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This is an interview with Senator Richard Riley,
in Greenville, South Carolina on December 3, 1974.
The interview was conducted by Jack Bass and was trans-
cribed by Susan Hathaway.

JACK BASS: What do you think is the impact of
the Ravenel campaign, one, and the impact secondarily
of the Ravenel disqualification and the events that
followed in terms of South Carolina politics and
particularly the Democratic party?

Richard Riley: Well, the Ravenel campaign, the
campaign radically changed politics in this state in
my opinion. The attitude of the general populace as
it pertained to state government, I think, shifted
from hard line conservative state government on state
issues to a very healthy, above-board, progressive
attitude. I think the things that Ravenel talked
about were not new issues, but they were articulated
or communicated in a way that the public picked it
up and tuned in and became part of it. That was the
campaign. As to what the prognosis is going to be,
that'll be hard to say. I think there has been a

significant lashback from that arising out of the court decision, arising out of the Dorn campaign which was unsuccessful. I hate to remind you of that. I think right now, the so-called Ravenel movement is at a much lower point than it was even at the time of the second reconvening state convention. The results of the court decision were mixed. The feeling was mixed. An awful lot of the real idealists felt like that was just again part of the establishment knocking down something that they had come up with. I think the predominant view though, as I sense it, is that it was a sound decision, and that perhaps it was something that either the Democratic party or the Ravenel staff or somebody should have gotten checked out better or done something else differently about. I was impressed in examining the Constitution there is a proviso in the Constitution that says that any registered elector, any qualified elector can run for any office so long as they are not disqualified by age as it is set out in the Constitution. That is under the category of officers. I forget what Article, but it is Section I under officers. It was ratified subsequent to the ratification of the article dealing with the executive, which has a five year residency provision. So, I think, really you can find in the Constitution some substantiation for him having been a legal candidate. The Supreme Court, however, ruled

on the residency because that is what was put to them. That is what the earlier judge had ruled on and it's awful hard to quarrel with the court decision in light of the thin or narrow question that they were given to answer. Because I think if the question was residency, I think they probably ruled right. Jack, it is hard for me to say what the prognosis is for politics in the state. I think the Democratic party clearly has a new look to it. Whether the new look will be the controlling look, or whether it will just be a viable influence in the party, I don't know. I do think this, that if the Democratic party organization does not make a meaningful place for the Ravenel people, the young progressives, and the old progressives in the Democratic party of this state, I think there will be either an awful lot of friction within the party, or you are going to have some problem holding everybody together in the party that considers themselves to be part of the state Democratic party. I would like to see the Ravenel movement carry on to the point that it would be the dominant force in the state Democratic party, and the dominant force in state politics. I think, of course, it is not a new position with me, I have been involved in all of the reform measures, most of which stemmed out of our efforts to revise the state Constitution. I think

reapportionment had a big role to play in opening up the state government to progressive ideas. I think that revision of the state Constitution then broke open the state Constitution, and when it did that, it caused us to take a self-analysis of all facets of state government, and take a look at what was being done in all the different areas of state government throughout the country. This resulted, I think, in a sound look - see on the part of the general assembly, with influence from without, with the editorials, organizations that don't have an ax to grind, like the League of Women Voters, who are just interested in good government, with public input from the outside. I think the efforts of revising the Constitution have opened up things like home rule, court reform, all the other many reforms that have been debated. Basically, every issue that has been debated in a political sense, which could be interpreted to be a progressive move, I think, has been brought to light by opening up the Constitution. You and I remember not too many years ago that that was not done. You didn't question anything that was in the state Constitution up to a certain point. Then all of a sudden it is acceptable to say, "Well, this was valid in 1895, but it is not valid in 1970." I think the Ravenel movement then came along following the disillusion that was brought about by Watergate. In fact, this state was

perhaps one of Nixon's strongest states. Frustration in government in general. It is good to see that the younger generation is coming along. At this point of frustration, they could have in one of two directions. They could have gone as the movement was in the sixties, except in a much more radical way, or they could take a very sound, mature democratic approach, and that is attempt to get their power, the power of their vote and support into areas and campaigns where change could be made, and where they could have input to change the system that they were frustrated in. I think the wind was blowing. It was blowing in the legislature, but very unsuccessfully. When I think back about . . . I made what I thought was a very sensible argument in the senate to make the adjutant general an appointed position. He is the chief staff officer of the National Guard under the Governor. The Governor is the head of the state militia. To have him as an elected official, you could have a real anti-military person elected, or a person that would want the National Guard to be used to hand out lilies, or you could have a very militaristic person elected. All of that is under the Governor, and we are the only state that has an elected adjutant general. I am using this as an example, a simple one. My provision, of course, was to have him appointed by the Governor. I even had the adjutant general saying

that he would not oppose it. With certain safeguards, because, I think, you get into the problem of having a Democratic Governor and a Republican house and senate, and so forth, but I think advice and consent of the senate or some safeguard of the legislature in order to get it through. I think we needed a two-thirds vote to have that as part of the Constitutional change, and I think I got six or seven votes out of 46 in the senate. That was a result of a very sensible change that no one yet, that I have heard, could make any statement as to why it shouldn't be done. Yet, you couldn't get the votes in there. The same way with having the Governor being able to succeed himself one term. The Governor has a program, and the program might be education. Then the people have an opportunity at the end of his term to say whether they like that direction or they don't. If they like it, it gives him momentum to keep going with the program. But in this state, the Governor after two years service, which is all just getting his feet wet, and the last two years he is on the way out. You never do have a state program. I favor the Governor being able to succeed himself. We got just a handful of votes on that. That is very sensible to me. Well, those things were in the air, and while we weren't getting many votes, and we got beat

on a lot of things. Well, in court reform we were able to get through a pretty good article. We were in home rule. But not as good as we wanted. Those things were being talked about and there again, they were being editorialized, and it was part of the news, and evidently the young people, or the thinking people were listening and then all the frustrations . . . then when Pug Ravenel came along, and he unabashedly looks the public right in the eye and says, "I'm opposed to capital punishment. I am not opposed to it because of this high sounding reason, which the young people wouldn't like, or this high sounding reason. I am opposed to it because I don't like it, it's bad, evil," a fresh approach. He takes the same approach on home rule. He was for a pure form of home rule, and not home rule with the legislature having a veto power, which is not home rule at all. That is no home rule. Ravenel says to everybody, whether it is an audience that is pro-home rule or against home rule, he looks them right in the eye and says, "I'm for home rule because it is right. It is good from a governmental standpoint." That's the approach that hit right when it was right, I think, for the right person to come along and lay it out. He did, and was extremely effective. He had a lot of guts, and he had a lot of courage, and he had a lot of sense, and he had, as I've said in a speech to

young people, he had the look of an eagle in his eye that the people liked and felt that he was a strong person.

J.B.: Do you think in two years there will be a number of people who will be running for public office because of the Ravenel campaign who otherwise would not have?

Riley: I don't think there is any question that there is a different . . . all of this group that were not involved heretofore, they are not Democrats, they are not Republicans or anything else, they were involved in a Democratic campaign with Ravenel. I think they are all going to be involved. Now as far as running, I am sure involvement means running, and I am sure we will have a lot of candidates that otherwise would not have been candidates. A lot of people have called me up that were involved in the Ravenel campaign up here wanting to know how they can become more involved, what they can do to keep things going. However, I feel like, coming out of the Republican victory in November, that again the Ravenel forces have been taken aback. I think they have suffered another lick. Now, whether that is all just smouldering in the background, and they'll come out strong again and be just as strong or stronger is kind of hard to say. I think they are wise to not make a whole lot of moves now and let things calm down.

I had a feeling that if Ravenel would have been the Governor of this state, that this state would have taken a leadership position in the United States that would be unmatched in state government. That is my feeling. I might be wrong about it, but that is what I felt, and I felt like he would surround himself with these people that don't have an ax to grind. They are interested in good government for the sake of good government and for providing the services that the government is supposed to provide. I was real excited about what all could be done. Of course, that is the way of politics. It doesn't always work out.

J.B.: What do you think is going to happen with Edwards as Governor?

Riley: Well, Edwards is a nice fellow. I think he is probably conscientious. I think he is a lot more conservative than he indicates. All of his background has been in party organization. All of his leadership, as I understand it, in the party organization. I don't think . . . I think the important ingredient in Edwards' service is the person or persons that he looks to for help. If he calls in the right people to help him and advise him, then I think he can have a very satisfactory service. But if he calls in the wrong people, I think he will make the wrong decisions. Not that I don't think

that he has the ability to understand the decisions, but I don't think he has that much background.

J.B.: We'll be in a better position in four months to make some judgement on that.

Riley: Oh yeah, you can't really tell now. But of course, he has started putting together his staff, but we'll see that. I don't know what the reaction of the legislature is going to be. As far as working with the Governor, I am sure they will work . . .

J.B.: Do you see any prospect of say if that task force should organize the Dorn campaign, continuing to act on any sort of informal basis, perhaps bringing in some other people and providing, in effect, a Democratic alternative program for the state in the next four years?

Riley: Jack, we've all been kind of getting over the campaign, and I don't think anybody has put a whole lot of thought to an alternative voice. I think if the voice is not one that the voice of the government ought to be, then certainly another voice will be heard, whether it is that way or some other way. We've got an awful lot of factions, so to speak, on various issues among Democrats. It's awful hard to say that we are going to . . . this group or that group is going to represent the Democratic voice. I was very encouraged by

the fact that Congressman Dorn felt, as he told us, and I am satisfied is correct, because he is an honorable person, that this was a voice that he was going to listen to. Those opposite, who were interested in the Ravenel movement, appreciated that because in a sense Bryan Dorn might could have gotten more done like that working with the legislature than somebody like Ravenel, because of his connections with the old-line leadership in the senate and the house if he did stay tuned in to the progressives in the house and the senate.

J.B.: Considering the closeness of the election, are you among those who feel that if Ravenel had supported Dorn without qualification, that Dorn would have won?

Riley: I don't know. I don't guess anybody does. Ravenel went awful far as the campaign built up in his statements in support of Dorn.

J.B.: But always with qualification?

Riley: Always with qualification. However, stronger and stronger. Every time I heard him speak, he would state that he would vote for Dorn and his reasons for voting for Dorn were more impressive. I think that had an effect of kind of building Dorn's campaign up from the outside. Of course, Dorn had his own support all along, and I do feel there was a tremendous build up in the Dorn campaign. I really do think that the time

factor was the real dilemma, and perhaps if Ravenel had thrown his whole staff, if he could have, and I don't think he could have because, I think, that is the problem he had. I think his staff, I am not talking about Marvin Chirnovff, because I think Marvin Chirnovff is a politically astute person and he wanted to help out the cause. But I think the young idealist staff worker that Ravenel depended on, and the people that really put it on the line for him when he didn't have a chance, I think they were the ones that didn't want him to give a formal endorsement for Brian Dorn, and you just can't criticize a man for that. If he has got, if his loyal supporters say, "We carried you this far, now we don't want you to turn around and do this. It'll be a slap at us." I never have been able to turn around to him and say "Well, I think you oughta do this, that and the other, even in light of that." I would have liked to have seen him come out and endorse Dorn abenishio, which I did.

J.B.: What does that mean?

Riley: From the beginning. I don't know whether that caused his defeat. It might have given him less of a time problem, because one of the main problems he had during the campaign was kind of appealing to the Ravenel people to try to get over this. If Ravenel had come out initially, it might have meant that Dorn would have peaked a little

bit closer to election time.

J.B.: Getting back to your own situation. If Ravenel had endorsed your candidacy before the convention began, say the day before, under the circumstances that was really about as early as he could have, and thrown his full efforts in support of that candidacy, do you think you would have won?

Riley: Well, Jack, I don't know. It might have been that my candidacy got maximum out of the convention that could have been gleamed out of the convention. The convention was not a Ravenel convention. However, I am sure the Ravenel people out in the counties could have had a big effect on the convention members. If Ravenel had come out for me on Sunday, before the convention on Monday, it almost would have been too late, really, to have his people, his real precinct workers contacting their delegates to have some effect. I am sure it would have had some effect. By the same token, it would have probably then put the Dorn people harder to work and cemented a lot of those people before they came to Columbia, and it would have had a lot of delegations meeting and voting "Let's go all the way, one way or the other." I would have probably been on the short end of that. I think it was the general understanding in the convention after the second ballot that I was

Ravenel's preference simply because of the Ravenel people that he had endorsed, he felt that I had the best chance in the convention. My father, of course, a former state chairman of the Democratic party, had a lot of old-line Democratic friends, family type friends, that would have helped in some areas. For example, I got some votes in Barnville and areas like that. I think Pug realized that in the convention, that might have been the best way to go. Alex Sanders would have been absolutely acceptable to him, but he had a hard core of people that would lay down and die for him. But they were a smaller group, kind of. They didn't have the broad appeal that maybe somebody that hadn't been as active in one particular area that I had not. So I don't say that if he had come out earlier it would have made a big difference. I would have gotten more votes on the first ballot, but I might not have gotten any more on the third.

J.B.: Are you aware the the South Carolina senate is the only legislative body in the South that operates on seniority?

Riley: I am aware that our use of seniority is probably as important as any other state, I think, in the whole union. Of course, we have a seniority system

up and down the line. In seniority, when you look at the alternatives, seniority for what, as far as serving on committees. Of course, I favor a whole reorganization of the whole committee structure and maybe having four or five committees and letting everybody serve on one committee. But as far as saying, "Well, the President of the senate, or the President pro tempore will have the committee appointments, or the committee appointments will be made on seniority basis. I don't have a big quarrel in the seniority method. That puts an awful lot of power in your presiding officer to be able to jockey those committee positions around, and I don't know that that is a good answer to it. I think the answer is equalizing in the committees.

J.B.: How about in the selection of chairmen?

Riley: Of the committees? Well, I think, I think we discussed that in Columbia the other day. I think technically we elect chairman now. But it is kind of a perfunctory thing that the senior man is always elected chairman. I am not so sure that that is done on seniority. In all cases it is the senior man, but I think we actually go through the exercise of an election. I am not positive about that. You might take a look at it. I wouldn't want to say that that is done strictly on seniority, even though it is for all

practical purposes on seniority. I don't think that three or four people ought to make all the major decisions in any legislative body. I think to spread out the representation is very important in our state senate. Frankly, that is very important in state government.

J.B.: Do you see any changes in that system in which three or four people do make the decisions as long as you do have seniority controlling?

Riley: Well, the senate, of course, serves a four year term. We all come up for election in 1976.

Begin Side Two, Tape One

Riley: I think a good many changes are going to be made between now and 1976. Whether the changes will be superficial, or whether they will be gut changes, that remains to be seen. But I do think that there is going to be some definite response in the senate to the political activism that was prompted in 1974. A lot of the interest in the Ravenel movement obviously centered into the power structure in the state senate.

J.B.: How about procedural changes in the senate?

Riley: Well, I am talking about . . . I think Senator Gressette has already indicated that he thought, I think he said it before really, that he favored only serving as

chairman of one major standing committee, and that is obviously a need that should be passed. I don't know whether the senate would agree to something like that. I doubt if that will come to pass until we reorganize again, or they reorganize again, whatever the situation is after the 1976 election.

J.B.: The question of whether or not single member districts are ordered by the court will be a big factor, will it not?

Riley: Well, I think there will be a real effort to pick up a single member district plan in the senate regardless of whether the court orders it or not.

J.B.: Before 1980 then?

Riley: Oh yeah, this year. I think there is a pre-filed bill in the house, I know, to do that, and I've heard a good bit of discussion about it.

J.B.: Yeah, but you don't see the senate approving such a thing, do you?

Riley: Well, I don't think it is outside the realm of possibilities that the senate would certainly consider a single member district plan for the senate. I have some reservations about it myself. I feel like, if you have a single member district plan in the house, where everybody has kind of their own house man or woman, then to have a broad based representation in the senate might make for

a stronger legislative body. I don't know whether the general assembly would be better served by one direction or the other, but if you have, for example, in the Greenville-Laurins district, everybody gets to vote for five senators. The five senators represent really all the various interests in the county. You have to represent the mountain people, the people in the southern part of the county, the downtown Greenville people, the dairy farmers, and you don't have just one group or area of interest. Frankly, I think that makes for a broader consideration on state issues. Now, if the senate then is structured to be more of a state body, I really think that broad election districts might have an advantage, as long as you have then on the house side the single member districts where the people can have their input into the legislative process by their neighborhood house man or woman. I read a court case one time that recognized that as a distinguishable point. As far as having one single member plan, and one broad based plan with people on one side being primarily interested in local type problems as they pertain to state government, and on the other side, the more or less state-wide issues. All right?

J.B.: Did Ravenel hurt himself with the way he handled things after his disqualification? Did he hurt himself politically or did he help himself politically in

terms of his own future?

Riley: I don't think he helped himself. I think he probably hurt himself, but I don't think there was much he could do about it. A political person who has stimulated people like he had, and then who is all of a sudden taken out, can't go up, he can't stay the same, he's got to go down before he gets back up. I think his going in that direction was inevitable after the court pulled him out. I don't think there was any way he could have turned it around and helped himself. No response to the court decision would have helped him. Just like a politician is beaten after defeat, generally the one that is elected goes generally up initially, and the one that is defeated goes generally down initially. And after time settles things down, then they reshape. I don't know what, as I say, if I had been making the decisions that he had to make, I would have to make them with my political background, which is not his political background, I would have to make them with my situation, the people that I am familiar with that are the participating public in political matters. His crowd, so to speak, was a new crowd, and they spoke a new language. As I say, I would have supported the nominee of the party, because I had run in the party, and the party let me run. If the court had taken me

out, I would have supported the nominee of the party. But to say, "If I was in Pug Ravenel's shoes and his circumstances, with his " that I would have done that, I don't think that would be a fair statement, because I think it was a different ball game.

J.B.: Your convention experience was your first taste of state-wide politics in any way, wasn't it?

Riley: It was definitely.

J.B.: Did it whet your appetite?

Riley: Well, it . . . I don't have any plans as far as that goes. Of course, I run for the senate in two years. If you run for the senate up here as a gubernatorial candidate, you get beat, you know what I mean? I mean, from a practical stand point, I am not going to be able to take a look at anything. I think possibly, though I have been on one side, and the Gressette-Dennis faction on the other side in the senate, I think that will probably be more noticable now. Of course, you know, I've had, of course off the record, a number of senators, you are talking about the task force, not in that sense, but have come to me, like A. J. Dooley, who is not a real progressive but wanting to have, you know, 15 senators down for a weekend and they follow me trying to overthrow the crowd down there.

End interview.