebody else. And what might seem criminal for black people. . .it's like the point that the late Dr. Brewer mentioned, he said, "For a black man to walk down the street and look the wrong way was criminal." So, if you look back and say that there was tremendous crime in the black community, what is a crime for black

people, is not a crime for white people. And this was that kind of situation. So, we got with Chambers and we went out to the little guy's office, the solicitor, or whatever he is, and instead of wanting to expediate matters, he wanted to act like an old fogey, and Katz wanted to get us out on reconnaissance bond and he refused that and so we had some people to come up and bond us, you know. Bond us all out so we could on. So, the strike continued then, but we couldn't serve there anymore, so people began to serve over at the Baptist Student Union. Off campus, then. So, we continued and people came over and ate and ate. Well, by this time, some union men had become to come in. The situation began to look better. Number one, because it was so embarrassing. I could tell when the situation changed, because the News and Observer, the Charlotte Observer was the first place that I really noticed, they began to editorialize a little bit and were becoming more critical of the governor sending the troops. Evidently a lot of students had given a lot of negative feedback to home. You know, "Mommy, you should have seen all them police over on the University campus. I mean, they are just taking over." And I know how students talk about blacks and, so I know how they must talk about police. I think there was a negative feedback that started. A whole lot more negative feedback was beginning and the first thing we saw happen was, as I remember correctly, the Troopers were taken off campus and there was a settlement made. Preston and them, and

Mrs. Smith and them and some guys from the union and all and people from the University had gotten together and they just settled on an increase, one of the things they settled on was that they would make \$1.80 an hour. Which would become minimum wage for the people that worked in the cafeteria. And what I understand was that this meant that somebody in Raleigh had to change W-6 for a whole lot of other people up to \$1.80 from \$1.60. I think that's the way it worked. Minimum wage. They could unionize. So, this settled the strike. See, we weren't happy even then, because some things had happened. First of all, and I'm being real honest about it, all through it, as I say, we were supportive. Being supportive is very dangerous and very bad, because you can be supportive and you can support someone and then they just cut you loose and flounder and you have no say so about it because you've always just been supportive, you haven't directed anything. We were supportive all the way through and when the union people came in, we felt that the people here should have done like the people at Duke did. My understanding was that at Duke, they let two unions bid, A^SFCME and another union. Offered them one better proposal and then I don't know what they finally resolved, whether they didn't go with a national union and just formed their own or what, but these people didn't do this. I think that A^SFCME came in here.

R.R.: But they didn't come in right after the first strike.

They came in after the University had sold the concession.

Davis: No, no, but see, they were here before that. They came in at the end of the first strike, I might be wrong, I get confused in the years, but as I remember, they were there at the end of the first strike, because part of the agreement was that the University had planned to sell the cafeteria system, even then. This was one of the considerations.

R.R.: This was before the first strike?

Davis: I don't know about before the strike, but I know that after the strike, one of the considerations was that the ladies were saying that they had heard that the University was going to sell the cafeteria system, because they were losing money. And they wanted to get from the University an agreement that the University would maintain whatever wage they got from this job to the next job. And also placement in jobs from this system to the next. This was one of the guarrantees. The University never really. . .I'm trying to think if they ever gave that guarrantee in writing. If they did, I'm sure that it was a very tied-up promise to do it. Because the University did not want to do it. They didn't want to do it at all. And what I wanted to say that bothered us. . .when these union people came in, like I say, we were only helping, in terms of advice, we couldn't tell them what to do. And so, they went with AF^SCME, I think. But without really giving it the time that we wanted them to give to it, really thinking about it. And

we knew too, I'll be honest, at the end of the first strike, we knew that things weren't going to last. Inherently, there were too many people working in the cafeteria system. It was overstaffed in this time of mechanization. And you notice that the first company that came in, which was SAGA, SAGA mechanized the hell out of it. In the cafeterias, you know. You get your own soda, you push, . . . it reduced the number of employees. So, when the University said that they would do that, we had real questions the first time. And that really worried us. We expressed, I think, on numerous occasions our fears about that to the workers. I think the workers were very happy to get back to work. By the way, running that cafeteria we ran, I think they said that they were able to pay about \$35 a week to every striker that was out. And that was paid every week. See, we were able to pay. The reason that we ran a cafeteria was that people had to live during the strike. We started a cafeteria with the workers so that the workers could make a living and by running the cafeteria, they made enough money that we were able to pay every worker \$35 a week. See, that was the whole idea behind the cafeteria. To pay them so that they could stay out on strike. That's why I say that we were supportive in terms of bank accounts and getting them, these funds, to the workers and to pay people off. And if special problems came up, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Brooks and them would take, but they were the ones that were hitting it. They were the ones

that made the decision. You see, we didn't. They made it. We could give them advice, but like I say, I tend to think that at the end when the settlement came, they were so glad to settle, I think, that they really did not look at it realistically. What really bothered me, was that it had only been, and there had been a strike within the ranks, I should tell you, about the Pine Room. . . there were people who said that the Pine Room gave them no warning that they were going to strike. And they wanted to strike too, and they were bitching about whether they were going to strike because the Pine Room crew, who led the original strike said that they weren't going to do it, it's funny that the most conservative part of the staff and the most radical were right there in the same building. Upstairs was very conservative in Lenoir. Downstairs was very radical, in the Pine Room. What happened was that there were some real disagreements between factions. People at Chase said that, "we didn't know." But my understanding was that these people had talked to them. These people were just jiving, they didn't want to set a time and do it. So, that when the people from the Pine Room came, that meant some conversation and some soothing of feelings between them. To get workers to go on strike. And that kind of took a while, but we got a good number of workers to go on.

R.R.: Do you think that if the BSM had had more control over it and had been less in the background, that the strike would have

ended up differently then? Maybe they would have held out for more concrete, or longer lasting. . .?

Davis: That's a possibility. I don't know that, you see. I can only say what my thinking was, our strategy, what we saw. O.k., what I saw and the people that I talked to saw, and what we expressed to them was, number one, they should be wary of the union people and beware of the things the University offered. Because of people whom we knew who were conservative and had no like for the cafeteria people all of a sudden find themselves available to help and do things. . .this kind of thing. So, in terms of the outcome, BSM may have made more input, I don't know. . .because what happens is the question of when you make input, whether or not people like your input. Oh yeah, let me tell you what happened, too. At the end of the strike, Chambers found out. . .they got over \$180,000 in back pay, you can find out the exact figures, they went through the records. . .now, those records, from my understanding were over there and a guy from the U.S. Department of Labor was going to come down. So, what we did, was that we wanted to stick around and watch. We started keeping our eye on buildings where we knew records was being kept. We wanted to see what was going on. After this was announced, we wanted to see if there was all of a sudden going to be a big moving program, or people going to do a little midnight work, we were very interested in this kind of thing, you know. So, we kept an eye out for that, and we watched where people were going and different things, and kept an

ear open and tried to find out what people were doing and into. And to get an understanding on that. But, that was settled, you know, and some people really got some nice-sized checks, because they had really been cheated by the University. The agreement was supposed to stop that split-time stuff in the middle of the day, but what happened, you know, what I say, they went with this AFCME, or whichever one it was, I'm not sure, but when they went. . . some unions are really good, I think that some unions don't really deal properly with the people involved. . .

R.R.: There were a lot of other groups besides BSM involved in it. A lot of them just offered some kind of minor sympathy, and a lot of them offered some kind of facilities and then a lot of them were actively involved. Things like the Baptist Student Union, the Y, Davis: This is what I'm saying, the dividing line was what's safe and what's not safe.

R.R.: For some reason, the BSM seems so much closer than any of the other groups, though. Did they resent the involvement, you know, after the first week, or the first ten days were over, of these other, mostly white student groups coming in?

Davis: No, that's what I'm saying about the SSOC affair. Some people are saying that we were against, well, what we've always said, BSM has always been a very coalitionist oriented thing.

People will say, and this is like. . . the press, it's just terrible. Now, I'm going to say it like I said it then. Back

then, you couldn't say anything to a white boy who worked on the newspaper, because if you said something to him, he'd run down t here. . .and some white boy told like, that with demands on one day, we were going to come tear down the South Building on Saturday at twelve o'clock and all these media people show up at South Building at twelve o'clock on Saturday. I mean, just really crazy, stories that were distorted on the AP. So, people got the idea that the BSM was this tremendous organization that was just full of black folks destined to destroy and tear down the University. We had a lot of kids in there who were very good students, by the way. Very good students. Now, I look around and I've got Jack, who has completed law school at Florida State. He will be a practicing attorney in Florida, Roosevelt Randolph, who was a student and worked in the project here. . .and the BSM encouraged a thing where some students who believed, like I say, I believe the whole thing breaks down to the safe and dangerous areas and some kids might, like, I was a kid who would go to the dangerous area, Jack and Larry White, Larry White is finishing law school this year, Preston finished law school. Donnie Hoover, and he's finished law school, you can see who's going into the law. And we have a fellow named Lee over here, like myself, he's in a PhD program in mathematics. All kinds of people were involved, Thomas Jones, who is a medical student here now. He was one of the students who was arrested with us, he's in med school here now. The students who were active were really superior in

terms of school. I think that people tried to get an image that BSM were a bunch of rowdy people that the University allowed to stay on campus. I think this image was accepted by inactivity at South Building, the lack of dialogue, real meaningful dialogue between South Building, the workers in the cafeteria and. . .like, one thing that happened, they would want to have meetings with the workers without members of BSM being in.

R.R.: Right, they said that they would not talk to black students as representatives of the workers. I remember they told this to white students, they didn't even tell it to the workers.

Davis: The point was, we don't want to represent nobody, we just wanted to be in there in the meeting, to help the people interpret what they were saying to them. For instance, a good case in point on that, when Chambers, the way that this back pay was, if you signed this piece saying that you would accept this back pay, you immediately deny yourself the right to prosecute for further pay. I think that the people in that cafeteria, if they had had a real strong union, they would probably have lawsuitsed, and not only would they have gotten back pay, they would probably have gotten damages. You see, against the University. But most people just got the things, and I think that most people just signed them. And we ran all over Durham telling people, "Look, don't sign these things, let's talk about it a little bit, let's have a meeting about it. Beware." But they just went ahead and they got the checks. But these are the

the things, any kind of little trick manoeuvre, they'd play any kind of little game just to. . .it became a real power structure. struggle. The power structure of the University and the old white people here in Chapel Hill against the power of, they felt, a few black students on campus.

R.R.: Did the role of the Black Student Movement change before and after the strike? In other words, was this part of the growth of the BSM?

Davis: Yeah, I think it was. We had to learn some things. That was a real major test, right there. You learn ideology and you sing songs like, "No More Brothers in Jail," and you get arrested, and this kind of thing. And people grew. Some people were caused to mellow and not participate so actively, or participate on different slants, what it did mainly, though, was to tire people out. That kind of stuff is tremendously tiresome. When you come out of it, you realize something. You say, "Man, I got grades out here on the line. I won't be here." And a lot of students that way in the strikes just aren't here, they never did finish their school. They just couldn't hack it. And you know, it's so interesting about the strike. We had a guy named Larry Bonds who is a medical student at Duke now. And Bonds was one of. . . we had people marching through the buildings, and Bonds was a zoo major and I think that Bonds was a. . .he didn't even have to take classes, he was this kind of a student. I think you know, that he had some meetings and he was the independent study type, in college.

And he was over at the zoo building and you know, they saw him over there and I think that he suffered for that for two years, man. And people in zoo, that made them so mad, he went out to Creighton or one of them schools out there for awhile, and then he went on and came back and went on to Duke. He's going to med school, he can do what he wants to do, but it mainly just tired the people out. This is why the workers were ready. The students were ready, they were tired, this just wore on your nerves. This kind of stuff would drive you crazy, because it was just day after day.

R.R.: How about the organization?

(end of side 2 of tape)

Davis: Now, you were asking what now?

R.R.: Well, just about the fact that the BSM was crisis oriented.

Davis: I tend to think that it was, because we really didn't have. . .well, BSM had only been started for about a year.

R.R.: So, it was sort of an untied thing?

Davis: Yeah, it was. . .well, first of all, Preston distinguishes himself I think, because he went down to the KA house and pulled the Confederate flag down with some boys, like I say, people seriously considered

but, I think that we had people here who were more prone toward that. Prone by, number one, by respect for themselves, they didn't like certain things that were happening and others that didn't care as much. You've got to remember the period, '67, '68, '69 was a very low point in terms of students' academic drive, I think there was much more freedom about going through, people would go to summer school and take one course, they would take a little more time to get out of college, you know. A guy would take four, five years to get out, "I'm going to get out, but I'm not going to break my neck to get out." You know? Now, kids go through in three, two and a half if they can make it, and bust on, get out. Worrying about recommendations and their grades. I think there was a lot more laxity at that time. For some. It was funny, because you generally had two groups of kids. You had the group that hit that library every day and another group that wavered. It was interesting, too, that Jack McLean was in Navy ROTC, I don't know if you know that. He was an ROTC cadet, he was a math major, too. At that time, this was before the strike. And I think that the Navy said that Jack's involvement with the strike and BSM's demands and all, kind of got in the way of people. . .the guy tried to square it with people in Washington, and they couldn't square it and so. . .

R.R.: Well, were there any kind of consequences for the strikers, or for any of

the BSM folks?

Davis: Well, the consequences were that people were constantly getting back. Now, like I say, this is why I mention this thing with Bonds. I think there were professors here who never forgot, who still haven't forgotten and won't forget about the strike. You know, in terms of people who were in it. Some people I don't think understood it, I don't think they bothered to understand it. They would read the Tar Heel, which is dangerous, super-dangerous, and the newspapers to find out what happened in the strike and of course, lots of the writing in the Tar Heel, to me, was somewhat biased. We made lots of gripes about the Tar Heel, you know, some of the things they were writing and how they chose to get their facts and this kind of thing, you know what I mean? Like, they would go to one cafeteria workers who would choose to go to work instead of going on strike and say, "Well, how do you like working at the cafeteria now?" And then "Workers at the cafeteria don't really want. . ." well, they may have talked to two workers. I think there were repercussions, in terms of being tired, kids were tired, they were worn down, people kind of laxed off. It really killed a lot of drive to do anything after that for awhile, because people were just tired. People had just had enough. You can just have so much at a time and we really felt bad. Because people could see this in the demands of the strikers, that this was not going to last. You knew that the University was going to renig on the promises, because the University here doesn't consider people and we never even thought that they considered the cafeteria workers people to begin with. They weren't going to treat people they didn't think were, like people. . .I mean, to treat a dog like a human. And I've seen dogs. . .and this is another thing that infuriated us, man, I hated the dogs on this campus, I hated everyone. It's amazing how good white folks could treat dogs and how bad they could treat people. I mean,

some of these things. . .these people just aren't even aware of how much they will do for a dog, how much they will do for an animal and all, and what they won't do for people. And it really kind of worked on us. I'd like to say one other thing about it too, because it's my understanding, I've been reading a lot of rhetoric lately and I was looking at a historical study on the perspective of rhetoric and this idea of idea-centered studies, you know, with the criteria of looking at how the particular ideas of the period interacted with the people. You know, how man's ideas interact with people. I think that you have to look at the ideals of what people want here at the University and rhetoric was based upon those particular ideals. The response of the Chancellor and his persuasiveness was "Recognize that I am the Chancellor. Recognize that this is the University of North Carolina. Recognizing all of this, we want you people to cool it." All right, that was their rhetoric. That was based on their ideals. O.K., now let's see how it hit the people. Initially, I think that it hit faculty members and a lot of students as very respectable. The University was answering it properly and it was a sufficient answer. The same kind of thing now when people say, "Well, Richard Nixon is giving a sufficient answer." But once that he feels that he's got so much power that he can send an army troop into someone's town or something, then, you see, the people's ideas and attitudes change and their rhetoric changes. "We've got to get this guy out of office." Well, the Chancellor's rhetoric and that of the Dean of Students, Dean Cancellor, and I can't say enough about Dean Cancellor and a few other people in this administration, because I think that it was just a backwards approach, the whole rhetorical approach. I mean, in terms of their rhetoric with us, they didn't feel that they had to persuade of us anything, they just wanted us to recognize the power of the University and the immediate goodwill of high office. And what these people didn't realize was that black students out of high school did not recognize that. And that's why Jack called Chancellor

Sitterson "Champ". I mean, to me, what does South Building mean to me? You see, you have to learn what certain things mean and I think this is one reason why people say that you like to get your missionaries in there. Because once you get your missionaries in there, you can tell a native what a white man means, so that he will respond to him in a way that gives meaning. I see it, I'm in Speech Communication, the way that I see it, if I go down to eastern North Carolina, I like to have a guy college educated, because if he catches me talking to his woman, he. . . I can rap to him, I can say, "Now, look here man, I know you are bad and I know you can kick my behind and all, but I know all of that, so, man, I'm asking you not to do it." I can talk to him. But I know that one of them good old eastern North Carolina boys, you can't talk to like that, because the way that he communicates is with his fists and he'll hit me. O.K., well, they didn't understand that here and they consistently tried to put out a line of rhetoric that would satisfy people in Chapel Hill, that would satisfy people in Raleigh, but would not solve problems. And this is the way. . .

R.R.: Was it purposeful, you think, or was it just sort of. . .

Davis: Purposeful? Yes. They believed what they were putting out. Well, what the assumption is is, "we can do wrong, but it's not wrong." I still think that system still rests with the University.

R.R.: Well, it must have changed. I mean, it just seems to be more aware to some degree now.

Davis: I tend to think that it is more aware, and I think that you can see the changes, because there has been a change in South Building, there have been some changes in Steele Hall. Let me tell you an incident, that shows why. . .

R.R.: Can you relate it to the strike? Do you think that the strike had an effect in changing people's ideas and the role of the University, the role of the student in the University?

Davis: It only did it because of the trouble. You see, this university, it took a lot of trouble for this university to get changed. Anyway, a little bit. And it really hasn't changed that much. For instance, the effect of that first strike was that it made everybody weary of demonstrations of this sort. We had been carrying on other activities, man, this whole thing was just wearing people down. And throughout all of this, The BSM you know had submitted demands and you know, we just had a lot of things going during this period and all and it had just wore everybody down and I think it wore people in the University down. It wore Chancellor Sitterson out and it wore a lot of people out. People were looking forward to summer school, they were glad that the thing was solved. As far as changing the University, no. Because the University made no concrete offers. I mean they did with the money, they did just what they had to do with the strike to settle it and stop it.

R.R.: I was looking at this strike, and it seems like the one real lasting contribution of which the strike made to the school or the state was that it sort of opened up the possibility of this kind of thing and it opened up eyes around the University.

Davis: Right. I tell you what, I agree with you on that and I think this was essential. This will tell you something about the response. Black people at other schools, other white schools, UNC-G and others in the South have joked with us about this. The point is, you can do stuff on other campuses in North Carolina, but when you do it on the UNC campus, that is bad, because what that says is, if you can do it in Chapel Hill, you can do it in Raleigh, you can do it in Greensboro, you can do it here, you can do it there. I think this is the way that the people in Raleigh understand that. And this was the point, "We're not going to let them do it in Chapel Hill." Having the strike in Chapel Hill, I think was good, because it did get people looking at that. But I'll tell you why, see, I'm prone to measure things in terms of what actual events have taken place. And of yet, the State employees

have no major union. O.K. As of yet, employees are still vulnerable, on this campus employees still go to work at four o'clock in the morning. There are still being shifted in and out of jobs, people don't know what happened with some of their jobs. A lot of workers are seeing that Servamation is just like the other cafeteria system. They have a little better management, but they still tend to push on their workers more. Looking back to me, I don't see. . .the only things I look for are number one, well. . .it increased the minimum wage and I think that's a lot that people didn't realize. Because we came under criticism in the strike from black people. There were a lot of black people who said that we had no business in the strike. I mean, I could go home and people would say, "You have no business in Chapel Hill doing that, you need to be going to school, that's what you're up there for." And certainly a lot of the blacks reflected the same things that the whites felt, but you could understand that, because this is what they've been taught to feel. That "you're fortunate to get to go to Chapel Hill and since you are that fortunate, why in the world do you want to get up there and try to tear the University up?" But like you say, there were repercussions in terms that the minimum wage in the state went up. I think that it taught the governor a lesson, it taught him that you've got to be careful about intervention in a state university. You know, you need to stay away from that a little bit. And I think that some changes might be seen as a result of the Cates killing and the second strike and the BSM demands and that Vietnam Moratorium, all those things together. Now, the last was a shocker. You might contrast the response of the University to that and the response of the University to the cafeteria strike. Kent State wasn't even on this campus. You see what I mean? It wasn't even on this campus. As far as the black students were concerned, a lot of white students said, "Why won't the black students support us?" Well, we looked back and we saw these same white students who had been critical of the cafeteria strike, the same

white students who would eat in that cafeteria even though they knew they were hurting those cafeteria workers, the same ones out here marching up and down, talking about "close it down," and "shut it out." And people wonder sometimes why black students just get pretty angry! I mean, this is some of the kinds of things that are happening. I just want to tell you this one thing, because like I say, I think that when you look at something like a strike, you have to look at the history of ideals. Have things really changed? Now, last year, or the year before, I'm not sure. . . we had a guy named Warren who was chairman of the BSM. Warren wrote, you were probably here when this happened, he wrote the Dean a letter complaining about some matter or another, and the letter was I believe, received and later answered by Dean Cancellor. When this letter was received and answered, there was some typographical spelling error or. . .and oh yeah, he just signed the letter, "Central Committee of the BSM", something like that. Instead of Dean Cansler writing back and answering what he knew Warren was obviously asking in the letter, he sent back an open letter in which he criticized the actual writing and transmitting of the letter that Warren sent. Well, this was terrible, because as I understand it, Dean Bolton had come in, and he wanted to have a liberal image, and you know, you want to keep your reputation. And I wondered if he had seen that letter before the response was sent out. But this will show you the kinds of responses that are still here, that are still prevalent in the University and we've seen them in terms of asking for space. We've seen some change here lately, but change is something that is shaky, it seems not to be a real attitude change, it seems to be more like just an acquiescence to time. I think you have to look at what factors external to the University are operating. I think there are a lot of white people outside the University who after awhile got a lot more open about what they would allow the University to do with black students. The University kind of got a feel. I think because this thing was so new to them, and this is a national thing too in

that regard, that they had to learn to respond. And they wondered what Raleigh would do for them, what Raleigh wouldn't do. And when the governor made that boo-boo, I think that allowed them a little more lee-way, saying, "O.K., now we can talk with students." Or we can do this or that with students. But this kind of thing with the dean here continued to show me that and what happened with that, and I guess that you might measure some change with this, when that letter was sent back, that letter really caused a lot of criticism on campus. Because people got down to the point and said, "Look man, you've done two bad things. One is, he's a student and instead of answering his question, you got down on him before you ever wrote that letter. And two, this student was a very good student, in the English department. What do you do with him." You see what I mean. And I think that after a period, you know, the BSM was given a space, they got together and they were given a space out here in Chase Cafeteria. But going back to the strike, the main thing that I can say about the strike that I remember, is number one. . .it really, to me, it really was an initiation to what UNC really was about. I learned about college administrators and tremendous problems with college administrators simply because . . .colleges and hospitals are very similar. They don't take normal administrators, they take special people. Hospitals take doctors who don't necessarily make good administrators. Universities take PhDs, professors, and they don't necessarily make good administrators. I think that probably one of the best things that could happen to the Consolidated University is that Bill Friday has a law degree and is not a professor. Perhaps because of that, he's more business oriented, oriented this way, which I think, helps the University out.

R.R.: You approve then of both Taylor and Friday?

Davis: Well, let me say about Taylor. Taylor, he's not saying he's any better than Sitterson, but he evidently shows more business-like response and that response in one of, "I won't give you anything, but I won't refuse you anything."

R.R.: Do you think the new attitude then might go back to things like the strike?

Davis: Not just that one strike, I think a number of things. A number of problems. You see, I think there's a total effect here. You have to look at what the particular incident of the strike, at what was happening outside the University in the state, what was happening outside the University in the nation, and then on the University campus, the interaction of those things, I think, made the difference. And one, I'm going to say it like I know it, the Chancellor was having trouble with his son. Now, some people say that the reason that Chancellor Sitterson had to go away was that he didn't handle the strikes properly. That was not it. I think he had to go because he couldn't handle his son. And his son was involved constantly in one thing or another. That part of the situation. I don't think that Bill Friday and Chancellor Sitterson got along. I got that impression, maybe I'm wrong, but I just thought that Friday thought that Sitterson was a dumb-dumb. And I think Taylor is more Friday's sort of man.

R.R.: Let me ask you just one to two more questions and I'll set you free.

Davis: O.K., and I'll give you specific answers, I'm going back down to Town Hall tonight.

R.R.: I was just wondering if you could sort of characterize what you feel the black students, the BSM contribution to the strike was. I think that is a general question, but I meant it to be more specific. What specifically was their place, what did they do that nobody else did and why were they in a position to do it?

Davis: All right. Number one, I think that the workers approached BSM simply because BSM had shown actual commitment, the leaders had shown commitment and interest prior to the strike and I think that people were looking for this. Like I say, we were committed, when we started out initially, we were committed. WE didn't just talk. You know, we mentioned some people at the beginning of this

interview, and some people said, "Man, always avoid arrest." And that always bothered us, that some people did always manage to avoid arrest. And we saw what happened in Durham and a lot of people in Durham were led down the alley and then looking around for the leadership and the leadership had split. Well, the leadership here stayed and I think that the people trusted BSM. Two, as a role, number one, in terms of communication, the BSM served between the workers and other campus wide organizations. I think that the workers were very naive-in a lot of ways, by dealing with a lot of people on the campus. And usually, they went through BSM for advice on how to handle this or what to do about that. And the BSM gave such advice. Our role was to support and give assistance and it was that from the beginning to the end. Support and assistance. Support in terms of just saying well, in terms of just plain spiritual support, people out there marching on the strike lines, people showing up to work, helping in the soul food cafeteria, assistance in terms of providing, like I say, people who could write letters for people, people who would go with the ladies from the cafeteria and help them solve their problems dealing with people on the University campus, this kind of thing. I think that was the primary role of the BSM. Assistance, support, and manpower. Now, see, manpower there was not many men at all in that cafeteria system. And you needed them, the problem with strikes is that you need manpower and we provided manpower out there on the line. We were going to help protect the ladies and I tell you, from my belief about the times, I think that the ladies did need protection. That was primarily the role of the BSM, that is the role as I saw it.

R.R.: Then, this last thing. . .I'm reading right here, this is Joe Shedd. Do you remember Joe Shedd.

Davis: Yes.

R.R.: He was one of the white leaders that was meeting with the administration back then. He has written up some conclusions which is his point of view. But one of the things that he condemns the white groups for, was that they seemed, he says,

"others, other whites, talked about provoking a confrontation or seizing a building without any seeming concern for what such an action would have done for the cause of the strikers. After all, 'the administration deserved it.'" Would say that this was true of the BSM as well?

Davis: No, no. I tell you what. There was a big difference. That's a good point that he brought up too. Because there was a big difference between. . .and this has always been the problem with black and white coalitions. The problem is always that what blacks wanted, whites didn't want, whereas blacks wanted stability. . . you know what I mean. A car, a good home, security, to go where you want to, to the beach or wherever, a good job. . .the whites who supported the blacks in this were doing so only because they were coming back from that kind of thing. What would happen would be that we would have white students who would say, "We want to take this building." We'd say, "Man, we don't want to take no building. We don't want to get hurt. Why should we want to get hurt." This is why people didn't want to stay in Manning Hall. Why should I stay in Manning Hall and get my head busted. I had no desire to get my head busted. I want no fight with no state trooper. Well, we always operated on the idea that everything we did was tied to particular goals. And the thing at the cafeteria, that too. We got to the point where we had strained our ability and had to tell people to leave our workers alone. Now, there were some white kids and some black kids who wanted to take a building, "we ought to tear it up and rip it off." But that wasn't us, like you say.

R.R.r: By another token, do you think the strike was really aided by the soul music and the loud speakers in Manning and the turning over the tables and the calling the Chancellor "Champ". Do you think these were. . .do you think they hurt the strike?

Davis: No, I don't think so. Number one, I think what you are asking me if the strike was not solved the way it was, would it have hurt the strike? As opposed

to literally did it hurt the strike? Literally, no. Because playing that music aroused the state troopers and led to that final big scene that helped us solve the problems. But in terms of actually playing the music, I think that the workers got real re-enforcement. One thing about it is this, people from the BSM were very sure, like I say, we were very committed and I think that when workers like that, and you've got a bunch of women who were going out on strike. . .and I don't say "women" in the chauvinistic sense, I'm saying that people who would want to hurt them would see them as defenseless. And we had some sisters out there that I wouldn't want them to mess with. But the point was that playing music like that, the cafeteria and everything, said to them, "we are not going to let these people hurt you. We are going to be out there with you." You know what I mean? Everything that we did was tied to a specific thing that was involved with the strike. And I think that has been a thing that the paper. . .like I say, it really amazed me how white people can have so much ego and care so little for human beings, and so, the papers, I think that people interpreted in the newspapers what they would like to see happen. I still find that today, when people come up to me whereas, o.k., the BSM has a good drama group, a poetry reading group, we really get a lot more students in our program, we got people writing plays, man, we got interaction, cultural, learning going on now. We've got all kinds of activities going on. We got a culture week that's been going on all this week. I've got a folder right here on the doggone thing and yet people come around and ask me, "What's the BSM doing?" They want the BSM to tear down the University, they want the BSM to do this kind of thing." But even then, what we said that the BSM was doing, we were helping those workers. And I tell you what, I wouldn't get up at four o'clock in the morning for nobody, unless I. . .I don't get up then just to hurt the University because I think that the University is hurt bad enough itself. I mean, it's just hurting itself. So,

there was never any of that kind of thing. We had cases where with the state troopers, we stayed back and the white kids would say, "Move out." Well, with these state troopers, man, we would go back. You don't go out and get killed. You don't do that, that's crazy. You can't strike dead. But we had white kids who would do that and it led us to believe that a lot of white kids. . .and unfortunately, this is what hurts you so much when you do stuff like that. I guess it's like anything, you know who your bedfellows are. And I think this is what disenchanted a lot of white kids with the black movement. Because whereas they were looking for people who would be super-appreciative of what they were doing, we tended to see some of them as having misplaced values. They were in it a lot for just getting their own rocks off, they were in it for other things.

R.R.: That's what I'm talking about. . .

Davis: Right. In other directions, with their gripes with the University, gripes with students, gripes with a lot of things. And they looked around for any particular perfect vehicle. The Kent State situation was beautiful. I mean, it provided the kids with a nice. . .even this was sanctioned under the law, that's why it was really nice, you know what I mean? That was the tops for this kind of thing.

R.R.: But, the actions of the BSM were actually just pragmatic and very controlled.

Davis: Pragmatic and controlled.

R.R.: With the workers in mind.

Davis: Yeah. And we invited Howard Fuller to speak after the strike. So, that's it and. . .

R.R.: And yet. . .

Davis: And everybody would say, "Howard Fuller solved the strike." But I think that the thing that is essential to remember is that BSM has done all this, we have been committed. When it came to arresting, when it came to being out there on the

line, our leadership has been out there to take it. And I think that if you look around, a lot of other leaderships at other schools, a lot of times, other people will come in there to lead people, will lead people and when the shit comes down, they back out, you can't find them. And I think that this is one reason we did well with the cafeteria workers the first time and the second time. Well, the second time, I think that the cafeteria workers got a little enthused about the union, they got a little overboard about the union. And the union just didn't do right at all. Wilbur Hobby ought to be taken out somewhere and strung up. You know, just the reflection between the first and the second strike, we told people, "Watch out for the labor unions." And we told them this after the first strike and all, but, "Oh, Mr. Trotter, and Mr. So-and-So, he said that he's going to do this and he's going to do that." And these guys were just as jive as they wanted to be. Wilbur Hobby would come out there and march around with the workers five minutes, go in and sit down in the office with this cat from Saga for sixty-five minutes, and drink coffee and come out and make a little speech and split. So, we had very little faith in that kind of thing. What we wanted. . .and once again, it shows that we were supportive, we didn't direct, because what we wanted, was that we wanted those people to have a total strike like they did at Duke. We wanted people to put them bodies away over in that hospital, not to be there to put them away, so that the morgue would smell, the power would go off, the lights go out, the floors get dirty. . .I don't mean for people to die, a few should stay there to take care of patients, but that's it. It would stop it, no garbage removal, nothing. And this university **really** runs black labor into the ground. Even today, you know. No sidewalks laid, no paper picked up, none of that, you know. Total, this is how I think we were oriented. But workers couldn't get the people joining them on campus and its been disenheartening because since then we've been approached and I've heard people that come here for

summer school and stuff, girls come up to me and say, "Oh Ashley, oh the plight of these people in this dorm and this dorm." And when I hear it, I kind of put my head down and you know, say, "Oh yeah, that's real bad, that's real bad." "These ladies got to carry out these heavy cans." And I say, "That's real bad." And then I look back and I think how when we talked to people who worked in the dorm, they told us that they didn't have anything to do with the people that worked in the cafeteria. That was an area that they weren't concerned with, a lot of them said, "I don't want to be bothered. Man, this isn't right" and "This and that and that. . ." You see, that was then. One thing too, that we wanted to try to get workers to understand was that that was a good time to strike.

R.R.: How's that?

Davis: Because there were jobs. '68 and '69, there were jobs. Ain't no one going to get your job, but now, you call a strike now, there ain't no jobs anyway. These are things that we said, so in general, like I say, I see the role of the BSM as a role of assisting throughout that entire strike. For us, the black students suffered in that strike because we got nothing out of it, you know, there wasn't a gain for us in terms of. . .it was a gain for us in terms of helping the people, but we weren't in it to attract glory. Check it out for me now. That wasn't it, because that four o'clock in the morning shit just did not cut. We weren't in it just to be against the University. That wasn't our bag. We had our own bag. That was outside, that was a different matter. But what we did, these people asked us to support them and. . .

(end of tape)