

*Southern Regional*

Interview with <sup>Harry</sup> Henry Bowie, Assistant Director of the Council, March 31, 1974, at McComb, Mississippi. Conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries. Transcribed by Linda Killen.

Bowie: I've been here it will be ten years in--64. ~~came down for~~ in 64. Went back to my church for a month and then took another month to come down after some violence that occurred in this area. That stretched into a year, two years, three years, seven years, what have you. But anyway from 64 until August of 72 I worked principally with the Delta Ministry in Mississippi.

Bass: As what?

Bowie: Project *Director*. First, just as a community organizer in this community. ~~And then I headed up our efforts to~~

That involved the first round of workshops and training sessions with folks who were running in 67. . Of the folks that ran in 67, we probably worked with 75% of them in terms of helping them put together their campaigns, helping them with fund raising, things like that.

The next major area of responsibility in terms of Mississippi ~~was~~ ~~somebody else was~~ more or less in charge of ~~was in~~ some economic development efforts, the result of which we got a major loan through Delta Foundation in Greenville, ~~which is~~

De Vries: You work with the R&D Center on that thing?

Bowie: No. It had nothing to do with that.

It is the most successful CPC in the south, clearly, and I say that with a fair amount of objectivity. That's been, you know, one of the

things I've worked on. I've worked pretty much across the board as a generalist. Lot of developments. I've worked--I'm on the executive committee of the American [?] party. I'm in name chairman here but I'm going-- I meant to resign--it's so funny--when I went over to Atlanta I began to worry about being there most of the time and offered to resign. ~~And with Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ you might as well go on being chairman." And I don't, you know, whether it's Leo or Mrs Taylor or Mrs Bryan, that's where most of the work gets done mostly.~~ We're a minority county here so we don't win the elections but it's a pretty hard working county because when somebody like Charles runs we may send \$2-3,000 *to the* other candidates. We're not.

Bass: What do you do in Atlanta?

Bowie: In Atlanta I work with the Southern Regional Council. I'm one of the associate directors.

Bass: Since 72?

Bowie: Yeh. I'm the associate director there in charge of program development.

Bass: So you commute?

Bowie: Weekends. All most weekends. There'll be a day and a half this weekend. I'm a generalist, organizer *been involved in a few little things.*

Bass: You came to Mississippi from where?

Bowie: Long Branch, New Jersey--not Long Branch, where I was born. Longside.

Bass: Had you been in the South before?

Bowie: Never. Well, yes, I'm sorry, I'd been in the South before but I've never lived in the South.

Bass: What attracted--why did you come?

Bowie: Why did I come? I was involved in doing some things out of my parish in New Jersey. Working with some housing problems and went to a few meetings. And then Washington. I was terribly impressed at this symposium they were having. Dr King and SCLC and SNCC and all those forces were there. And I'd taken down a large group from the town where I had my parish. I was most impressed by a gal by the name of Jeanie Schmidt. She and Stokely and John Lewis one particular session and they talked about the needs of Mississippi. And a group of us just standing there said "Hey, we ought to go that summer." They were preparing for the summer of 64. I said "Fine, I'm going." It turned out I was the only one in that group who came down. And I came down with the stupidity that most of us had, that we were going to solve Mississippi's problems in a month because that's what everybody said they were going to do. And they came running down here to do that.

Bass: What did you find when you got here?

Bowie: I don't know if I can describe that any more. The fear. I think that was the most overwhelming thing I found out here. I came in, I think it was July 6th, and I was assigned to Vicksburg initially. And I drove over to Vicksburg going about 30 miles an hour scared to death I was going to get arrested or something. And before I got there there had been a phone call asking if I would come to McComb instead because there was a bombing that had taken place here and they couldn't get any help at all from the local ministers. And I was a minister. They said "Go on over and see what you can do to help." And I came on over here. It was a fortress-like atmosphere. Here were the Freedom House folks sort of boarded in and everything around was sort of hostile. But there was also this wierd kind of hope and joy--they called it the beautiful . wrote an article

called "The Beautiful or the loving community" or something like that. With all those hostile forces, you know, kind of coming in people were both afraid and absolutely unafraid at the same time because they depended on one another in a wierd kind of way. The barriers, the normal things that keep people from just being people had to go down to survive. And it is something that many people will regard as the high point in their life. And in many ways it was. Unfortunately too many people continue to seek it and it probably only could have existed at that particular time and period in history. But fear, confusion, hope. All that put together. Hatred.

Bass: Is it hard to reconstruct those days?

Bowie: You can talk about it very easily with somebody who was there. For some reason those relationships were made absolutely strong. Curtis Hayes, who was with us at that time, he was really the leader of the project. Young SNCC kids from out in the country. He's a muslim now. But those relationships simply don't wash away. We fought like mad. He was with the Black Liberation Army back some years ago. He's a hawk now. He had one foot. He never finished law school. He and I essentially were enemies during the whole of the project. Not enemies but adversaries. But he was down and he came here and stayed here for a while. That relationship was all right within that context but there's something that holds us together. We all understand. Because there was something very strong and very--you needed one another in a way that you don't ordinarily have to admit that you need one another. We both fed ~~and fed~~ one another. How do you describe something that happened that's not structural, that's not ordinary.

Bass: At that point what was the perceived political strategy?

Bowie: At that point? Yeh, very simple. We won it. What appeared to be radical in Mississippi was very conservative in reality. We

wanted folks to be able to vote. We wanted them to have integrated education. We wanted more jobs. We wanted federal programs and intervention. We wanted to eat in the restaurants and *white* hotels. That was it. And we wanted to begin to become involved politically. Very simple, very easy, very clear. We got it.

Bass: The goal was equality, is that right? Was it that simple?

Bowie: Yeh, but it was equality in specific kinds of ways. You know, the ones I'm mentioning. Those were the things that people were struggling after mostly. [Interruption.] . . . the genius of it. We went and made it wing. What made people give such an absolute commitment to it. I read an article recently in Ebony about

. It made a point about King: it was that King was able to take absolutely, completely complex issues and with his charisma, you know, pull out of them very simple articulations of them that everybody could ascribe to and move with and be caught up in.

Bass: So when the term 'freedom now' was used it encompassed everything you just enumerated, is that correct?

Bowie: Yeh. But those were all very. . . , we were after the end result. Those were ends, and we could articulate them very simplistically. And in many ways I don't know if we understood the complexities in getting there. It may have been far more complex for other people. Because you got to realize when I say those were the goals, those were the stated goals to which we could all ascribe to some degree. But we were, whoa, a mixture of people involved in achieving. . . . A guy down south who was a municipal priest; a guy in the project who was a Marxist; you had another guy who came from Mississippi and went off to college who just knew that he wanted these very basic things for his people and he had to struggle for them. You had people killing out of their own bitterness, you know, frustration in life where they had too much of everything and found something very wonder-

ful in working for very basic things. So who we were. . . what we were all personally seeking, is something we'll never fully know and understand. But we could all subsume that under some very simplistic goals.

Bass: All right, so the strategy at that time was perceived as what? The political strategy to achieve these goals. You had goals and objectives. How are you going to achieve them?

Bowie: The basic assumption was that it was uniquely simple also: that if you involved people in the struggle, they understand how they are being denied, and they understand how they can change the system, they will seek these good ends for themselves. I guess. . . I don't mean to oversimplify it, but I think in many ways we naively assumed to some degree that to know the good was to do the good and that all we had to do was to get the folks who, one, who were being oppressed to know they were being oppressed and that they had power in themselves and they should go out and seek it. To get the oppressor to know that he was evil. And he might cease. But back to some of the rhetoric in Dr King's speeches that were so moving and you find the very similar simplistic kind of thing. You know, the black man needs the right to free him from oppression and the white man needs the black to free his conscience kind of thing. . . I think a lot of that simplicity ran through the movement in many ways. But strategically the thing was to get a mass movement going, as many people involved in understanding their needs. This meant putting the only thing you had up, and that was your body. Because that was the only thing you could move.

De Vries: Was there a perceived model anyplace else?

Bass: India, you know, is sometimes referred to, nonviolence, this sort of thing.

Bowie: Nonviolence as a model was not as strong in Mississippi. Non-violence in Mississippi was a tactic. . . no, it was a necessity. You just didn't go out and get violent because you got your head whipped or got killed. The whole Gandhian thing was not, in my opinion, strong in the areas where I was working in Mississippi. SNCC was non-violent, tactically, *in* Mississippi. Most of the workers were. More so than as an ideology.

Bass: Did the movement in Mississippi have a religious base. Did it grow out of a religious base?

Bowie: Most times,  yeh. It's like the other answers I've given so far. I could say yes and be absolutely telling the truth. Certainly it was housed in the churches. It was talked about in terms of religious symbols. But the folk who were brought up in the movement were a mixture of people who themselves had a religious basis similar to the people they were working with

~~don't believe it to have any basis in reality.~~

Bass: Were Biblical models referred to?

Bowie: Oh yes, frequently.

Bass: What? Recalling some of that. . . .

Bowie: Oh you know, obviously the Moses. . . .

De Vries: Old Testament groups.

Bowie: You had one that I like to use myself and some other people use about the equation of. . . Jesus talked to his disciples about if you see somebody who's hungry you ought to feed them, ~~thirsty~~, you give him drink, and what have you. And that to deny it to somebody is to deny it to Jesus and to give it to somebody is to do it to Jesus. And moved to point out that the church did this historically and now to do this through the political operation. Tie that to how social services are

given. It was an easy transference for people. You had the whole story told you a couple of times about how Joshua sent the folks into the land of Canaan to find out who was there. And they'd come back and talk about these great big giants who are over there. But one lone guy says "No, that's not so." Most people saw the white power structure as that giant. And another appraisal was to see it as something that could be dealt with and fought. That was the sort of Joshua

that was used. The Jericho story obviously was used quite frequently. Marching around and blowing the trumpets. And so many of them were used.

De Vries: Was it more Old Testament oriented?

Bowie: Depends on who. No, see, you can't. . . yeah, I can make some things very simple. Different folks use different tools in the community. And that was very much a part of the folks, you know. I used a lot of Old Testament because I like Old Testament. But I don't know if I could make a statement about more or less Old Testament. I would tend to think there was probably more because the Old Testament fit itself far more to it. ~~I like to use the old story about the son. . .~~  
~~Isaiah wouldn't [could not make out the story]~~

you know, a very easy parallel between that and the individual choice a person had to make in the movement. Heavy Old Testament but I'm not prepared to say--

Bass: Am I correct then that the Bible was used both as a means of example and also a means of communication?

Bowie: Both, very clearly both. I would think more communication on the part of the majority of the movement than example. Because some of the examples have to be stretched. Far more communications, but both.

Bass: Do you perceive it, or consider that whole period in Mississippi and the South--Mississippi as the center--as a genuine revolutionary movement?

Bowie: Without asking you to define general revolutionary movement and using revolutionary in the sense that I would use it, okay,

I'd say yes. I mean that's such a big question. Yes, in the sense that people who were to turn upside down their whole context of their lives. And what *they did* constituted a total change. And using the only weapons they had available to use, in that sense yes. As conservative as they were compared to another day, at that moment, that particular time in history, people's commitment to it and involvement was in a sense totally revolutionary. The mentality was clearly revolutionary.

Bass: Do you consider it unique in the sense of a revolutionary movement motivated by Biblical teachings?

Bowie: No, by no means.

Bass: What would be another example?

Bowie: not revolution. But fighting for change. The struggle in Ireland right now is in part tied up with religious concepts and teachings. Let's not narrow it to strictly Biblical. . . . Certainly the Crusades were tied up in Biblical teachings.

Bass: *As* the modern state of Israel?

De Vries: The whole American revolution.

Bowie: You just go back through any struggle in which religion has been involved you're going to find it having a force on it.

De Vries: Can I ask you about Cleveland Sellor's book?

Bowie: Not read it.

De Vries: He argues that you started a *movement that reflects an* inability

to articulate, to bring people together around those things.

Bowie: You see I put that into another context. You're getting into a whole bag of mine in that, one, I don't think any of us understood at the time. . . . You know, in '65 I thought I was the vanguard, I thought I was part of the vanguard, you know, that was seeking to initiate achieve a new kind of change in this country. I found out later that I was the tail end of something in that this movement we were involved in is something that goes back in this country historically to the '30s. And part of the situation falling apart of the complexity of the issues also speaks to the falling apart and the lack of consensus and agreement nationally. I think the kind of ideological ferment that was existing prior to the Rooseveltian compromise and pulling together of a consensus of that period is not dissimilar to what we're into right now. That the kind of sense of dispossession that existed then, even though it was essentially an economic sense of dispossession is not different essentially from the feeling of alienation and dispossession that we're going through right now. And this whole period that we're in that perhaps was kicked off and seen in terms of black power movement is in fact-- *an* article in Ebony in '71 by Jerome Bennett, who talked about ingroupment as a process and quotes Sartre saying that salvation is where the group is kind of thing. In part, the confusion and alientation in where we are right now reflects a necessary and valid regrouping process in which people are going back to find out who they are in relationship to very simple things. And that from there you might find a new consensus. But that the failure of consensus in the movement, while it in one sense was a failure, was in the movement because of the complexity of those issues. Was also paralleled by a similar process going on nationally in which there was, and there is yet,

no one who can articulate above the cries of all the individuals, groups claiming their share of whatever it is this country to survive who can articulate clearly a message that speaks to them. I think the last almost effort at that was Bobby Kennedy in California. The last thing that happened. I would regard the Johnson period as kind of the last hurrah of that whole full era. And if you go back and you have a whole religious base to it, with the church, the society, always caught up in the assumption that government could, almost around each corner, provide more and more for people. That's part of why we went to government for it. You know, it was a picking up of that whole assumption. So yes and no. Maybe not even no--

De Vries: Let me extend it. McKissick argued, or discussed with us the proposition that once you achieve some of the social, political roles, as the inflexibility of the *system* increases and becomes more and more difficult to think about and articulate ~~and~~ equal *rights*. He evidently saw that what ought to happen now is working toward economic goals. ~~They~~ <sup>Instead of</sup> looking at the social power structure, the political power structure, think about it in economic terms. If you didn't do that what you tended to do was look back to the past and how great it was back in the '60s when we accomplished some of those simple goals. How do you feel about that proposition?

Bowie: That hypothesis is valid for the person who has a program to stand on whether it's Floyd in terms of economics, somebody else in terms of continuing the struggle on education, or somebody on housing, is that when the issues become so complex and there is no consensus about how you *do it*. Each group must take that one area of complexity and work on it. It's a mistake to assume that you can say "This is the answer and all those other things are not." It's just that we can't

weave them together in a whole any longer, or as easily.

De Vries: Yeah, but beyond this his basic criticism was that those looking back, as you said earlier, trying to relive--

Bowie: I'm saying he's wrong when he assumes that unless you work with economic issues you necessarily look back. [Confused discussion between interviewers and interviewee about who meant what.] You have to pick something and focus on it. In that sense I'm agreeing.

Bass: Didn't King also say that the final result of the civil rights movement was to be economic development because you can't really be free unless you have economic selfsufficiency and well-being.

Bowie: But you can't have it without human

[A Leo Whaley now enters the discussion.]

Whaley: I think. . . now because many folk refuse to go to these campaigns, Howley [howling?] and what not, because those who fought for them were the ones who could least afford to go to--those folk who march, those folk who were *first*. After these freedoms were granted, then they couldn't go. But the other folk who could afford to go were already going. If not here in Mississippi, going elsewhere. So when freedom came, maybe we say "I'm free at last." We say it too soon. Because we're still not free, by gosh. I think, moreover, that religion was coincidentally attached to the movement because the church was the only place we could go to. We couldn't go to the court house and we couldn't go to the public building and meet so we had to go to the church. So religion was remotely associated with the movement. I think moreover, by gosh, that just about any freedom, just about any movement unless there's economic *program*, unless there're more jobs. Being free and not having financial push is not worth a yell in hell.

De Vries: Let me ask you about the church and the movement, because

I've heard that you could argue that if indeed the church hadn't been dragged into it, it would have continued its opposition to the movement. It had been opposed to it more or less for a long, long time.

Whaley: The church wasn't ready. Even when the church was used, the church didn't get into it.

De Vries: That's what I meant.

Whaley: The church didn't get into it. We might have used the church buildings, but very few of the church--

Bowie: Fundamental error [area?] there. Because you're equating the church with the institutional leadership as opposed to the people.

De Vries: I'm talking about the leadership.

Bowie: Yeah, but see I don't use the church to mean the institutional leadership when I talked about its involvement. [Bowie and Whaley both talk simultaneously. Unintelligible.] No, no. It's an error everybody makes. I'm glad you did it. Partly because I have very strong feelings on this. Yes, the institutional leadership at the local area by and large was not ready because they represent the people who had just that little bit more, who were less likely to get in, as Leo pointed out, than the folks who were most oppressed, most whipped [he says whupped], most messed with. But unless you have communicated to the church, i.e. those people who were the base of the church out there, you never would have reached the base of the people in Mississippi. And those areas in which they fundamentally failed to understand the importance of talking to them through the church and their religious contacts had far less success in sustaining a movement that was ongoing. Now, in other areas of the country that might have been different, but when you get into rural parts of Mississippi and you reach people honestly through, you know, the communication, the symbols, the models of the church, you have a much stronger *reason* for doing that.

De Vries: Well, have the freedoms really been achieved or was it only symbolic?

Bowie: Have the freedoms been achieved?

De Vries: Yeah, his point is that, you know, you may have integrated some of the restaurants and busses and so on for a few, but really maybe the freedoms haven't been achieved for everybody.

Whaley: . They are there, but many of our folk will not take advantage of them, will not make themselves up--

De Vries: Because of economic reasons?

Whaley: Economic reasons . Here again, here you have a group of folk who have never been to the Holiday Inn. The place they've been was the Dew Drop Inn. They're not going to the Holiday Inn, by gosh. They're not going to the Ramada Inn.

De Vries: Because they're afraid or because they don't have the money?

Whaley: One is fear and another is money--they have money, but it's just a new bit for them.

Bass: Fear of the unknown.

Whaley: [Something about being comfortable at the Dew Drop Inn.]

Bowie: For some it is still fear, for some it's still money. But the comfort factor of being. . . . Some of them thought that wasn't very essential.

Whaley: When they have the money they go to the Dew Drop Inn, spend \$10 all day. Go to the Ramada Inn, stay a few hours, by gosh, and spend

[Interruption in tape.]

[Discussion, short, which seems to relate to people involved--blacks? teachers?--in the program]

Bowie: Most of them were afraid of their job or of the risk. Leo got

involved. Spencer Dash. Mrs Taylor. But that was,  
you know, by and large it. ~~The rest of them were~~

Bass: Can we try out some of the--

Bowie: I've got to pick up on something. Yes, economics is absolutely important and there'll be no complete freedom until we address it, you know, the economic issues or politics. But to assume, in each instance, that the economics will precede some other device is faulty. In many areas politics must precede economic development as the device, the organizing device for black people if they're going to make it. Because it's an easier one to get a handle on, it's where you have natural strengths. And it then becomes a base for economic development efforts.

De Vries: Yeah, I think McKissick was arguing that you use political power to achieve economic ends.

Bowie: Okay.

De Vries: That is now the trust of the whole thing. If you don't see that, essentially it's out of your control.

Bowie: Okay.

De Vries: Can we ask you about some of the conventional wisdom that we're getting about politics in Mississippi?

Bowie: You can ask me if I can answer it.

De Vries: We've asked most of the people we've talked to, thinking back ten years ago, could they have at that time foreseen the change that would occur for the massive integration of the schools? Most of them argue, or say, that they could not have. Say that that was 20 or 30 years away. Then we ask, why did it change? Why did it come about without really a lot of incidents or violence? In the context that this was the state where most of it was to happen, *that it would go to hell* in a handcart, go up in flames. But it didn't happen.

Bowie: You got different ways of counting the cost, okay. I think the

cost. . . . Mrs Haymer's not on your list. Mrs Haymer has given so much. I was there Tuesday and she seemed tired, worn out. And what she gave basically was her whole life in that period. You can walk around Mississippi and you can find people, folks who gave at a given time, point in history, who didn't <sup>reap</sup> ~~xxx~~ benefit out of it directly, who were just there. You know, they just live in the past because that's the only thing they have to hold on to. They weren't physically dead, but it took so much out of them that they'll never be alive again in the same way that I once knew them to be alive. You know, there wasn't the killing. There wasn't that tremendous violence that could have been. But the violence that was there and still is — — strong. You talk about--let's take schools. We've massively integrated the school system in Mississippi. But, we have given to the people who resisted segregation with all their might, the responsibility for administering an integrated school system and they are resegregating them in a way that is violently oppressive. And perhaps more oppressive and more destructive of black children than the other system. We've got to deal with that fundamentally because we're by no way free. See, it's one thing to have a dual school system separated in different buildings. You at least have a peer grouping and image thing that continues people thinking something good about themselves. When you have a dual school system within the same building, in which most of the kids are put into classes by testing devices which, one, themselves are fundamentally faulty and not culture free and two, and the thing that many of us . . . administered biasly. And you have a situation where a predominant number of black kids are tracked or ability grouped into classes and essentially say to them day in and day out that I'm the dumb child. And that white folks are essentially smarter. And you have a few blacks who escape into that system. You are destroying them at a

rate that is worse. . . . Not that we want that again, but we've got to attack that resegregation from within. We have not accomplished massive integration in the truest sense. We still have a great deal to do on that front.

Bass: Is homogeneous classification used in all the schools in Mississippi that are integrated?

Bowie: By homogeneous classification--

Bass: Grouped by perceived level of ability. A students, B students, C students.

Bowie: I don't know the answer to that. I know that ability grouping is used in many schools.

Bass: What do you mean by ability grouping?

Bowie: What you're referring to as homogeneous.

Bass: That's one technique. Is there something else that you *call it* ?

Bowie: Leo could speak to that better than I could.

Bass: Have there been any statistics on displacement of black teachers and principals?

Bowie: Oh yes.

Whaley: There's no statistics but it's obvious. By gosh the percentage of Negro teachers has decreased. At one time you could look around--

Bass: Even with the combination of the two school systems?

Whaley: Each year, by gosh, the number of Negro teachers is decreasing.

Yearly. And as far as race is concerned, let me say this

. We are there, but you still have some students--I'm talking about both groups, black and--if there're some white students, as far as we're concerned,

*and if a black* come there, he'd not be worth a damn. There are some white students, as far as they're concerned, I don't care what kind of teacher you are a

Negro student teacher you can't tell them anything. Now there are some

Negro students who have a hostile feeling toward whites. And they refuse to hear from a white teacher. They're going back, you see. You just have to, by gosh.

De Vries: Do you think that situation is getting worse since 1970?

Whaley: It's changing a bit. It'll take a few years.

De Vries: Did they have homogeneous classification before 1970 in the white system?

Whaley: No, no, we just started it a few years ago. Might have started it in '70.

Bowie: I think what you're referring to as homogeneous groupings, by ability is more a product of integration than of educational--

Whaley: . . . when you come to the ability grouping usually, once the Negro students are in. . . . You have three levels: advanced, regular and basic. Basic is the lowest group. Most of the Negro students, they're in your basic group.

De Vries: Because of the tests they take?

Whaley: Tests they take, yes. Then recommendations on the part of teachers. Performance. That's it, by gosh.

Bowie: Well, yes and no. Because the test is one part of it and we'll question whether the test is valid. And also like when lawyer Dye's son. . . . Legislator in this county. His son was ranked in a lower ability group. All it took was one phone call and he was put into another class.

Whaley: I would think such things happen. I wouldn't know, but I wouldn't be surprized at all.

Bass: I don't know if you know about that, but I do know--

Whaley: I've had some students from families who were in my class, good families, who were assigned to me--I teach English, 11th and 12th grade English--they were assigned to me but eventually they got out of my class.

I teach things that the *whites* would not like. . . . You know, shit.

Bass: What you're saying is the particular system is put into an uneasy coalition in one system but you've still got discrimination occurring between the two groups.

Whaley: Yes, right.

Bowie: There are statistics on the displacement of black principals. And there are what? Can't be more than 25-30 left in the state.

Whaley: Perhaps not.

Bowie: But you can get those figures. The Negro principal in the state of Mississippi is a *floppy*.

Bass: A what?

Whaley: A floppy. I wouldn't have his job and you wouldn't either.

Bowie: And he's a rarity right now.

Whaley: Quite so. *A black man* ~~is~~ an assistant principal. Because they have building principals. You have the principal of academics and you have the building principal. The janitor. He's the head janitor, that's what he is.

Bass: Now the popular perception of white Mississippians and certainly those in politics is that this is the most integrated state in the country and we've done it so smooth and we're so proud of ourselves.

Whaley: [mutters shit?]

Bass: In addition to that, race relations in Mississippi are about the best in the country. I'd like to get your reaction to that.

Bowie: Obviously it wouldn't *be* smooth.

That's the point I made earlier. Grade selections at this point follow the--they are reasonably quiet. I think the hostility and bitterness is at a presumed low level right now. But that's only because

folks have gone from one thing to another. And it's an apparent and surface victory. They have not started the next phase of the struggle. And that's equality within the integrated system. Now we've made progress. I mean, nobody can deny that. But the progress so far tends to be more surface progress than really deep underlying equality in terms of sharing power, sharing economic means, sharing influence.

Whaley: I think so long as the Negroes remain quiet/<sup>don't push,</sup> race relations will remain good. But the moment they start pushing and asserting themselves then you'll have tension.

De Vries: If the Voting Rights Act were not extended, if the anti-bussing amendment in the House of Representatives goes through, what would that do to race relations in Mississippi, specifically the schools?

Bowie: Nobody can answer that.

De Vries: What do you think about it?

Bowie: I think the failure to pass, continue the Voting Rights Act for another five years would be one of the greatest blows to black political development in the South that we could imagine.

De Vries: *Would the state* go back, or what?

Bowie: I think there would be efforts made to chop away at the gains that have been made and that they would reinstitute devices that would curtail black political development. I don't think it would go back to what it was.

De Vries: But you do see a retrogression?

Bowie: I would see a retrogression.

De Vries: Severe one?

Bowie: That calls for a judgment as to how strong we are and I don't know that.

De Vries: What about on the bussing thing. If this thing were open again. Just open it all up again--

Whaley:--go back toward segregation.

Bass: So you can have no bussing and no districts that are under bussing orders can appeal them. I think that's the plan in the House.

Bowie: It wouldn't. . . . See, it's not a matter of going back to what it was before. Okay?

De Vries: I said going back.

Bowie: Okay, but it would give license, it would be a signal that they don't have to do anything else. They have to really integrate the systems and share educational opportunities. And that we would harden the kind of resegregation process that was going on within the school system. But I don't think there would be a tremendous growth of predominantly black schools again or anything like that. But it would set back--

De Vries: Sort of freeze in the status quo.

Bowie: I think it would freeze. There would be a sort of--

De Vries: Does this suggest to you that there hasn't been any basic changes in social attitudes of the people of the state and/or its leadership?

Bowie: No, it suggests to me that social attitudes are as they have been. When there was no power that blacks could wield either through their numbers in voting or through the protection of law, what have you, whites misused them quite significantly in the South. But if--

[End of side of tape.]

But attitudinally there has been, or even needed to be, fundamental change. People who are in power. . . . would recognize power far more than they do good feelings and nice guys and doing it for the right reason.

De Vries: Yeah, but they also deal with perceptions of reality.

Bowie: That's right. That's what I'm saying.

De Vries: But the perceptions, the attitudes out there have changed a little bit, or shifted. They're going to shift.

Bowie: That's not the problem. That's precisely what I'm saying.

Okay? Is precisely. Okay. They'll deal with those realities.

De Vries: That says there hasn't been any shift in basic social attitudes but just a shift in perceptions among the political leadership. If there had not been some of the things that are happening in the legislature wouldn't be happening now.

Bowie: Right.

De Vries. Like this civil protection thing that just passed.

Bowie: Was that primarily for the benefit of blacks?

De Vries: No.

Bass: Robert Clark thinks that it was very much of an underlying awareness that blacks would benefit and that this was generally perceived by the legislature--many of whom have constituencies that are at least part black and a substantial part black and it was also something that would not offend white, a typical white would not perceive it that way--but it was very much of a conscious perception in the legislature.

Bowie: I'm glad to hear that. Okay. Again, there would be a response to the reality of their voting power. If you diminish that reality, their reaction to the needs of black constituents would diminish.

Bass: So if you did not renew the voting rights act you would certainly stand the risk--

Bowie: Stand the risk. I'm not prepared to say that we'd go all the way back. I think it's fundamentally, absolutely important for it to be re-enacted. Because I don't think we can afford to risk. . . . But I doubt, I seriously doubt that blacks are prepared, under any set of

circumstances to go back to what once was. And that any attempt to do it would be catastrophic.

Bass: But when you stop going forward then you're going backward, aren't you, in terms of political development?

Bowie: Yes, and this is why I'm still uneasy. . . . I said this earlier. I'm uneasy about the problem of only having achieved the appearance of integration, the appearance of equality, without going down deeper. Because I think that we may have created the old North. Whether we keep these laws in existence or have *new ml*, lessens that, okay? One of the problems in the North with the appearance of equality, without really structural change that involved blacks far more in the sharing of power and sharing of opportunity, their frustration level rose that led to the riots of the '60s. And without a continuing movement to involve blacks in the South, particularly Mississippi and in the indigenous society, you risk that even now, with what you have.

Bass: What does the term southern strategy mean to you?

Bowie: To me it means Nixon, or the administration, presuming that the southerners to whom they have to relate and with whom they're seeking to serve are white southerners. And it means to read out, to a great degree, the benefits and gains made by black southerners. That he's played to the most conservative element of the white South. That he's sought to appease to a great degree the forces that would at least maintain things where they are if not move towards a retrogression.

Whaley: The term conservative has come to mean a segregationist. You said a different meaning--

Bowie: segregationist. I can subscribe to that I think because a lot of segregationists are conservatives. But I dislike the word liberal. I hate to leave. . . .

Bass: But when the Republicans speak of having a conservative party,

what does that mean to you? Is there a racial connotation there?

Bowie: Not necessarily, okay? Because I think there are conservatives who are conservatives, okay? I think there are conservatives who are racists. One does not necessarily mean the same. It's just simply that *the* word has value. I think it's used that way and perceived that way, okay, by many people.

Whaley: I think historically it meant hold on to the status quo. Recently it has taken a different connotation.

Bowie: When it's used by the guy Clarke Reed, in many ways it's a code word; when it's used by Thurman<sup>d</sup> I think it's a code ~~[colored?]~~ word, too--racism. I don't necessarily use the word that way. I think the Republican party has taken, is getting much of its growth, from the forces of racism in the South.

De Vries: Most of the white politicians we've interviewed view the whole racial problem as behind them. You ask them. They said "That's behind us. We're over that. Now that we've gotten over that hang-up, now we can do many things that need to be done for the state socially and economically."

Bowie: Proponents of the New South essentially are saying the same thing.

De Vries: Okay, but see, those are the perceptions. And it's almost with relief that they tell you about it, that somehow it's--you're saying that it's not really put behind you.

Bowie: Yeah.

De Vries: That's my question to you. If that's the way they perceive it, what does it mean?

Bowie: It means--

De Vries: The schools have been integrated, so that's done with, okay?

Bowie: It means that they think that they don't have to deal any further with the problem of racism. And I think for many of them-- That's so hard! I think for many southerners, they don't understand the ways in which they're racist. And they think they dealt with the necessity of the legal requirements and that. . . . I think some of them can honestly say to you "Yes, we've put that thing" behind them. And in a sense mean that. I almost hate to say this , but it's the truth. Because they don't understand the degree to which their kind of racism affects and oppresses black people. They think that which they have that is not shared equally by blacks is not a matter of who they are as whites and the condition of racism historically and their continued racist attitudes. They see it as the structural thing, the dual systems. And for some of them, when they say it's behind us, I think they actually mean that. Many others know a hell-- most of the leadership knows that's not so, but that's politically the right and proper thing to say. If you want to find out whether the blacks are satisfied with where they are, the answer's simply Hell No, they're not. There are many who are pleased with the progress that's been made and who say "Hey, we've come a long way." [Something about see how far we've come.] But coming behind that is how much farther we have to go. And they see that--lots see it as a racial thing.

Bass: Is there any black feeling at all that the racial problems are behind us. Or is it a pretty much universal feeling among blacks that that's. . . .

Bowie: I think pretty much universal that we're still dealing with a racist society and a racist system. I just. . . . There are some who probably feel that way, but there are so few it's not worth mentioning.

You know, I hate absolutely absolute statements. My thing is, I couldn't conceive how a black could feel it's behind him. But there might be somebody who does. I couldn't conceive of it and the blacks I know don't think it.

De Vries: Because politics--the way to win in this state is no longer to do it using the racial issue to win. Because that is a sense is removed from the public forum. It opens the opportunity for blacks to get more education, more economic opportunities and so on. I think that's what some of them are saying.

Bowie: And I think some of them mean that, okay.

Whaley: [Unclear.]

Bass: Was it in the last governor's race?

De Vries: *Rac* was *not* <sup>an</sup> openly discussed issue. There are many ways to get at it subtly, of course. But the question is whether or not by getting at it subtly is still the way to win in Mississippi.

Bowie: It is.

Bass: In the last governor's race, in the run off, did you perceive race as an issue between Waller and Sullivan?

Bowie: In the run off? Oh yes. Very clearly.

Bass: All right. How? And by whom?

Bowie: It had to do. . . . I'm trying to remember this damn thing. It was very clear that Waller, in his feeling on the private school thing, made an appeal to the white racist voter. He was far stronger, more supportive, one. Two, if my recollection serves me correctly, a big deal was made over the fact that Sullivan and some of his political ads had blacks in them. Waller did not. You know, there're things like that that were just talked about at the time.

Bass: Talked about among blacks.

Bowie: And among whites. Okay? It was pretty clear that Waller made

a pitch to say he wasn't after the black vote. He was, but, you know, he made it appear that he was not. Sullivan appeared to seek the black vote out a bit more than Waller did. No, no, I think it was an issue. And I think that Sullivan was identified as wanting and trying to get more of the black vote. But it wasn't the only issue.

Bass: But there was a perceived, recognizable difference between '71 and '67. Between John Bell Williams--

Bowie: Oh yeah, it was far more subtle. Okay? Far more subtle.

Bass: So as an open issue it becomes more and more submerged and sublimated but you still say there are going to be clues and so on.

Bowie: Oh yes. And when you get down to the local level it sometimes isn't all that subtle.

Bass: Well as the race becomes more and more visible it's going to have to be more subtle.

Bowie: Right.

Bass: On a different political level, so to speak, do you think that the loyalists and the regulars are going to get together before '76?

Bowie: It is my hope that they will get together.

Bass: You think they will?

Bowie: But right now nobody's going to be able to answer that question until we see who's going to be elected governor. Much will hinge on that. I think there's a possibility that they can get together. Me personally, I'm only willing to get together if it jells with the issue of local power, not simple the state executive committee. I tend to think my feeling is represented by the majority of the loyalist executive committee. And that will be enough as to whether or not the governor-elect or in office, whichever, is prepared to swing the weight that he could swing to deal with sharing power at the local level.

De Vries: How do either side gain any kind of resolution of this thing?

Which is the next question. Why should they get together?

Bowie: All sides gain if they get together.

De Vries: Who's willing to go through the battle to do it?

Bass: How do they gain?

Bowie: How do they gain. If. . . . Well, the situation as it stands right now is that the regular so-called control the political machine within the state at the local level. Control it pretty strong except for perhaps Greenville, Jefferson county, Homes county, three or four other counties where we do in fact have political control of that machinery. That's important to the election because it affects the election. Poll watchers. What have you. They would have a much fairer election if it were not controlled by them. The reality is that the loyalist control the relationship to national politics. That national recognition is something that the regulars want and feel that they need. Otherwise they wouldn't constantly be fighting the legal battles. They would say the hell with it. That sharing in local con-  
party  
trol is something the loyalists/need if it's to continue to affect any kind of fair political representation within Mississippi in which blacks and whites are involved governmentally similar according to their numbers. So that both have a need. If it can be put together to meet the needs of both, so that sharing is done across the line, in a general sense both political segments would gain. Now, when you get down to a particular local area there would be losses and gains that are different. To the rank and file party leadership in most counties in Mississippi it would mean that by and large whites would have to give up something and blacks would gain a fair amount. In some areas blacks aren't sure they're going to share with whites, either. A few places. Okay? Just

as whites are not sure they're going to share where they already have it. So that gaining and losing depends on where you are. But by and large both sides would gain if they shared that. You would have a strong political party that is far more representative of the people of Mississippi. Neither side honestly represents, you know, the people at this point.

Bass: If you ended up with this type of coalition politics, do you think the present regulars would stay within the Democratic party or would many jump across to become Republicans and reorganize--

Bowie: A number of them would jump across, but I think you'd have--then you'd end up with two pretty strong parties that were fairly equal. And it might be very good for the political system in Mississippi.

Bass: Do you think reapportionment in the next election is going to result in more blacks in the legislature?

Bowie: If we win the suit. Because the only single member legislative redistricting that's not severely gerrmandered. . . . Reapportionment through the legislature simply will not increase significantly the number of blacks through gerrymander. They do it for their own political survival. In places where it wasn't even a factor they would do it for their own political survival. It's got to be done--that's one that's got to be done through the courts.

Bass: Is Eastland going to be the key figure on resolving the differences between the regulars and the loyalists?

Bowie: Well, I don't know what it would be next time. One thing is very certain. When Eastland's seniority was attacked and threatened prior to the '72 convention, the regulars were far more open to resolving the-- they kept the discussion alive at a very honest level. But once Eastland's seniority was clearly established and he would not lose it without the

coalition of the two forces, their negotiation went from good faith to bad faith. There appeared to be reasonably good and fair negotiations up until that. Now, that doesn't answer your question. I can only tell you like what it was in the past. I don't know if we'll mount the effort, can mount the effort, to attack at this time. I doubt that we can.

Bass: So the question next time then becomes a question of who controls patronage if you have a Democratic president.

Bowie: Who controls patronage is one, and two, the degree to which the governor seriously wants to bring about a whole Democratic party in the state of Mississippi.

Bass: So if the governor fails to do that, you could end up with it being a case with it being a question of the president of the United States having to do it. Right?

Bowie: Could well be.

Bass: I mean if you had a Democratic--Let me ask you a question. If you had a Democratic president elected in 1976 and this issue were still not resolved. And he in effect told the Mississippi loyalists and also some of the Eastland--

Bowie: Patronage came through the loyalist party?

Bass: Unless this thing gets resolved to his satisfaction. Do you think that there'd be resolution?

Bowie: I think that there might well be.

De Vries: Would the loyalists settle under those conditions?

Bowie: That would be a problem. Right now the loyalists can act. . . . Essentially the leadership of the loyalists can act essentially for the good and interest of their constituents. The vested interest held by the leadership at this point is such that their integrity would overcome any

desire to maintain, you know, their power positions. It would be hard and they'd have to give up something. If there is a coalition, Aaron Henry ~~and~~ has to give up something. Pat Derrian probably loses her position. The whites within it, to some real degree, lose something nationally. I feel very strongly that their integrity is such that they would want coalition for the good of the whole state as of this time. Were they to share in the patronage, I'd like to feel that that would still be the same. It would be a much more difficult decision for them to make under those conditions. It would be a far more difficult decision to make. I believe that we have some really good, decent people in the leadership of the party. So I hope for the best.

Bass: But if the conflict is not resolved and you have a Democrat elected president and Senator Eastland wins control of the patronage, would you consider that to be a sell-out of the blacks in Mississippi?

Bowie: Well, first of all, yeah. No question about that. My real opinion is that if we have a man who gets elected president it won't be done as simplistically as that. It'll be a little bit here and a little bit there. Carrot stick waving toward resolving it. I think there's real push to resolve it from the leadership of the national Democratic party right now. But the greatest mistake to be made by the regulars would be the mistake that Waller made, which is to underestimate the political skill of a man like Aaron Henry and Pat and Hodding and some of the others. Waller campaigned with the slogan, essentially, it seemed like he was saying "I'm nothing but a red neck with a ~~carrot stick~~ in my hand." Folks thought it was really a good strategy. The problem is that's what he is. And he underestimated the-- he thought he could take ~~it~~ it. I don't think a more savvy governor would do that.

De Vries: Strategically, among Mississippi blacks in the 1975 elections,

do you see any concerted effort to run blacks as a third party or independent candidates from the two political parties?

Bowie: For '75?

Bass: Yeah.

Bowie: No. Unfortunately never think of political strategy that far ahead.

De Vries: In 1975 do you think that's apt to happen?

Bowie: No--

De Vries: What I'm saying is do you view the arena as essentially the Democratic party to get blacks elected or do you view it--

Bowie: We might run as independents. But that will depend too much on the conditions at the time to forecast it. I would tend to think we'll run primarily as independents unless the issue's been resolved.

Bass: What issue?

Bowie: The issue of pulling the party together. But I don't think it will be resolved and I think we'll run primarily as independents.

Whaley: Go back to what we mentioned a few minutes ago, in that the South has been historically Democratic. More recently, by gosh, they've turned Republican. Again, because of race. And that's why I'm saying conservatism now means racism.

De Vries: Well you know this book that we think we're trying to re-write or replace by V. O. Key. His essential hypothesis was that if you understood the politics of race in the South, you understood southern politics. Now that's 25 years ago. Is that hypothesis still--

Whaley: By gosh, 25 years ago you couldn't name a white Republican in the South. You couldn't find one.

Bass: But is race still the central issue in Southern politics?

Whaley: It is, it is.

Bass: You think it is.

Whaley: It's tied up. . . . It's interrelated with Republicanism and your Democratic party.

Bowie: Yeah, the question is, you don't deal with it the same way, but it's there.

Whaley: It's there.

De Vries: Is that still the key to understanding all southern politics?

Bowie: It's the key right now to understanding politics at this particular stage of development.

Whaley: Yes it is.

Bowie: Now the word all. . . . It's the key to understanding southern politics.

Whaley: It is, it is, by gosh.

Bowie: There are other forces that interplay with it. Other things that are beginning to happen. But they are not yet of significance in terms of. . . . For example--

Bass: What has changed is the black role in politics is what has changed.

De Vries: Not the key issue. The key issue was one of how to suppress blacks. Now the key issue is how to deal with them in a political contest in which they have some power. Is that right? Is that a fair statement of it?

Bowie: That's a fair statement. By and large. In some places, keeping them suppressed. It's a different form or way of keeping them suppressed. In some places they don't feel that the black strength is significant enough to deal with and you have to recognize some places that it's not terribly important. But by and large, yes.

Bass: But the development of blacks into a significant political force, if you assume that that is the case and I think you're correct on that, resulted from the force of outside pressures. Primarily that of the federal government. Which to some of them was a result of internal pressures

from within the South. From blacks. But it was imposed federal pressures that resulted in blacks being guaranteed the right to vote, etc. etc. The federal laws and the federal cases. If that federal pressure is removed, then what? The first Reconstruction, the First Reconstruction era ended with the removal of a federal presence. It did not result in the overnight disappearance of black political participation. Ten years later I think you still had something like 14 blacks in the Mississippi legislature.

Bowie: Let me restate what you said.

Bass: Please do.

Bowie: The importance of outside, and primarily federal, pressure to bring about change, political change in the South in terms of the influence and significance of the black population, which came about, which was a response to the efforts of blacks in and outside of the South and colleagues that were not black, was unquestionably that which permitted the change to come about. And should that power or, you know, mechanism be removed, then that would begin to change once again the political power and context within which blacks live. And the reason I'm turning it around. . . . I guess I'm agreeing with what you want to say. . . is it's a fundamental mistake to read out the importance of the NAACP people in Mississippi in the '50s and the '40s and colleagues in the North who responded to that as a reason for the federal government's intervention. It's a tremendous mistake to read out the other forces that moved the federal government to intervene. It was not some noblesse oblige on the part of the federal government that in the '60s they decided to intervene in Mississippi and in other parts of the South. Your statement tends to assume that some mystical noblesse oblige on the part of the government happened and they reached out and did something.

Bass: I didn't mean it in that context.

Bowie: I know, but it says it.

Bass: Right.

~~Whaley: At one time, by gosh--~~

~~Bowie: \_\_\_\_\_ the abolitionist movement prior to that other inter-  
vention. And too much of history leaves that out.~~

Whaley: At one time both the state government and the federal govern-  
ment, by gosh, arms of oppression in our *state*. We had no relief.

Not until the *federal* government came in did we get some relief.

We said "Okay, we got a hand here." Now, for the South to criticize

[Discussion among all four--impossible to understand--something about  
Bowie being from New Jersey and therefore not "our side"]

Now, it would be no less wrong for Bowie to come here and help his  
fellow Negroes--I won't use the term black because hell, I despise  
that term--to help his fellow Negroes than it was for France to come  
and help America when she was fighting the British for her independence.  
You have the same parallel, by gosh.

Bass: Why do you despise the term black?

Whaley: It's a term that *we* - *we* used in referring to ~~it's~~ sub-  
jects, Negro subjects. I can't stand it. For years they used the  
term black and we said "Don't call me black." And all of a sudden  
they want to be called black. I refer to Negroes. That's my term.  
Historically, that's my term.

De Vries: Why did you accept what this Yankee told you? I mean New  
Jersey is about as Yankee as you can get. [Something happens here that  
transcriber can't figure out.] I'm from West Virginia, which is a  
border state. I came here, I had my ideas about racism. I was as  
frightened as Bowie was. Scared as hell. But I came here.

Bowie: Leo. . . when they set up the Head Start system as a delegate [?] agency in this county, was chairman and ran that program. Leo and I disagree still quite frequently. Not over major points, but. . . . This is parenthetical to what you're talking about. I think part of. . . . We're not, in Pike county [?], extremely well organized. We can pull together whenever we want to. But part of that strength is that we have attempted to keep within the political apparatus here. The right to disagree on strategies and styles. This is true by and large of the Hill. Unlike the Delta, there is no one guy who can run a county. Charles is an exception. He has some problems with that exception. There is leadership in the Hill as opposed to a leader. And we've got to struggle for--

De Vries: You mean there's a difference between the blacks in the hills and the blacks in the delta.

Bowie: Oh I believe it. I believe it very strongly.

De Vries: What is it? Is it parallel to the difference between the hills and the delta whites 20 years ago?

Bowie: I think it parallels that to some degree and it parallels the plantation system and its effect and the dominance of the planter. You see it in the whites, even now. There is far more the yeoman farmer kind of thing in the hills. In a sense the hills itself is a more democratized part of Mississippi than the delta.

De Vries: That's interesting. You mean the plantation system has produced the kind of system politically in the delta where one man can control.

Whaley: They're docile, docile.

De Vries: Because of a tradition--

Bowie: You don't have a tradition of ownership in the delta. For

example, for example, you know. . . well, I had to come in to Pike county and tell people what to do, tell them "This is where we are." Folks would just laugh. Okay. I mean you've got a whole tradition of land ownership. People with small farms who have struggled against

. You talk to people out in the rural parts. They'll tell you about when their granddady and their father used to fight the bobcats. These are the folks who own those 60 and 36 acre farms and work their asses off. They didn't have power, but they struggled. They had a sense of their own, you know, of their own, that they have. If you look to see where your black institutions are, you'll find that you had none in the delta until 25 years ago. When was Mississippi Valley organized? Your colleges are in the hills. They weren't in the delta. All right? You have two exceptions to that. One at the time of Bayou. And that unfortunately was the compromise of 1890, was it not, in which Bruce, not Bruce, the last legislature basically accepted that constitution in return for Mount Bayou's [?] continued political involvement. And you did have black land ownership. The other exception are those few little communities where the Resettlement Act was played out in Mississippi. Around Mileston and Homes county and down in Missaquina county where you have farmers with those little 60 acre tracts of land. You take those exceptions out of the delta and you don't get that similar kind of thing. All right. Look again where there is political strength in the delta. It developed around those areas where they are far more like the hills. Why is it that all the money--this is a question I'm asking myself, I don't know the answer, I know part of it, I have a feeling for it--why is it that we've won no political victories in Sunflower county? We've put more money in Sunflower county than any county in the delta.

Bass: In fact their lack of institutional strength based on local ownership--

Bowie: An infrastructure thing, okay? A history of Dolliver county. That's where our strength is, in Dolliver county. Okay? We won around Kahoma but --

Bass: Why did Eastland run stronger in Wilkeson county than his state wide average, and yet in every other county in which McGovern got more than 40% of the vote Eastland ran worse than his state wide average?

Bowie: I don't know. I just don't know. I missed that. I actually missed that.

Bass: A curious part--

Whaley: I think what both the Negro and the white must do in the South and in the nation is to forget what happened years ago. If we're to forge ahead . We're not going back, by gosh. I think another essential difference is Eastland attracted good men [?]. West Virginia was a border state. We were free enough not to feel hurt. That might have been bad.

De Vries: That's interesting.

Whaley: Bowie, Bowie was free to the extent in New Jersey that he thought he was going to make it. Whereas in the South the Negro had no smack of freedom. Now, I think the most dangerous folk are those in the North and in the South. In the North they felt they were free and they found out they were being hoodwinked. Got mad as hell. In the South, when they found out that they could fight, they became angry. Now, in the middle, in that border state, we played with both sides, by gosh. Had enough communication to say well you will if you will. That's why we were not so terribly *hurt*, by gosh. We knew it was there.

Bowie: That term is what I was trying to get at. The change historically from total oppression to the surface changes, has moved the South--this

is what whites are doing now--to where we're free enough not to feel the hurt in the same way.

Whaley: And I'm fearful that we'll feel the hurt. I know.

Bowie: Yeah, we'll have to in the next thrust. Okay?

Bass: Now what do you see as the next thrust?

Whaley: The next thrust is the people fighting. It's not over. And they say again and again "Free at last, free at last."

But they say it too damn soon.

Bowie: Well, in some places it goes on. Like in Green county, in Bolton, in other places, trying to keep the struggle alive here. But the ink will never change [?]. That will be good. In other places, like Sunflower and , where I think they are essentially depressed, where I think they've lost the thrust, where they feel hopeless. Either. . . . There are a number of variables that can happen, okay? Either folks will wake up with the same kind of anger they woke up with in the North, and that thrust will be far more vitriolic, bitter, frustrated thing that either is channeled into constructive action or blows out in destructive. . . . Or somebody will come on in and help organize that area. And start them moving toward institutional change there. It depends on whether the. . . . The crucial thing to whether or not we succeeded in the '60s will be those areas where we left an infrastructure for institutionalization of the change process in tact. That to me is crucial to success. There is no such thing as instant freedom.

De Vries: You're looking at 20 or 25 years. Looking at a generation to see whether the change is--

Bowie: Yeah, I know. I'm saying you're constantly. . . there's no instant change. Sure you win victories.

De Vries: Now where you left that structure, infrastructure in tact, were

any changes made in that?

Bowie: No, I'm saying that there were changes made and whether that is perpetuated and built on.

De Vries: But that's still a generation away. Don't you need to have, for example, students who started the integrated school system go all the way through before you can--

Bowie: Okay, you're using it a little different. I'm talking about [All four talking at once.] closer to the general pattern of societal life thing. That's happened all over. Okay? Do you continue struggling or do you stop? Is the real question as to whether or not you solidify that basic change. Part of the answer to the question about what happens if the '65 and '70 amendments are continued or not. It depends on what was left in their community. In some communities they wiped out any structural leadership. I think one of the gravest mistakes we made in Mississippi is that we can in and we did not perceive the institutional/ization patterns that existed. And instead of building on them, in many cases, we moved to erect ones that were not needed

. And in some cases left them with little.

De Vries: You said that the original premise was that if you show people what is right they will then do what is right.

Bowie: But that it obviously did work to some degree. The question is what the degree. Okay? It was naive that that would produce total and instantarily 100% change.

Whaley: I think what changes we have now are external. It take internal change. Only internal change or make of our society what it should be.

Bowie: If the effect of what we're doing with, say Delta Foundation, which is a part of. . . to build. . . . And here I'm not talking about

whether or not to change the law so the people have access, okay? But whether we built into that the means by which people can take advantage. For example. . . . Let me give you an example. Given the EEO suit. Whether it's with some paper company or with state government or what have you. You win the right for blacks to be employed equally within that particular institution. Because they end up doing it that way. All right. So five or six are immediately employed. There's a slight upgrading thing that goes on. We're now in an institutional outreach [?] parallel to that. What you get is a limited opening, you know, struggle that stays more open. It's more open. But without paralleling that with institutionalizing an outreach system to get blacks, to be certain that they're trained, to find out how to take the test, that process moves much slower. Okay? You talk about having the right to vote. You talk about having economic development. Then you have to develop the institu--opportunity--then you have to develop the institutions that grant that. And part of what I hear you talking about in terms of Floyd , is Floyd , is developing the institutional base to deal with that. This is what I'm talking about when I talk about an infrastructure.

Bass: Yeah, that's what he's saying.

Bowie: See, part of the mistake of the '60s is we came in.

De Vries: Yeah, what he says is the hardest work. That is the hardest work.

Bowie: That is the hardest work. And that's time and day and day and day. Okay? And you take it and you make it be something.  
possibility of change.

De Vries: It's not going to produce many heros, though.

Bowie: Okay. There are only certain times when charismatic leadership-- as important as it is--but particularly in an instrumental, in a time of

rapid change and social upheaval, does not institutionalize a process, okay? I think Toynbee, somewhere in his writing, makes a point about the difference between states that were built around charismatic leadership essentially and the civilizations that were, and those that were built around other forms. And that the lasting, you know, that kind of nation state. And they're weak. I think he's essentially correct. That does not mean that heroes and charismatic leadership are unnecessary and wasteful. Because there is a certain point in time that they are what's necessary to take that articulated issue, to simplify it, move it out beyond, you know, the complexity to something that all of us can converge around and get a handle on. And what you do with that afterwards is far more of an institutionalizing process. And that there are times in history that are complementary to one another. See what I'm saying?

De Vries: Yeah, I understand. I'm just saying that probably 95% of the blacks don't understand it.

[Interruption.]

Bass: I understand that in Mississippi there really is no state wide black political organization. Is that true?

Bowie: If you mean by that a really well organized, well run, accepted by everybody, there is no state wide black organization that, you know, meets those standards. But it's not true to say there is none. The NAACP is certainly, clearly a state wide black organization that has rather considerable strength. The loyalist party is a state wide organization that has some strength and people like have some identity with it. Otherwise you could not have 82--well, we didn't have 82. But when it became necessary in '72 we had meetings in something like 75 counties. You know. By a lot of people who identified themselves as a part of

the organization. It depends on what you mean by that. A really good, solid, strong, no; some, yes.

Whaley: The teachers are another one?

Bowie: No, they're not really competitive. They might compete at a local level but not--

Bass: Is there a getting together of black political leadership in Mississippi on a state wide basis to discuss political issues and candidates?

Bowie: Yes, that happens through a number of structures. Happens certainly through the loyalist structure to some degree. But many people say that's not sufficient and they'll meet in other kind of state wide meetings.

Bass: How do you assess the Evers candidacy for governor? We hear two versions. One is that it did a great deal to arouse interest among blacks, to boost black registration, to create a greater awareness of the political process. The other is that it took away resources from local black candidates and had a detrimental effect to that extent. Took away resources and effort.

Bowie: Okay. One, the first part is true. It did in fact help generate enthusiasm, movement, etc., around it and voter registration. The problem is not that it took resources away because essentially it did not. Because the resources that Evers received could not have been raised by the local candidates anyway. It did not take time and effort away from the local campaign, ~~because it enhanced~~ . What it did do, and its the fault of a number of us, myself included. . . . Charles wanted to run. . . and perhaps looking in hindsight, he should have run. . . in the primary. One did his thing, not win but get a better showing and a better run off. And let the rest of the candidates

to run primarily as independents later on. There are a number of us who felt that Charles, Aaron, Bob Clark, etc., had coattails. And that by their running at the same time with the local candidates, it would have enhanced their ability to get elected. What we found out is that Mississippi does not have institutionalized politics, but personality politics. And that was driven home. And we found out that they do not have coattails. For example, Charles--you have a *difference* in Fayette, Jefferson county, between Charles' vote and the guy running for the superintendent of education *and he got* some 43% of the black vote. He could not deliver an organization vote. Okay. Well, that was no more true of Charles than it was of Bob Clark or Aaron Henry or Dr Connors, etc. Okay? Now I'm using some names of people who are the only people who drew more than Charles did in their home district. That was Herman Stanton, Aaron, Bob Clark, Dr Connors and that other doctor from up around Stockton, I forget his name. Okay? By and large Charles outdrew the local candidates. There are only two places in which there was in fact an organizational vote that was consistent for all campaigns. That was in the 3rd district of Baltimore [?] county. That was really [End of tape. End of interview.]