

Interview number A-0078 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Jack Bass: How do you see politics in Georgia right now? How do you assess the state of politics in Georgia?

Carl Sanders: In somewhat of a confused state right now. I don't think, at the present time, that there's any particular group or individual that you can look to as the leader of the people in this state. We don't have what we used to have. We used to have. . . . I guess back before the two-party system became a real thing, we sort of had individuals. Everybody was a Democrat, but we had personalities, and people would have this group and that group and the other group. It's pretty well splintered up in Georgia right now. And there is no one factor or one faction that you can consider as being the faction that is going to determine the results of any state election that I know of.

J.B.: Do you see the Democrats in firm control of Georgia's political destiny for the foreseeable future?

Sanders: Well, I think right now the Democrats are probably by far in better shape than they were in recent years. Not because of what the Democrats have done, but because of what the Republicans have done. The Republicans have lost what momentum they had going for them in this state. And they didn't have a great deal, but they were coming on and getting stronger and building up momentum, I'd say for the last several

years. And then all of this Watergate and all of this Nixon business, and all that, has just sort of taken all the wind out of their sails. I don't think that they're going to mount any kind of substantial campaign, at least not for the governor's race. And I doubt if they will put too many strong candidates in any of the other races this year.

J.B.: Have they shown any real growth in this state since 1966?

Sanders: Yes, I think they've shown some growth. They made some progress. They elected a few people; they made a pretty strong race in '66 with Callaway, and then they subsequently seemed to get a better grassroots organization than they'd ever had before. And when you say a great deal of growth, I think, percentagewise, if you look at where they started from--say maybe '64, '65, '66--and how they have come on, I think you have to give them credit for making right creditable strides. But they seem to be going backwards now, rather than forward. You don't hear, naturally, much out of them. Even their chairman and the so-called leaders have sort of crawled under a rock, and they've shut up. They're saying nothing. Whatever they say, it's generally in defense of something somebody else has said, and they're not out on a positive program of trying to sell the Republican party.

J.B.: Well, my point is that even in '72, where you had Nixon and Agnew and the Republican presidential campaign at the top sweeping the state with seventy per cent of the vote, and. . . .

Sanders: They didn't do too well.

J.B.: They didn't do particularly well then.

Sanders: No, they didn't. Well, they didn't really have too

strong a candidate running, or candidates running, in the governor's race that year. They made some gains in some of the local elections. They picked up some seats in the house, they picked up some seats in the senate, in the legislature. I think they made some progress. You can't start. . . . I think that was one of the fallacies of the '66 campaign, was that they started with the idea that. . . Beau Callaway started with the idea that the way to build the Republican party in the state was to start at the top and build down. And he, of course, got nominated by the organization to run as a Republican candidate. And then he very deliberately headed off anybody else running either for lieutenant governor or some other race, because he didn't want anybody else running as a Republican that would be competing with him on the top thing. He had some theory that he would be able to pick up, I guess, a lot of independent and Democratic votes as well as Republican votes, and win by it. And of course he got a lot of votes. But when he failed, there wasn't anything under him to fall back on. They were just leaderless and without any reserves to. . . well, they had to start all over again, and they started trying to pick up a seat or two in the house or the senate, and they began to build up the credibility.

J.B.: I believe it was during your administration as governor that the Republican party really began to get organized in Georgia.

Sanders: Began . Well, it gained credibility when Barry Goldwater ran for the presidency against Lyndon Johnson. In 1964, when that election was held, I was about the only state Democratic official who was even attempting to try to hold the Democratic party up to the people as the party that they should support. All of our other Democratic officials were hurrying and scurrying all around the state,

and some of them to foreign countries, to completely avoid any semblance of support for the national ticket. And, of course, Goldwater carried five southern states or something, Georgia being one of them. And that gave them some credibility.

J.B.: What effect did that have on the Democratic party?

Sanders: Well, I think, in retrospect now--although at that time it seemed to prove that the Democratic party, like I said, was a personality situation rather than a party situation--I think in retrospect, now, it finally got some of our state officials off of the dime, and got them back into thinking that they were going to have to hang together or they were going to hang separate. And some of them, in recent elections, who heretofore completely abhorred the idea of even being seen with a national Democrat, or speaking on the same platform, or giving any kind of illusion that they were part of the whole Democratic machinery, have now reversed themselves, and they've become right actively involved. In fact, Herman Talmadge in recent years has gone about actively supporting some people for other offices which he wouldn't have done before. Of course, Dick Russell is no longer with us, but Dick Russell never did. Dick Russell absolutely refused to have anything to do with any other state Democratic election.

Walter De Vries: What other major changes do you see in the Democratic party, say, in the period we're looking at, '48 to '74.

Sanders: Of course, the Democratic party, as I say, in Georgia now is greatly changed because of the re-apportionment that took place in those years. We went through all the re-apportionment of the legislature, and we changed the flavor of our general assembly--or it's being changed, gradually but constantly--from the rural to the more urban oriented representatives and senators. And the flavor of the

party changed. I took the first black to the first Democratic convention, national Democratic convention of 1964. The first delegates that had ever been taken to this state. Took LeRoy Johnson, who's still in the senate, and . . . what was the guy's name that was head of . . . the lawyer . . . oh, I can't think of it now, but he was a black leader. I took them to Atlantic City as delegates, something that was sort of unheard of. Now, today, of course, there's a greater variety of participation in the party, but there is less cohesiveness within the party. You don't have the strong representation by substantial people in communities that you used to have, but you have a different type of representation by different types of groups. You've got a lot of these, you might say, fringe groups that now are more actively participating. And this recent debacle in the last election. . . . Our present governor went through, accepted some of this George McGovern's recommendations of how to democratize the party. And the Democratic party here at the last national convention here in Georgia was represented on the most part not by Democrats, but by a lot of people who really were out into the fringe areas of the political spectrum who said they were Democrats in order to have a forum at which to speak on and speak out on. And when it comes down to really working in the Democratic party for the candidate in the state elections and all, you don't find them very actively involved. But they went all out. A lot of students organized and had great success in winning delegates seats to the national Democratic convention, that had never before even been involved in the process. Now, that's not to say that that's not good, if that's what you want. But I'd say today, most or some of those people or a majority of those people who won in that method

have had nothing else to do with the Democratic party since that time. Just a flash in the pan.

W.D.V.: The composition of the party has changed. What about the issues that you've talked about in the last twenty-five years. Have they been changing too?

Sanders: Well, that's a good question when you say issues. When I ran for governor the first time, issues generally, or issues basically in the South in the early sixties, I guess, were. . . . It was apparent to most people in this part of the country that moderation was a desirable issue, on almost any political question. And the moderates, the Terry Sanfords, the Carl Sanders, people of that stripe who were described as moderates, were looked upon as something that was representative of the broad thinking of the electorate. The middle of the road was a wide place in the road. Today, maybe in 1974, that is beginning to re-appear. But I'd say from '66 to '72, middle of the road became the narrow spectrum of the road, and the shoulder--the left and right shoulder--became the broad places. And that's where you found people, and I think the South generally, swinging away from the idea of following a moderate, middle of the road, course or leadership. But they were either going violently to the left or to the right. And, of course, in recent years, we've had more people in the South that have been postured over on the right shoulder than they have been on the left shoulder, although we've had some right vocal people on the left shoulder. And I think the conservatism re-appeared, and it may be just as strong in '74 as it was, maybe, say, in '72, when Nixon took about, what, eighty something per cent of the vote in this state. I get the feeling, though, that people are now beginning to moderate

again, and beginning to look to somebody who would represent a coalition of the thinking of the extremes, and not just represent the extremes totally, as the successful leaders, at this point.

W.D.V.: Is race still the key, or one of the keys, to winning a statewide election?

Sanders: I don't know. I think race is still involved.

W.D.V.: At a different level?

Sanders: It's definitely involved. It's involved for the simple reason that there are more black people registered in the southern states and in Georgia than ever before right now. Although they've registered and been registered in the past, you go back and examine the actual elections, they have in most instances never really voted as well as they've registered. The percentage of votes cast in the election is not anywhere close to what the registration figures are "supposed" to be. That's a threat, and that's a potential election weight that's hanging out there. I heard just a comment, I think, the other day, from Andrew Young, who was back home speaking, on the fact that Wallace in '76 couldn't carry the South because there were 465,000--I believe that's the figure he used--blacks registered in Georgia, and I guess something similar to that maybe in other states. And under no circumstances would they vote for him, and he felt like a candidate who espoused the conservative cause like Wallace just couldn't make it. I don't agree with that right now. I don't know whether that . . . that may be a very real factor. But I think that race is still definitely in the picture in any election, just because of the numerical numbers of people. But I don't think the idea of standing out on a political platform and saying the issue of just race

per se--that I'm for segregation and for whites versus blacks--that's no longer the factor that it was. And we've got the wildest kind of people that are still running on that. J. B. Stoner, up here, who's an out and out racist, ran last time and got 12,000 votes or 17,000 votes.

W.D.V.: But those days are gone, you think?

Sanders: I don't know whether they're gone. I couldn't say they're gone. I hope we have matured to the point that they will not ever re-appear with the force and the divisiveness that they appeared previously, but I think there's still an underlying feeling and current that's there. And that re-appears in shapes and forms today that you just can't ignore. I think as long as we continue to have, for instance, in the Atlanta area, the problems of crime, as long as those statistics still seem to relate themselves to the races, you'll still get a lot of people that say, "I'm totally without prejudice, I'm absolutely objective." But when they go in that voting booth, they still vote to some degree on whether a candidate's black or white.

J.B.: Is it hard to think back to the days of 1963 and '64? Remember how hot the race issue was then?

Sanders: Oh, it's not hard for me to think back and remember how hot. . . .

J.B.: Hard to conceive of the attitude change, or the apparent attitude change since then?

Sanders: In a lot of respects, yes, because those were rugged and violent days, and those were days, of course, when we were confronted

every day with whether they were going to integrate the university, or whether they were going to have, you know, people riding on the buses and sitting in the lunch counters. When you think back on them, it's hard to . . . it's amazing, I might add, in that short period of time, to realize how so many of those sharp, violent points have been dulled, and sort of been flattened out. The race thing, as I say, is still there but it's. . . . Whatever's being done now, it's being done in a subtle fashion and it's done obliquely rather than head on.

W.D.V.: To what do you attribute that change, that dulling?

Sanders: Well, I think the laws of the land. I think that finally people have just come to the absolute conclusion that they can't--no matter what local politicians stand up and profess and say that they can do to turn back the clock and to eliminate integrated facilities and schools and other things--that people know that that's just baloney, and that there's no longer an issue that's believable. I think the media, television, the press and everything else, have exposed the citizens of this part of the country to the rest of the world and the rest of the country, to an extent that where a thing used to be so absolutely abnormal, that it's now--many matters that involved housing and working conditions and individuals relating to each other--that they are looked upon today as commonplace, where before they were just totally unheard of. And this is all in a relative sense, people have gotten used to it. So they don't have quite that urgency that they had before about this as something that's going to absolutely destroy us.

J.B.: There was a theory--I think Senator Goldwater was one of the proponents of it--that changing laws would not change the hearts and minds of men. When you had the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights

Act, the laws did change, practices changed. Do you think that people's attitudes did change as a result?

Sanders: Some of the attitudes changed. I think, yes, people's attitudes have changed. However, I think that one of the reasons they changed, too, is because there's been, since that time, you might say, another generation that has reached maturity. And their attitudes are completely different from some of their fathers and their mothers. And some of the strongest people, most radical people, on either side of it, have passed on. They're no longer on the scene, they're no longer in positions of leadership or importance, and they don't. . . . You don't have those people to constantly either inflame or to otherwise create a confusion or create problems that they were very capable of doing, say ten, fifteen years ago.

J.B.: What do you think was the reaction of most white Georgians to the assassination of Martin Luther King?

Sanders: At the time that he was assassinated?

J.B.: At the time, and subsequently.

Sanders: I think at the time he was assassinated, there wasn't any great reaction by white citizens. I think generally most white citizens didn't have any great sympathy with Martin Luther King in Georgia, at the time of his assassination. I think probably since that time, due to the constant effort and, I guess, program, to educate and enlighten people on what his nonviolent philosophy probably represented as compared to people like Black Panthers, now, or the Symbionese Liberation Armies and things of that kind, that people have probably in retrospect said, well, maybe this fellow we should have given credit . . . given him more credit for what he was doing than we gave him at the time. So I think in retrospect now, they'd probably

feel that he was a more effective leader for the cause that he represented than they respected him for at the time that he was doing the job.

J.B.: Do you think re-apportionment has had a genuinely significant effect on Georgia, more than almost any other state?

Sanders: I don't know about any other state. I think it's had an effect on Georgia.

J.B.: How about in terms of state government, what has re-apportionment meant?

Sanders: Well, unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how you look at it--I would say from my point of view it might be more unfortunate than fortunate--it pretty well, in recent years, has meant the difference between having strong executive type of government in this state, as compared to what I would now call a weak executive type government. You know, back fifteen years ago, the Georgia senate rotated. Actually, they didn't have any real continuity. Senators would serve one term or so, and then would rotate to another county, another group, and you'd have probably fifty per cent of the senators each year, or each election, would be brand new faces coming in. And so they really didn't have any continuity of leadership. I was fortunate, when I was in the senate. I was able to get other counties to waive the right to elect a senator, and I stayed in for three terms, which was unheard of. Today, of course, they don't have that. Today they've got the more urban flavor in the house, and all. They have declared themselves to be independent of the legislative branch of government. They now take great delight in challenging the governor's party, as say the Budget Director, to present an executive budget and all. And it's just sort of a three-ring circus, compared to what it used to be.

J.B.: What would you rank as the most significant achievement of your administration?

Sanders: My rank of the most significant achievement of my administration? Probably the total overhaul of all the educational facilities of this state. Higher education and the elementary and secondary. We completely rewrote all the educational laws. I funded it. I built the junior colleges, and I put more brick and mortar in the university system of Georgia in four years than all of its previous history. I raised the teachers' salaries. I brought in people from . . . educators from all over the country that heretofore wouldn't have set foot in the state. And I think that probably would have been the number one achievement, although I could go on like anybody and give you many, many achievements that I am proud of. But I think that probably was the most lasting achievement. I don't think we've had an educational program of anything close to the size and scope that I had, since I left office.

J.B.: What would you have done if you'd been elected in 1970?

Sanders: Oh, I would have done many things. I had all sorts of ideas of things. But, as you say, "what would I have done." I was not elected, so I didn't do it. But at that point, I was so full of ideas and things that I wanted to do, and things that I'd left undone that I had started and I wanted to continue, that I would have. . . . I think I'd have done, I believe I would have done as much, if not more, than I had done previously. But I didn't get a chance to do that, so I turned my activities and my energy and my thoughts to my individual opportunities. And I have enjoyed that immensely.

J.B.: Going to run again?

Sanders: No, I don't have any plans to, simply because I think

the arena, at this point, and the rules by which you now have to operate, are such that make it most unattractive for not only me but anybody that has spent any time in his life trying to achieve some success. I think you almost have to totally, completely give up and disassociate yourself, and sacrifice everything that you are related to in any shape, form or fashion in order to go back in as an acceptable type candidate today. And I just don't think that at this point in my life, that the things that I am doing, that I would want to do that. But I would prefer to help other people who are, I believe, representing the same thinking that I have, and who can do a good job. I'd rather help them achieve the opportunity of deserving those offices.

W.D.V.: How do you see yourself now, philosophically? You were one of the first crop of New South governors. Now we've got a second crop of New South governors. How do you see yourself in relationship to them?

Sanders: Well, I think that the first crop has been better than the second crop. Let's put it that way. I think we were at the crossroads. We were in the line of fire to a much greater extent than the second crop. And I think that we were able to turn the tide and move the thinking, and move the direction, of our states. In my case, and in the case of most of the southern governors, towards a more enlightening and a more progressive future. And what has subsequently happened. . . . I don't think the subsequent crop--and I'm just speaking of "crop" in a general sense--have taken advantage of the foundations that were laid, and the tremendous change in direction that was accomplished, and have built upon that, or embroidered upon it, as

greatly or as much as they could have, should have.

J.B.: How important do you consider constitutional reform in Georgia?

Sanders: I think constitutional reform in Georgia is badly needed. I rewrote the constitution in 1964, got it through the general assembly, got it through, and then had the federal court here deny us. We rewrote all the election laws in the constitution, in a special session. Toughest, hardest job that I have ever encountered legislatively. And then had the federal courts here approve the election code as being valid, but disapprove the submission of the constitution to the people, on the grounds that it was written by a mal-apportioned general assembly at the time. We appealed it, sent it up to the Supreme Court. They would not accelerate our hearing. And so they subsequently agreed with our position. It should have been placed on the ballot, but it was too late to get it on the ballot, so we didn't get it. And since that time, there's been a lot of conversation and nothing else done about it. Every year over there, they talk about re-writing the constitution and revamping it. Right now in Georgia it's been amended so many times, there's no place that I know of anywhere in Georgia you can go and see the constitution of Georgia in one document. Nobody really knows what it looks like. It's been amended thousands of times.

J.B.: What were the major changes that you'd written in?

Sanders: Basically, the major changes were, we simplified it, and went back to something more akin to what you might call the model-type constitution, state constitution, that the organization of state counsels, governments, and all, had recommended, and all. And we provided home rule and all other things, which they have in

forms and fashions now, but which nobody really . . . everybody's got a different little variety of it. We would have made it a modern, twentieth century constitution, as compared to a eighteenth century or nineteenth century constitution.

[Interruption in recording]

J.B.: . . . is that when you ran for governor [after first announcing] for lieutenant governor, then the decision came down ending the county unit system.

Sanders: No, I had already. . . . When the decision came down ending the county unit system, I was already in the governor's race. The decision didn't come down until the early part of the summer. I qualified for governor, oh, about a month or so in advance of that. The decision came out after I had already [decided to run] for governor.

J.B.: The suit itself had been filed.

Sanders: The suit had been filed for, oh, several months, but there was no decision. No way for me or anybody else to know what [the decision] would be. My decision to run for governor didn't have a thing in the world to do with that [suit].

J.B.: What was it based on?

Sanders: Based on, primarily, that I made up my mind, as I went around the state, first of all, that the two candidates who were running for governor, Griffin and Ganland Burd--who was then lieutenant governor. . . . As I went around the state, I realized--as I was speaking all over the state--that people were not satisfied with either one of them. People everywhere I went kept imploring me and begging me to get in the governor's race. Well, of course, I was president pro tem of the senate, and I knew what the lieutenant governor's job entailed. And I

finally made up my own mind, if I didn't go ahead and get into the governor's race, I'd spend four years in the lieutenant governor's office just running errands, so to speak, because it's really not a job with a great deal of authority. And I had a real pressing problem with my law practice. It had grown to the point where I was having to work around the clock to keep up my practice, and all, at the expense of my political affairs. So everything came together and it just made itself most imperative that I go for the governorship. So I went for it. *[It was a case where]* I just made up my mind.

J.B.: As it turned out, is that correct, you were elected by the county unit system?

Sanders: County unit system, popular vote-wise, anyway you count the votes, I won it.

J.B.: Then I presume that you
Either way?

Sanders: Yeah, that's right. If I had been depending just as much on the county unit system, I wouldn't have *[gotten in]*. But I felt like I'd done it any way the election went. And when the votes were counted . . . if they'd excluded all the black votes, I still won it over . . . I had a majority of the white votes. I had a majority of the black votes. I had a majority of county unit votes. I had a majority of the popular votes.

J.B.: Were you polling at the time?

Sanders: Yes, we polled. We had a poll done by Lou Harris. Of course, when I started out, I had the same problem as many people who'd never made it politically before, and that was the recognition factor. I had a positive profile. Griffin had a negative profile, but

he had a hell of an advantage over me in the recognition factor. I took the positive profile that I had. Those people who knew me, knew me positively and knew me in that fashion. Of course, I was able to develop from that foundation the recognition all over the state, and profile, and that's how I won, I guess, .

J.B.: You know, based on the campaign itself, and the poll, which tells you what the voters are thinking and what they're responding to, what was the central focus of the campaign? What do you rate the determinative factor in that election?

Sanders: Well, that election was determined, to a great extent, on the issue of corruption in government. Griffin's administration, as you may or may not know, had been pretty [Corrupt]

And one of the issues, of course, was honesty in government. Of course, I was a sort of a knight on a white horse, a young moderate riding. . . .

J.B.: What was Byrd's problem in that area?

Sanders: Byrd was too much of a "me too" [of Martin] Griffin. He sounded like, talked like, and everything Griffin would say, or vice versa, it was "me, too." Just wasn't any difference. They were just both running down the same track at the same rate.

J.B.: You were running on a platform of what?

Sanders: Well, I was running on a platform of, in effect, let's get Georgia moving and get in a new day, let's put in a fresh, new leader, a moderate leader who can keep the extreme forces at bay and make progress and just have a good administration.

J.B.: Now, that was in '62, right?

Sanders: That was in '62.

J.B.: Okay, that was the year in South Carolina you had

Russell running as a moderate, winning overwhelmingly. Also the year that you had George Wallace running, I guess you could say, *[not a SA]* moderate, and winning.

Sanders: I don't think . . . George Wallace, I think, ran the year before. Wallace came over in '63, when I ran, to sit on a platform with Marvin Griffin, to give him some kind of moral support in , Georgia. Wallace was already elected. He'd been elected, I think, in '61 for some reason .

J.B.: *[No, it was 1962]*

Sanders: Well, maybe he was.

J.B.: *[I think their primary was earlier].*

Sanders: Maybe that's what it was. Primary was in September.

J.B.: *[There was earlier]*

Sanders: He was already the governor or governor-elect when I ran.

J.B.: All right, now, to what extent was the election of you as a moderate . . . let's see, you were running as a moderate, is that right?

Sanders: Right.

J.B.: You were the moderate in '62. And then the election of Maddox in '66.

Sanders: Well, Maddox wasn't elected. Maddox was elected by the legislature.

J.B.: Well, I understand that. But he won the Democratic primary.

Sanders: Well, he won the Democratic primary in 1966, purely because Ellis Arnold was in the primary. Ellis Arnold has always been known as an extreme liberal. Maddox was able to put together some moderate and conservative forces, that gave him the vote that he got.

J.B.: Did Republicans *[cross over]* ?

Sanders: You mean, precisely in Maddox's case?

J.B.: Right.

Sanders: I think it had something to with it, because there was no question about it, the Republicans had put the word out. Callaway and all the rest of them had put the word out to vote for Maddox so that beat.

J.B.: Okay, one thing I really wish you'd clarify, and I'd like for you to be candid, if you would, and if you want to go and say "not for attribution" that would be fine. But I really don't understand it. That would be the election of Maddox. And I recall you had a complicated legal situation.

Sanders: Well, I don't want it for attribution purposes, but I supported Maddox because Callaway. . . . The first speech Beau Callaway made when he ran for governor, was a speech in which he criticized me personally for accumulating a hundred and forty million dollars surplus, which I left in the treasury when I walked out of office. And he said that was irresponsible administration, government. That that was fiscally irresponsible. Of course, that was the [worst kind of nonsense], because no governor in the history of the state had ever left the kind of money that I had left, and no governor had ever spent the money that I'd spent and done the things that I'd done without a tax increase. But I just had that surplus money, and I knew they needed it, and I knew rather than pour it down a rathole, I would treat the state's money like I'd treat my own. Well, that was the first indication to me that Callaway, number one, didn't know what he was doing, and, number two, he was irresponsible in jumping at conclusions. Then later on, Callaway came to see me right after that and apologized. Said he'd made a hell of a mistake. And I said, well, don't worry about that.

That's the game. But later on, through friends on mine who were friends of his, it became obvious to me that Callaway was just absolutely so damn bull headed about everything that he wanted to do, he wouldn't listen to anybody. And he totally, completely, just went down a road to oblivion. But, now, Maddox, of course, was no factor at that time. He was a guy who'd been running around here shouting and talking about being elected, and all of a sudden, there he was. It was a question of whether a Democratic legislature was going to have a chance to elect a Democratic governor, or whether they were going to elect a Republican. Now, in the meantime, the constitution, of course, at that time, had no provision for a runoff. The constitution of Georgia, which has been in being for hundreds of years, simply provided that in the event nobody received a majority of the votes in the general election, it would then be up to the members of the legislature to elect. Like the electoral college, in effect. So Callaway filed a lawsuit to force a runoff . . . I mean, a special election. Between him and Maddox. The Supreme Court of Georgia, in an _____ time, came down with a decision upholding the constitution of Georgia. Now, there wasn't any funny business about any of it. It was just strictly _____ some of Callaway's friends, when the case was filed with the Supreme Court of Georgia, wanted me as governor to try to take the position with the Attorney General of Georgia, to in effect tell them, you know, they shouldn't uphold the law, but everybody ought to just defend it on the basis of what they think ought to be done, not on what the law ought to be. And that the Attorney General of Georgia ought to take the position there ought to be a special election. And I told them in very candid terms that I wasn't going to be a party to that. Whatever the law was, the Attorney General of Georgia

was elected to uphold it. Whatever it was. And if he was going to abide by it, I was going to abide by it, we all would abide by it.

J.B.: Let me tell you a story we heard, and I'm trying to find out if it's true. Well, a couple of versions. But one is that there was some element in the legislature which felt that, because the policy position at that time, and public image at that time, you can't afford to have Lester Maddox as governor. That some of these Democrats approached Callaway, talked to him. The more they talked to him, the more they realized, one, he didn't know what strength he had in the legislature

. In addition to that, you had another element in the legislature, and in the state, that were politically atrophied, and felt that Lester Maddox . . . just considered him to be somebody who was not particularly bright and if he became governor, he wouldn't have a whole hell of a lot to do with state policy and would probably be controlled by the legislature. If you had Callaway, you'd probably be inaugurating a whole series of Republican governors.

Sanders: Well, there may be a semblance of truth in both of those thoughts. Now, I don't know who the people were who were thinking that. But, yes, I think that there probably was the thought that if you inaugurated a Republican governor, that that just might set itself into a continuation of the Republican governors for a while. All the Democrats that I know of weren't that much interested in that. The other thing was, I guess, there was some thought and I think some realization among people in the legislature that Lester Maddox was a very unsophisticated politician when it came to. . . .

BEGIN SIDE II

[It take a]. . fellow quite a while to learn where all the damn levers are, before

he can become really effective in the administration of government. So I was . . . I'm quite sure there were some of them who felt like with him in as governor, it would give the people in the legislature a much stronger hand in the overall operation of government. I think there was

. Other people probably that Maddox was not going to be able to just step in and try and undo, and try and pull down the momentum that had been building up in the state over a period of years. Industry and education

J.B.: Was there an effort to actually puff Callaway, and finally they gave up.

Sanders: I don't know about that. I never talked to Callaway on any lines like that. I don't know whether there was an effort by some of the legislators to talk to him. But I'm sure there had to be an effort by a lot of them to talk to him, you know. Because it was a wild three-ring circus, and there was all kinds of intrigue and all sorts of so-called . . . people, you know, going around saying, do this and that and the other. But I couldn't tell you . . . on the top of my head, I can't remember specifically anybody who did do that, and I didn't.

J.B.: Now, we've also been told--this was by some Republicans-- that you played a key role in getting the legislature to [back Maddox].

Sanders: Well, I think that's probably right. I think, as far as I was concerned, I made it clear I was a Democrat and that I wasn't going over to the Republican party.

J.B.: In retrospect, was your role primarily one of people that were trying to go with Maddox, or was it more one of giving positive reinforcement to people who were somewhat inclined to do that?

Sanders: I just giving people positive re-inclinement to the fact that I was a Democrat and I wasn't going to the Republican party. And I think when they realized that I wasn't about to trip over to the glamor of the Republican party. . . . See, we'd had four or five of these guys, if you remember, that year, too, who made a little flip-flop in the middle of the race, like Bentley and the rest of them.

J.B.: Okay, that occurred in the middle of that campaign.

Sanders: That's right.

J.B.: Okay, I'd forgotten.

Sanders: They walked right out in the middle of the campaign, which I thought was the most, lowest form of attitude. You know, it's all right when you get to the end of your term, I think, if you want to change parties. But if you got elected by a party to serve for a term, and then in the middle of the stream you start trying to change horses, I just think that's. . . .

J.B.: That switchover occurred. . . ?

Sanders: Fall of '63. It was before that election.

J.B.: In the time they were running as Democrats?

Sanders: Yeah, yeah. It was some time during the time they were running.

J.B.: They were unopposed by the Republicans at that time?

Sanders: Those boys were, yes. Most of them, they were, going out at the end of the year, something like that.

J.B.: So they had all been inaugurated.

Sanders: Oh, they had been serving. They still had some time to serve, that's right, on their terms.

J.B.: They weren't elected Republicans?

Sanders: They were not being elected , that's right.

(Note: Bentley, et al. switched over in 1968)

J.B.: I did want to ask you one more thing, and that is your own perspective. How do you assess the 1970 campaign. What do you think caused your defeat?

Sanders: Well, I know what caused my defeat. Two things caused my defeat. First thing caused my defeat was that I knew so much about the government in 1970, having served and been in that office, knew how it worked according to what needed to be done, that I embarked upon--as a part of my campaign--the theory that I could educate the people on what the needs of it were. So I gave them a pretty good dissertation on what government was all about and what we needed. Well, I found out--maybe I told you all--they weren't interested in that. They were interested in the emotional issues at the time. The second thing was that Jimmy Carter, very deliberately and very insidiously, I might add, over a period of three or four years, went around the state and totally misrepresented himself and his political philosophy, as a conservative. George Wallace type conservative. Of course, conservatism in 1970 in this state was growing rampant. He bottled up what I would call for lack of better description an attractive bottle of political snake oil. And he sold that snake oil far and wide. He also, as a part of his what you might call deceitful type of campaign, he sold also the theory that there I was, the big corporate lawyer, and here he was, the little peanut farmer. And since I had left office and I had been very successful, and that the reason I had been successful was because while I was governor of Georgia, that I had done a lot of favors for a lot of people. Now they were my friends, my clients. All that kind of horse manure. And he went around and gave that song and dance far and wide, north, south, east, west. Of course, the reason he's had such a disastrous time, just four years, is that the day he made his inaugural speech, he completely changed the color that

he had been flying under in the campaign. And I'd say if you checked it out--as I'm sure you will--that he probably had four years of the most personally discredited type of administration that's ever been in Georgia, for simply the reason that nobody in the state--with the exception of a small, marked corps of loyal people who you always have around the governor's office--nobody in this state, I think, would tell you that he really carried out what he campaigned for. He did just the opposite. He's totally distrusted. Maybe some very liberal people have been pleasantly surprised, because based on his campaign, they would have been inclined to think totally otherwise. But the moderates and the conservatives of the state don't believe him.

J.B.: How do you assess, currently, the influence of organized labor politically?

Sanders: In this state?

J.B.: Right.

Sanders: I think they still are not organized politically to the extent that they . . . that the leadership can speak for the rank and file members.

J.B.: Have they reached the point that a candidate would consider it an asset to have their endorsement, or is it still considered a liability?

Sanders: Well, I don't know. I think they've improved that situation. I think most candidates would like to have, you know, their endorsement. I don't think many candidates feel like their endorsement is a kiss of death.

J.B.: But am I correct that ten, fifteen years ago, they . . . ?

Sanders: Oh, years ago it wasn't that way. Years ago every candidate didn't want their endorsement. Thought it was a real kiss of death. I

think today, most of us feel like .

J.B.: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

Sanders: No, I've given it to you in a nutshell.

As I told you all the other day, I think--if I'd had subsequent opportunities--I think I could have gone back, if I'd wanted to Russell died senate race, he probably Bentley wanted to do it. I said not to do it. I realize today that position you've got to be in to be in that position public office. And particularly if you go to Washington

As I look back on my administration, in retrospect, in those years, I feel better about it every day. As I look at what I have seen happen in the last four years. . . . In Maddox's case, Maddox left in place most of the people that I had put into you might say the cabinet type positions that the governor appoints, because he didn't know anybody of any real stature to put in there. So for his four years, those programs continued. Since that time, Carter tried his hand. And the one thing he has tried to do is "re-organize" the government. in the last few years

All kinds of problems. And he spent most of his time the last few years trying to groom himself for some kind of job in Washington.

And as a result, the legislature has taken over the government. One thing that I think he's done that I really regret is he turned over to the general assembly, after Maddox didn't really exert the strong leadership

that he advocated . . . that Carter . . . that he ~~advocated~~ ^{abdicated} ~~is~~ the
governor's responsibility to the general assembly.

J.B.: Do you consider, then, the office of chief executive, the office of the governor of Georgia, as an institution, to be weaker now than it was when you were governor?

Sanders: Much weaker.

J.B.: What are the reasons for that?

Sanders: I just gave them to you. Maddox didn't know how to keep the power in the hands of the governor, because he didn't have any experience.

J.B.: Am I correct that that was when the legislature, for the first time, in effect, elected their own speaker?

Sanders: That is right.

J.B.: In effect, designating who they were to pick? Has that been the major change?

Sanders: Oh, no. There's been all sorts of other changes. The executive budget has now been shot out. They don't listen or they don't look at it.

J.B.: How is the budget put together?

Sanders: Well, the governor still puts it together, but they take his budget over there now and just put it in the trashcan, if they want to. They do what they want. There's a lot of things. And there's no real allegiance to the governor's office anymore. Used to be a great rapport between the governor and members of the general assembly. And I, last two or three years, started to get fifteen votes in the committee, in the house or the senate. He puts in bills that he doesn't know if he's ever going to get out of the committee.

[It's really a] tragedy, because the governor has to have . . . he runs on a program, and he has to depend on his relationship with the general assembly to put it in force.

J.B.: Has the office of lieutenant governor changed at all during that period?

Sanders: Of course, it's changed dramatically in the last four years when Maddox and Carter had this running gunbattle. Constant fight.

J.B.: Has the lieutenant governor always been more or less independent?

Sanders: Oh, yes. My lieutenant governor was not of my

if
convince him that/it was in the best interests of the state, it was worth .

J.B.: How about any other ?

Sanders: Well, I don't know. There's been a lot of

The main thing is that the most recent holders of the governor's office have been extremely

J.B.: Now, we heard someone who obviously would be very much of an impartial observer who found that Carter was the man who campaigned and politicked very hard for three years as lieutenant governor. And soon as he became governor, he quit policicking , quit

insofar as his relation to the legislature.

Sanders: Not only did he quit politicking, but he also quit . . .
he never administered, through the plans and theories that
/Interruption in Recording/ all those sorry politicians in there.
If they didn't toe the line, they didn't do what they were supposed to
do. He

J.B.:

Sanders: Yeah.

J.B.: The machinery of government and the legislature
in effect took over state policy.

Sanders: That's right. With Maddox, to some extent, they were
looking down their throats. "I'm going to blast you out of the water."
And he scared the hell out of them, so they ran it just in a nice, calm
moderate way. And Carter came in, and Carter's theory was that, "I got
a program, and I'm not going to spend a lot of time trying to convince
y'all how right it is. If you don't put my program in, I'm going to go
out and tell the people on you, and they're going to get mad with you."
And they said, "The hell with you. We'll tell the people too. We
represent them too, we're elected too." So on that theory, he spent
four years going around saying like, "I'm going to kill all of you if
you go to the people and tell on me." It just got worse and worse.

J.B.: Was the current Georgia law on primaries passed
?

Sanders: The current one? What do you mean by that?

J.B.: Well, the one that provides for the state to run both
primaries for twenty-five per cent of the filing fee to be returned
to the parties

Sanders: I don't know. We re-wrote the election code in the

summer of 1964 or '65. Now, they change election laws every year. We put in--I think that was '64, '65--we had to put in an election, you know, primary, for the Republican Democrats. Second primary. I don't recall

thing has been on the books for years and years.

J.B.: Did the Republican party peak here in '66?

Sanders: Well, it's pretty obvious that up to now, you've got to consider that their high water mark. I don't think anybody would have thought that they had peaked, but as the record shows now, history, as you look back on it, I guess that was their high water mark.

/ End of Interview /