

1

Interview with David Pryor, governor of Arkansas, June 13, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: What is the state of Arkansas politics, right now?

Pryor: What is it? It's neither fish nor fowl. It's almost like it was in 1968 when we voted for Rockefeller, Wallace and Fulbright. It is ferociously independent and very proud of its independence. It's very proud of its new independence. As a state and as a voting population. It's very proud. It's kind of like shackles have been taken off of it, us in the last decade. It's almost like we're voting for the first time.

Walter De Vries: [Unclear.]

Pryor: I would say it's basically moderate. It's possibly populist. It's neither liberal nor conservative, but I would say moderate with a lot of populism. But no big transitions in the last three or four or five years.

J.B.: Well, assuming you become governor, and I think that's a safe assumption, do you plan--

Pryor: Remember, our voters are very independent. They may decide they want a Republican governor.

J.B.: We'll assume, for the sake of questioning. . . Do you plan to take an active role as head of the Democratic party?

Pryor: In the state of Arkansas?

J.B.: Right.

Pryor: Well, of course, to be very factual, and this is being published in 1976 to be very honest with you, I've never known quite what the state Democratic party was or is

in this state. It's only in the last four or five years that we've even had an office or a filing cabinet. For years we never had even a telephone or a secretary. It was run by whoever the governor said is state Democratic secretary. And we just kept it, it was just there. . . . I mean, when I say it was there, it was. . . . Every two years we held a state convention. We had no political party. We have developed, to a degree, a political party and a structure since Rockefeller. But it's not a political party per se as you would think of in any other state.

W.D.V.: Was the Democratic party essentially a Faubus party until 1966?

Pryor: Right. And the Republican party came about because of an anti-Faubus sentiment.

W.D.V.: Right. And our reading of the Republican party was that it was a Rockefeller party. Been out for four years. It literally died when he died. It went because of lack of money and name and so on. The principal impact of it was the reform of the Democratic party in the sense that it started to elect moderate candidates or, maybe in a sense, that it started to elect anti-Faubus candidates. Is that a pretty fair reading of what's happened here?

Pryor: In other words, the Democratic party finally emerged as a party during the Rockefeller years.

W.D.V.: It was reformed or [unclear].

Pryor: It was not quite reformed because it was nothing to reform. It, I would say, was born during the Rockefeller years. And it's going to be very hard. . . just as the Republican party has died, it's going to be very hard to keep the Democratic party alive. Because to remain alive and viable you've got to have a good opponent. You've got to have something to be against. And right now we talk about the Republicans being a great menace or something like that, and really they're not a

great menace. We might can run against Richard Nixon this fall or talk about how bad Watergate is, but that's the only real thing we have going for us. Now you can't talk about Rockefeller because he's dead now and he's gone and he's respected. [As goes the way with most politicians], you die, you come off at a good perspective. We don't have an enemy to keep us alive and going. We don't have a battle ground.

W.D.V.: But the moderate wing of the Democratic party, if you want to call it that, has been strengthened at least by two victories in 1970 and '74 over Faubus. Is that right?

Pryor: That's absolutely true.

W.D.V.: Okay. So in a sense it is stronger, in the last four years, than it was in the period before that.

Pryor: Absolutely. As a party. With party machinery and with county conventions, elected delegates to the state convention and this sort of thing. Yes.

J.B.: Would you like to see any change in the status of the Democratic party? Would you like to see it become stronger as a political party?

Pryor: In Arkansas?

J.B.: In Arkansas.

Pryor: Well, to be honest with you, I would like to see the Arkansas Democratic party become more active on the national level, in national politics. It has been a separate, independent entity. Kind of divorced, basically, from the national party or any national problems or what ever. I think we could do a lot more about making our state party more nationally oriented. And the people say "Well, the Democratic party nationally is too liberal. And they've got the Humphreys and a few of those guys up there running the thing." The reason they have is the state parties have not activated themselves, you know, enough in the national

party structure. I think we've moved to that degree in some way. We've moved that way to some extent, but I think we can do more.

W.D.V.: You want to get more of a presidential party, or at least more in tune with the national Democratic presidential party.

Pryor: I want it to have more input in national Democratic politics as far as platform, as far as choosing a candidate for president, as far as making the real, concerted, concentrated effort to become an advocate for middle America and what you might call the New South and all like this, which would be, I think, a voice of neither conservatism or liberalism. A voice of moderation. Down the middle. That's where the votes are and that's where the people are and where the problems are. And I think the state Democratic party, not only here but all across the South, will do this. I think we've got to if we're going to elect a Democratic president even in 1976. A lot of people say "Oh man, we've got it made in '76" but I don't know who we have it made with. We can't sell Ted Kennedy here at this stage. Oh, I better not. . . . But it will be very hard to sell a Kennedy here in this state.

W.D.V.: Do you think with your Congressional background you can do more ^{as governor} of this/than some of the other people have in the past?

Pryor: Well, I would say that I'm more comfortable in working in that environment than someone else who may not have been there. But as far as me having a great deal more input there because I was a Congressman, other than just personal relationships with people that I know across the country or in Washington or whatever, I don't know. But I think, frankly, I think the people are. . . I think our people are going to look away from Washington for leadership. I think they'll look to guys like, well, now he's going to be a part of Washington. . . I think they'll look to guys like Bumpers for national leadership. I talked to Dale Bumpers for about an hour before he announced and I thought that what he should

--he was just getting ready to go to a governors' conference [Discussion of which governors' conference.] In March. I said "You ought to go up there and ask for 30 minutes time. Get NBC, ABC, CBS up there. Say 'my fellow governors, and ladies and gentlemen, I hereby announce my candidacy for president of the United States. And I'm not going to run from Washington or from the United States Senate or from a governor's office. I'm going to run from Charleston, Arkansas, over the Dairy Queen store, and I'm going to run it on \$100 contributions and \$10 contributions. I'm going on a lecture circuit to support my family for the next two years. And if this country's in the state where we have to go to the Senate or the Congress or governor's office to chose a man to lead this country, and we can't elect someone from grass roots America, then we're in bad shape.'" I think, knowing him, knowing his abilities to get on that tube and communicate, and knowing how totally hungry the Dan Rathers and Eric Severids and all those people in Washington are for something fresh, something new, and for a proven leader without scars, who had done a lot for the state, totally clean, articulate and young. I think he could have been elected president of the United States. I think he could have gotten the nomination at the Democratic convention this way. I was the only one who seemed to feel like this but I wish. . . I thought he could have done it. I think America is ready for that type of candidate.

W.D.V.: argued that in a piece that he wrote from Seattle.

Pryor: About Bumpers?

W.D.V.: No, about the leadership will be coming not from Washington but from the state capitals. The increasing prestige and stature of state governors as compared to the last couple of years. Let me get back to the reform of the state Democratic party.

Pryor: Sure.

W.D.V.: Some of the people we've talked to have argued that they don't want it any stronger. They don't want it any more organized into something that has the aspects of a machine. What more could you do. You've only got one senator and one representative in the general assembly that are Republican.

J.B.: That the Republican party is so weak in this state that for the Democratic party to become stronger would put it in a position of sort of strangling any sort of two party system.

Pryor: Well I think when they're talking about getting too strong they may be talking about too much executive control over it. Do you think?

J.B.: Talking about another Faubus kind of machine.

Pryor: Yeah. Frankly, internally, for the state of Arkansas for state politics, I can't get overexhilerated about trying to make the state party. . . . I want it good. I want they should hold clean elections. We should keep moving in the area of certain reforms and so forth. But so far as making it stronger, it's pretty strong right now. And I don't know how much more strength we should have or how much more organization we should have. It's so much more operational and functional and organized now than it was seven or eight years ago, it's unbelievable. Like I say, we have nothing to relate it to because we had nothing to begin with. I said we didn't have a file cabinet.

W.D.V.: Did you get involved in elected politics in 1960 for the legislature? Was that the first time that you ran? Say from 1960 on, what are the basic changes you've seen, political changes.

Pryor: From '60?

W.D.V.: Well, whenever you got actively involved in politics. Our book covers the period from 1948 through 1974. I don't think you're old enough to go way back to 1948. . . .

Pryor: Let's see. I was running for class president probably along about that time. What changes? [long pause] Well, the University of Arkansas board of trustees is a possible example. Today the board of trustees at the University of Arkansas is made up of extremely capable and intelligent men. And college boards all around the state would be. There's a great movement, in this area. I've seen great change here because in past years we would see on many many boards and commissions nothing more than a raw political reward for employment. To something like the University of Arkansas board of trustees or to a highway commission job, or whatever. But now there is, not only in practice but also by public demand. . . . They demand a higher quality individual to serve in these capacities. I've seen a remarkable and drastic change in the state legislature itself in the past 14 years, since the time I went there. It's frankly not the same place.

J.B.: Is that the result of reapportionment?

Pryor: It's the result of time and it's the result of people. . . . I think it's the result of people wanting to be a part of the system. For some reason or another it is attracting better people. Maybe because its affluence or something. Many young people now are getting to the stage where they can afford to accept \$100 a month and go to the state legislature. Maybe it's because the people are demanding better representation. Reapportionment evidently certainly has something to do with this. There's just a higher standard in the state legislature. There's just a higher standard. I think people who, 14 years ago, would introduce what we'd call a revenue bill. . . . And when I'm talking about revenue bill, I'm talking about a bill that would bring some special interest to make them kill the bill or not bring it up or to bring it up or whatever. I think people who would do that now would be totally

ostracized from the state legislature. Fourteen years ago it was kind of the accepted thing. Everybody kind of laughed about it and went on about their business. But now I think there would be a total ostracizing of that legislator.

W.D.V.: Any other changes?

Pryor: Better staff for the legislative council. More strength in the joint budget committee and in the legislative council. They meet kind of constantly throughout the year where they used to meet right before the state legislature went into session. There's more money in the state and as a result, I think, they've upgraded the departments and have been able to attract better people into real positions of influence within the state government. We're going to have to address ourselves to that soon. In special session. Going to have to raise the salaries for some people. University of Arkansas today I think to their president pays \$35,000. Maybe \$35,700 or something. And I'm sure we're going to have to update that in order to get, to attract the right kind of president here. Football coach is paid \$35,000. At one time he made more than the president. But now the president makes more than he does. Everybody makes more than the governor. That poor guy makes ten grand and that's kind of a bad situation.

J.B.: How important do you view the ~~the~~ need for a new constitution?

Pryor: I worked a lot for a new constitution in the early '60s. Travelled around the state and I think the Gazette one time referred to me as a wandering political evangelist on this issue. I just spoke all around the state on behalf of a new constitution. There are two amendments on the ballot this fall. Amendment 55 and 56 which will reform, to a degree, county government to allow better salaries and. . . in this particular area. These would help out a great deal, but generally speaking I would

support another movement for a new constitution. I would support another movement.

J.B.: to the extent of initiating one?

Pryor: Possibly. Possibly. I would have no hesitancy about initiating one if we had not concluded a convention so recently, which was 1970. It was defeated on the ballot in 1970. I just don't know timing-wise whether it is right or not. It may be that we can do it without a convention. It may be that by legislative act and by referendum--referral to the people, we call it--by the legislature's enactment and by referring it to the people in a special election we might be able to circumvent a convention. We might do it by governor's commission or something of this sort. There's a possibility. The legalisms I'm not quite certain on nor the timing.

W.D.V.: Let's suppose you follow the Arkansas tradition and serve two terms. Our book is trying to look into the future, too. Now you're looking back over your two terms. What would you want to be able to say you had accomplished in those four years as governor?

Pryor: I would like to be able to say that I was the catalyst between divergent groups--black and white, labor and management, rural and city--that I could make these people come together to realize how many things they have in common rather than to exploit the differences that they have. And I hope that's the type of administration that I will have. I'm hoping that I can bring these people together before a confrontation. Before a crisis. Before we go to war, for example, on the hot, involved issues that divide . I hope that I can bring them together or help to bring them together. To set the machinery in motion for them to more or less get to know each other, because I believe through communication that we can accomplish these things.

I would also like to say, looking back, I would like to have done a great deal for education within the state. I'm not just talking about teachers' salaries, because I don't equate teachers' salaries with good education. But generally the quality of education, improving our educational system, is something I hope I might be able to bring about somewhere down the trail. Let's see. . . that's kind of a hard question. These are general thoughts. I'm not much of a concrete and mortar man. I don't care about having any building. I'm not much on buildings and bridges and this sort of thing. They're necessary, but they're not my ideal or gauge, I guess, of progress. I don't equate concrete and bricks and mortar with progress.

W.D.V.: How would you bring these people together? By appointing more people from the small minority groups or. . .? Do you have a plan?

Pryor: Well, I think that. . . we are lagging right now in appointments of minorities to boards and commissions and I think we could increase this and I plan to do so. When I'm talking about minorities I'm not just talking about blacks. I'm talking about women, also. But basically, by forcing, if necessary, these folks to sit down and talk to each other. And I think through the governor's office I can do this. I see so many business people talk about how bad labor is and they've never met anyone or really talked to anyone about labor, about their problems. I mean labor people talk about business folks. And there's not any communication. I hope we can do it. I hope, too, that industrially I can look back and say that at least I had a part in leading our state, in being very selective as to the type of industry, the type of business that we brought into the state. Because we're at the stage now where we can be very selective. Just a few weeks ago there was a plant in Pine Bluff which announced that it was not going to come. It was a smelter

plant. They announced that they were not going to locate in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, Well, a lot of people gloom and doom and all like that. Well frankly it upset me none. One, I thought it was going to be a very serious problem of pollution on the Arkansas River. It was going to be a serious problem, eventually, of air pollution. I've never seen or heard of a smelter plant that did not have some pollution problem along with it. And frankly, I say, well, if they don't want to come that's fine. We can afford to be very, very selective about it. And there'll be someone else and I think there'll be someone else down the track that will recognize the responsibilities of citizenship in this state. These are just wild thoughts that seem to me. . . .

J.B.: What type industry are you looking for?

Pryor: Well, we need primarily. . . well I don't know what. . . you mean whether we need steel mills or this sort of thing or garment factories or what.

W.D.V.: But you're going to get away from the position of this state will take any industry at all. . .

Pryor: That's right.

W.D.V.: Okay, so you're going to kind of go on a selective growth pattern?

Pryor: Selective growth.

W.D.V.: High pay industries.

Pryor: High pay industries. Many industries that have come into the state of Arkansas in the past ten years. . . well, let me say in the past 20 years, have come in only if we would waive property taxes. Have come in only if the city in which they were coming in would build them a building. They would come in only if they felt, I thought on many occasions, if they thought they could take something from the community

or something from the state and without any idea or real thought of ever putting anything back into the state. Too many garment factories and too many shirt factories. Too many groups such as this that came in and exploited our wage scale and our people and kept their money in Chicago or Newark, New Jersey, or somewhere like this and packed up and left. I think we can be very selective about the type of industry that we bring in.

J.B.: Being selective, what specifically would you like? What kind of industry? Do you plan to take, play an active role in recruiting industry? Selling the state to industrial prospects?

Pryor: I've only had about two weeks to really think about this since the election and how active a role I don't know. I will be a very cooperative governor and I will appoint people who I think will attract the right type of industry. When I say the right type of industry, I say one that will pay good wages and two that will accept their responsibilities of citizenship in the state. And they will not balk on paying a few dollars taxes in the school system. Appointments to Arkansas Industrial Development Commission, for example. . . I'll be very careful to try to choose those people who, you know, are really going to have the state at heart. As to whether or not they're going to try to get General Motors to locate down here or Kelloggs or something like that, I don't have any thoughts there. Any specific thoughts.

J.B.: How about industry that's heavily unionized?

Pryor: Well, we're eventually. . . I think everyone in this state realizes that we are eventually. . . that our economy in this country is going to be, to a great degree. . . most workers are going to belong to some type of organization or association or labor union. And I think it is a fact of life and I think we've got to realize this and I think we've

got to make ready for it and I think we've got to, again, we've got to open up channels of communication where we can talk. One of the highest per capita income counties in this state is Saline county, Benton.

They have two steel mills, Alcoa and Reynolds, highly unionized. Some of the labor union officers are on the board of directors of the chamber of commerce. There's a great feeling and spirit of cooperation there, and I think we can build this all over this state. I haven't seen any detriment or anything bad happening in Benton, Arkansas, or Saline county that I could have a fear of. They're clean unions, they're steel workers, they're good citizens. Pay taxes. The school districts are extremely well off financially, in fact some of the richest in the state. It's one of the what we call hot towns of this state because it's growing, it's healthy. They have a good relationship. And I think if labor is going to fight business and business is going to fight labor there's no way to build that good relationship. I think we've got to prepare to build that relationship, statewide.

J.B.: Do you have any blacks on your staff when you were in Congress?

Pryor: Yes.

J.B.: What do you plan to do in that regard as governor?

Pryor: I have no plans for a staff, at this time, except one person, who would be my executive. . . whatever, administrative assistant or something like that. I have no commitments for a staff; I have no plans. I don't even know how many I can have. My assumption is that I'm going to have someone black on my staff--not just because they're black but because whoever I hire I think they're going to have capabilities of performing whatever task they're given. I assume I'm going to have someone black on my staff. Maybe several.

J.B.: In a major position?

Pryor: I would assume in a major position.

J.B.: If you were hiring someone black, even though you say you want someone capable, not just because they're black, since they are going to be black what sort of person would you like to have?

Pryor: Well, I think the same person I would want to have if I hired someone white who was capable. You know, someone. . . . First, I want them loyal to me. I want them to be honest with me. I don't want someone to tell me that I'm doing everything right because I know that I won't be. Want them to level with me. I want them to have a knowledge of government and a knowledge of politics. Some degree, at least, of ability to communicate with people. I don't know, look for the same qualities in a black person or a white person.

J.B.: Do you think the state needs a human relations board or commission?

Pryor: Uh [long pause]. We do. Well, let's see, what was the proposal sponsored in '71? Was it. . .

W.D.V.: The human resources committee?

Pryor: It was not exactly named that but it was similar to it. It was kind of an equal opportunity commission so to speak. They got hung up, as I understand it, on whether or not they should have subpoena power. Finally the bill went down the drain on that point. I would have no hesitation about not only helping such a commission be created, but also sponsoring such a commission if I thought, you know, it would be meaningful. I don't want to do it and just have another commission out there that doesn't meet or doesn't function. If it's going to be functional, if it will do some good, I would be for it. But I don't want just another commission for a commission's sake. [Unclear.]

W.D.V.: Do you have any plans for a state wide, comprehensive land and water management kind of policy?

Pryor: I don't have any kind of plans in that area. Not because I'm not interested in it. It's just because I haven't made any plans of this nature. I've let it rest since the campaign. That's my problem, I'm still kind of. . . . Going to South Carolina for a few days, Hilton Head. Never been there before and I'm looking forward to it.

[Discussion of North Carolina coast--brief.]

We used to go to Nag's Head a lot and I always liked Nag's Head.

W.D.V.: Yeah, we're south of that about 70 miles.

W.D.V.: Can I lay one on you?

Pryor: Yeah.

W.D.V.: We hear that your nomination, or the fact that certain people supported you, represented a power elite of the brokers of the state.

They made a decision. Had a meeting, which was reported by *[the newspapers.]*

. You would be the candidate and the others would not be.

Someone charged that was undemocratic. That you would receive, then, the full benefit of some of the same power brokers that supported Faubus.

J.B.: Some have even gone so far as to say *[somebody?]* return the old days. Just interested in how you respond to that.

Pryor: Well, one, I think it's not true. The so-called vote meeting, unquote, Faubus kept talking about. Was there himself trying to get their support. He didn't get their support. As a result he lambasted them. I think out of *that* meeting. . . there were probably five or six people. . . . I think I probably netted from that meeting \$3,000. I sent back \$1,000 or that \$3,000 because it was a corporate check. And he never gave it back. He never found ways and means to give us the money back. We gave his money back and said we'd like to have it as an individual, and he never gave it to us as an individual. Anyone who was thrown off balance or who went to that group and did not get their support

and failed to file for governor because they did not have their support didn't have the guts to run for governor anyway. They can't elect you and they can't defeat you. They're basically people who did support Orval Faubus who realized that his day was over. And they know themselves that their day is about over.

W.D.V.: Well, we hear particularly about Bill Thompson. Who, allegedly, was forced out of the race because if he decided he was going to go his business would have been hurt.

Pryor: Oh, that's [something, suggesting the idea is not true.]

J.B.: No, that it dried up his money supply.

Pryor: That's ridiculous. If Bill was bluffed out by those guys, I can't believe it. I know Bill and I just don't believe that. It's a little bit comical for me to hear that Bill Thompson didn't run because of these people. I would sure hope to believe that I had a much broader base of support than the few men in that room that particular day. If that was all I was relying on, I'd be in pretty bad shape. I'd come in with about $\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the vote.

W.D.V.: Well, the argument then goes that because they had, in effect, put you into office, along with organized labor. . . . But these two forces will be fighting for which will put you in a very untenable position.

Pryor: They're not going to be fighting. They're going to be getting to know each other. And they're going to be developing an understanding for each other, I hope. I firmly believe it. We're going to see, I hope, harmonious relationships being built.

J.B.: Do you have any feelings so far as state financing of public education? Have you given any thought to that?

Pryor: State financing of public education.

J.B.: Rather than have rich school districts and poor school districts. . . .

Pryor: Oh, yeah. I probably will by January but now, frankly, I don't have enough facts to assess it.

W.D.V.: How do you see, if you do see, your style of governing any different from Bumpers'? Everyplace we go, you know, we hear he's Mr Superpolitician. We won't see him until Monday, which will be our last day here. But that. . . .

Pryor: He is super, he is super. He's been a super governor.

W.D.V.: But you see yourself in a moderate tradition? You say you're trying to bring groups together, working on education. If you have any other goals or what you'd like to look back on at, accomplished in these four years. Do you have a certain style of governing?

Pryor: No, I've never been a governor before, so I can't have one. Voted on a lot of bills and all that business. Twelve years in the legislative end of it. I don't know how it will be. I imagine each day will be a little bit different. [Something about erratic.] I'm probably more prone than Dale Bumpers. . . I'm probably more prone to be a little more erratic than he is. He was relatively predictable. In many instances, he was relatively predictable.

W.D.V.: Well let me give you an example. I'm sorry I was so imprecise. But, you could run an administration very openly with weekly press conferences. You can go for the kind of freedom of information or sunshine laws like they have in Florida or so on. But where the administration is much more open than say a previous administration. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Pryor: I think it will be a very open, a very, very open administration as far as the press is concerned. If for no other reason, I know the press guys pretty well. I used to be one myself. I had a little paper

and through that I got to know a lot of them. And through the legislative work. I've known them and I kind of know them on a personal basis. That's not to say that they don't jump me from time to time and I certainly deserve it. But I basically have what I would say an easy or comfortable relationship with at least most of them. And I think I know what they're about. I know what they need to do. And I think as a result I think they will feel free and I will feel free. Now I don't go around saying now this is off the record, however, so and so. . . . I think when I say something they'll know whether I'm speaking off or on the record. I'm not guarded, but I think it will be open and honest. I'm hoping that will happen. Might turn out to be the worse relationship that ever occurred, but I don't anticipate it. And I'm sure they will continue, from time to time, to slap my wrist or whatever is necessary as they must and as they should.

J.B.: One distinct difference between you and Dale Bumpers is that you have prior governmental experience and legislative experience, both at the state and federal level. Do you have any strong feeling about the need for legislative pay increases here?

Pryor: Legislative pay increases, yes I do.

J.B.: And constitutional officials.

Pryor: County officials and constitutional officials. I'm going to support those increases.

J.B.: Do you see a trend toward more governors coming out of the Congress? You've got Edwards of Louisiana, Bryan ^{Dorn} running in South Carolina.

Pryor: I knew Edwards real well. Who's running in South Carolina?

J.B.: Bryan Doar.

Pryor: Yeah, William Jennings Bryan ^{Dorn}, sure. I got a telegram from

Bryan. Let's see, no, they haven't had the Democratic nomination yet. That's July, isn't it? And then Westmoreland. Whoever wins that will have to face Westmoreland.

J.B.: If Westmoreland wins the Republican. . .

Pryor: If he wins the Republican. . . . Is that a question?

W.D.V.: Apparently.

Pryor: Really?

J.B.: Some question. It's not locked up.

Pryor: Well, I think for example Edwin had the same problem I did in the US Congress. Several of us have. And that is the frustration of not being able to. . . . There's 435 people there and it's just a terribly frustrating experience. It would have been the year 2003, so said the computer, when I would have been chairman of the appropriations committee. And unless you are chairman, or chairman of a subcommittee at least you have very little voice in really shaping legislation. And I think it's just a very frustration experience for the impatient. And I'm impatient, Edwin was impatient. The only thing that got John Tunney out of the House of Representatives was not his great desire to be US Senator but I think his great desire to remove and extricate himself from the House of Representatives. Because it requires a special type of person who has great, long suffering perserverance to withstand what you go through there in the House. But Bryan Doarn, I don't know exactly his motives for running because he was, seniority wise, much higher up the ladder than any of us. Who else is governor? Let's see. Mesckal. He became governor of Connecticut didn't he? Tom Mesckal. Isn't that right?

W.D.V.: Arch Moore.

Pryor: Arch Moore, West Virginia. And I think a lot of things are happen-

ing on the state level. We have more money. And I think you can really feel your input, so to speak, a lot quicker or easier. You can shape things. The position of being a chief executive. I don't know why anyone runs for any office. I've always tried to figure that out.

W.D.V.: Yeah, how come you ran--

Pryor: Yeah, we all say. . . You know, we all want to serve the public and all like this. Well, we all do. We all want to serve the public. I'm not certain. . . real reason, real motivation is, though. It's the desire to compete. It's like this man right here, he has a great desire to get ahead in business. He takes great risks and he's a plunger. But every now and then he does something that's very satisfying to him. I think you've got to do what is most personally satisfying to you and politics is. . . .

W.D.V.: Can I ask you a 20-20 hindsight question? You've had two years to think about it, almost. Why did you lose in '72?

Pryor: I could talk on into the night on this. One, I was not supposed to win it. Everybody asked me why I lost the race. I always asked myself how I got 49% of the vote. I think we ran a magnifi. . . well, we ran a much better race than everyone expected us to run. No one gave me a chance. No one gave me the remotest hope of winning. I felt I could win.

[End of side of tape.]

W.D.V.: Looking at one point.

Pryor: Looking at one point.

W.D.V.: [Unclear.]

Pryor: A lot of people say that the debate lost the race. This is one thing. I can't point it to one particular instance. One thing I think caused me to lose the race is that I don't think that they ever realized

that they were in trouble. I don't think the Senator ever realized he was in trouble. I think the night of the first primary, when he was in a run off and I got 42% and he got 46% or something like that, whatever that was. I think they were in a state of shock, And I think that because most of the other races were over in the state, it freed the so-called politicians in the court houses and everyone else. And I think they just flat outworked us and outorganized us. I think the issue of amnesty probably cut off several thousands votes. I think the prayer issue cut off another several thousand. It was just one of those strange situations where it just didn't quite all mesh together. They had a tremendous organization. It was operated from a position of leverage in four Congressional districts where I was operating from a position of leverage, so to speak, in one Congressional district. He had three-fourths of the state; I had one-fourth of the state. I didn't even have name recognition in West Memphis. They don't know who David Pryor was. They don't get Little Rock television. They don't get the Gazette or Democrat. They're on Memphis. They didn't know who or what I was. Never heard of me. In the northern counties I was in the same situation. I thought we ran a very good race, to be honest with you. But lost. You can always say and defeated politicians always say well, they had more money than we did, they outspent us ten times, and they did this and the other. Although they did outspend us, that was not the real reason. They just had organization and people and they knew how to put it together and I didn't. Had I know how to put it together I don't know if I could have. I'm not an organization person to begin with. That's one of my drawbacks.

W.D.V.: Did you have the courthouse support this time?

Pryor: In some courthouses. It would be a good study. I could take a

map of the 75 counties and pretty well pin point where we had the support and didn't have it. I'd say probably half the courthouses.

Courthouses have always been very suspicious of me because, you know, the piece of legislation I finally passed in '65 requiring the county judges to take competitive bids on their purchases. And I always had a running battle with them on that particular piece of legislation. It finally passed and they've always been very suspect of me. But I had the support of some courthouses. In fact I had the support of some of the people that I fought hardest in those courthouses. President of the county judges association, for example. We were arch rivals. Never enemies, but arch rivals during that period of time. And fought each other like cats and dogs. But remained good friends throughout these years of fighting. Very close personal friends. And he even had to go for John McClellan two years ago. But he says "I hope I have the opportunity to be for you two years from now." And he did. His commitment was there and he was there.

W.D.V.: Why do you think they voted for you this time?

Pryor: Why? One, I think they thought I could win. That's probably the real reason.

W.D.V.: No, I'm talking about the general voters.

Pryor: Oh, the general voters.

W.D.V.: Not the courthouse. I know why they voted for you.

Pryor: And then, two, I think like they feel that I'm accessible.

W.D.V.: If you asked the average Democratic voter who voted for you why he did, what do you think he'd say?

Pryor: Gosh, I don't know.

W.D.V.: What do you think he'd say.

Pryor: I would hope that he would say "He's a good guy and I trust him."

That's what I hope they would say. I don't know whether they'd say that. They may not be that complimentary.

W.D.V.: Were there any issues involved you think?

Pryor: Any issues?

W.D.V.: Because of your identification with any issues?

Pryor: Not really. Not the average voter.

W.D.V.: Was it an anti-Faubus sort of thing? Or anti-old guard organization vote?

Pryor: Some of it. There was some of everything you're talking about. But general opinion of the average John Doe, I don't know what he would say. Some poll or something someone took. . . I never saw it and I don't believe the voters who don't like him said this. . . they believed me. I don't know if that's what most of them would say or not. That seemed to [me/be] believability. Seemed to be the strongest of what few characteristics. . . .

W.D.V.: That's become the most important characteristics in polling when measuring politicians today is comparative [unclear]. The three basic things that you can measure on a politician: integrity, dynamism and confidence. Integrity now, of the three clusters, has become most important. Digression.

J.B.: Do you plan to use polling as governor?

Pryor: Nope. I have no plans for it. I'm not saying I won't do it, but I don't have any plans for it. I've never used it in a campaign.

W.D.V.: I think you ought to spell out what you mean by polling. Polling on issues. An indepth kind of a feeling as to how people react to certain kinds of issues. I'm not talking about head-to-head polling for candidates.

Pryor: I have no plans for it. I think that I'll be able to get a

feeling about what people are thinking about it. It's a small state. You can get a . . . It doesn't take you long to get a feeling about things if you work at it. You know, if you sit up there in the governor's mansion and the state capital all the time and never leave it, you're going to be insulated or isolated by your staff and all like that. If you read the Gazette you're not going to get a real feeling for what the people are thinking about, I'm sure. Due respect to the Gazette. It's been one of the . . . I don't know where this state would be without the Gazette today. But I think I'll be able to get a pretty good idea of what people are thinking about. I don't plan to use them.

W.D.V.: Let me ask you one more thing about Rockefeller. What do you think his impact was on the state's politics and government?

Pryor: Tremendous. He basically ushered in what you might call the new day. Dale Bumpers continued that and I hope to continue that. Rockefeller basically was the beginning of the new Arkansas, politically speaking. He was responsible for a great deal of change in this state. Not only change in what you might call legislation or programs or revamping of the state government. Change in thinking. He was not a good administrator, so to speak, but his presence was felt. He tried to hire very competent people. He was a very unselfish type of government that he sponsored.

J.B.: What difference do you think it's going to make in your own administration, your having spent that time in Washington as opposed say if you'd stayed in the legislature, gone to the senate, gone to become lieutenant governor and then governor. Any?

Pryor: In other words, I'm one of these Washington guys down here trying to run the state of Arkansas so to speak. That sort of . . .

J.B.: No. Could you do more for Arkansas because of that Congressional

experience? Than somebody who had just stayed here in the general assembly and gone up the traditional route, never gone out of the state?

J.B.: Does it give you a different perspective? That's what I'm really trying to say.

Pryor: Yes, yes, it does give you a different perspective. It does give you a different perspective. And I think stamped on the legislative mind of 135 guys out there in the house and senate. . . . They will probably be a little more aware of this than say the average voter or the average citizen. I think, too, I will be more aware of it and I will be more comfortable because of the experience I've had. One, I know and know full well that all the answers are not in Washington. I know that as a fact. I know that just because it comes out of Washington it does not make it that knowledgeable or does not make it. . . I don't know. . . . I have a sense of what they're doing when they're doing stuff up there. I think I know how to put it in its proper perspective or some degree of knowledge of this.

J.B.: Do you think it will give you a different perspective on the state and its problems, having been outside?

Pryor: Well, the experiences I've had will. Mere travel around the country and around the world and things like that always give us a little better perspective. The whole thing is part of a whole educational experience. We're all learning something about it every day. And I've just tried to take advantage of those opportunities that I've had. Hopefully I can translate it into something good.

J.B.: How about [~~infiltration~~ ^{implementation}] of federal programs on the state level? Will it make any difference, having been in Washington? Or do you think you'd have done the same thing if you'd just stayed here?

Pryor: Well, I think that. . . I think just from being there, just by

osmosis I have a little better understanding of how it works. But also maybe how you could expedite. . . and through personal contacts, hopefully, I could take advantage of those contacts

[End of interview.]