

This interview was conducted with David Treen, January 31, 1974,  
by Jack Bass and Walter DeVries. Transcribed by Jean Pruner.

Jack Bass: . . . especially wanted to talk to you. We just came back  
two weeks ago to Louisiana and I think we've got a pretty good feel for  
the total exotic quality of politics in the state but . . .

Walter DeVries: We got a feel for it. We didn't necessarily get a total  
understanding of it.

J.B.: No, I wouldn't claim a total understanding of it. I'd say we got  
some feel. But I don't think we are going to understand Louisiana  
Republican politics at all until after we talk to you. And so that's . . .  
since we have a limited amount of time . . .

Treen: Okay, sir. Let's get right into it.

J.B.: All right. Why don't you just . . .

Treen: We'll dispense with the pleasantries until another time.

J.B.: Right.

Treen: Good.

J.B.: Tell us about it.

Treen: You ask the questions. I don't even know where to begin.

J.B.: All right, let me begin with this question. Louisiana is the  
last state of the states of the old Confederacy to elect a Republican  
Congressman. Despite the fact that it's got a single member legislative  
reapportionment plan which Republicans in other southern states think is  
a dream vehicle for electing Republicans to the legislature; they only  
elected four. And it's our feel, at least, that compared with the other

states, southern states, that Republican party development in Louisiana is less advanced than elsewhere. And the question is, why?

Treen: Well, it's . . . in terms of the number of officeholders, it's certainly appropriate to conclude that it's less advanced. Before going into a general answer, the single member legislative district situation was a boost, but, of course, a Democratic legislature drew the districts.

W.D.V.: I thought P.A.R. drew the districts.

Treen: Huh?

W.D.V.: P.A.R. drew them.

Treen: Well, as a matter of fact, they did. In certain of the senate districts, they didn't . . . I don't think they approved the plan. As a matter of fact, the legislature changed it. I'm pretty sure of that. But this is really not, I don't suppose, right to your point. Well, let's see.

W.D.V.: I didn't mean to challenge you . . . to challenge that thesis. That, I mean, that's just . . .

Treen: No, no. I don't think that you can challenge that based upon the number of officeholders that we have. You had in the governor's race . . . I was a candidate for governor, as you may know. You had a man who was . . . survived the Democrat primary who was considered a reformer, so that took some of our . . . some of the thrust out of our . . . some of the wind out of our campaign, Edwards.

J.B.: What is a reformer considered to be in Louisiana?

Treen: He's considered to be some one that seems to have a fresh, honest face who says in a credible way that he is going to clean up all the bad practices, regardless of what his intention is. That's . . . he cast the image of a reformer, I think quite well. And to the public at large. And

I'm not saying whether he is or not, but I think he did. The . . . as to the reasons why Louisiana has moved slower, I would say several. One, the registration situation in Louisiana in which you need to be registered for at least six months in your party to participate in that party's primary. Other southern states have had, I think, have had the advantage of less onerous registration. And there may be some that have just as hard and difficult a situation. But Texas, for example, you have a . . . well, I think you can vote in either primary. For some years that's been possible, to vote either primary. You must not only be registered for six months under Louisiana law to participate in a primary . . . and that means if you switch parties, you cannot vote or be a candidate in the primary of the other party. So that's held registration down considerably. It's only 3% now in the state, as you have undoubtedly found out. It makes it difficult for us to even get commissioners at election time and because your commissioners at general elections are named by your political parties and must be affiliated with the party that names them and must live in the ward in which they are named. So you have many elections in which simply because you don't have any Republican registration, you can't name commissioners, or rather you can get two or three in a ward. And these people have to be at the precinct at 5:30 a.m. and serve 'til 8 o'clock at night. So you don't . . . you have a very meager number of people to draw your election officials from. This has . . . well, this has two effects. One, you don't get the protection at the polls and, two, it's rather discouraging to Republican candidates to know they are probably not going to be able to get commissioners at the polls. So that's the registration effect, which, because of the law, you have a retardation

of Republican registrations out of proportion to the Republican sentiment. Obviously, the sentiment in Louisiana for Republican party is much greater than its registration. But since you don't have the registration, you have the problems of commissioners, drawing candidates, etc. You don't have the reservoir of people from which to draw candidates. Your Democrats in office that might consider changing to the ranks of the Republicans must make that decision at least six months prior to the primary date, let alone the general election so before issues or candidates in many instances begin to crystalize, that date has already passed by which you can change your registration. Let's take, for example, a Presidential election, at which time we, of course, elect for Congress as well. The date by which a Democrat would have to change in order to run Republican is past, before the nominating conventions ever take place. Long before, before it's even clear who is going to be the nominee. And most of your . . . your southern Democrat officeholders are quite interested in who the Democrat nominee is going to be, as well as, of course, the Republican nominee. That's been very, very influential, as I am sure you will agree. And so when you get in a situation like a McGovern being nominated, for example, for the Presidency you have a reaction among southerners and even among those who are in office who say, "I just want to get out of this party. In fact, I'd like to run Republican." But he can't; it's too late. He can't change his registration and run. That's a factor. And next, Louisiana as a whole has not been as conservative. It's aggregate profile, or whatever you political scientists call it, I don't know, is not as conservative as some of the other states. That's because of the southern part of the state which is French and Catholic and tends to be, let's say,



more liberal. It did not react . . . southern Louisiana did not react to the Kennedy years and the Lyndon Johnson years nearly as negatively, and with respect to Kennedy, I would say not negatively at all, as did your . . . the cotton belt section of the South. North Louisiana is . . . is typical, I think, of the cotton belt. Mississippi and north Lou- . . . north Louisiana is like Mississippi and Georgia and so forth. So, in other words, those are the conservative areas where south Louisiana is not particularly conservative.

W.D.V.: Let me interrupt you just a second . . .

Treen: Those are the two principle . . . those are two of the principle factors. Plus the fact that you've got in your Congressional election . . . you've got to look and see what . . . I think very few Democrat incumbents have been defeated in this phenomenon of the south growth in Congress. I don't have the figures, maybe some in the Goldwater election, but usually our growth is based upon winning a seat that becomes vacant and we haven't had the vacancies in our conservative districts. Now in some others you may have, but you haven't had them in ours.

J.B.: How did you get active in the Republican party in Louisiana? Are you a native of the state?

Treen: Um-hum.

J.B.: Were you a Democrat first?

Treen: Yes, I think I registered Democrat the first time I registered and then I became a Republican.

J.B.: When?

Treen: In . . . I think I registered as a Republican around 1953. Yeah, when I got back from the service. 1953. Then I left . . . there really was no political . . . well, there was a party of sorts. I wasn't really

active in the party. I guess I got a little bit active in Young Republicans, which was a paper organization of about four people. Then I got out of it in 19- . . . oh, around 1958, '59, maybe '58, I'm not sure. I joined the Louisiana States' Rights Party at that time, which had no affiliation with the other States' Rights Party of any other state. And I left that in '62 and became a registered Republican in February of '62 and have remained since. I was really motivated to get into politics on the Congressional level to oppose Hale Boggs. He . . . he provided the stimulus, I mean. And he was a Democrat and there was support for me to run against in the Democrat primary or in the Republican . . . as a Republican, and I chose to run as a Republican because I felt I that I would be more in harmony with the policies of the National Republican Party than the Democrat party. That if I got elected as a Democrat I would be completely out of step with the Democrat party here, so I couldn't see any future in that. So Boggs provided me a stimulus and . . .

J.B.: Was that on the basis of his votes on open housing and what, voting rights act?

Treen: Yes, but, well, no. It wouldn't have been because he voted for that later. Open housing vote came in 1967, I think. And the voting rights act was 1965.

J.B.: You ran against him in . . .

Treen: '62, '64 and '68. And, no, it was his generally liberal philosophy, One of the things he did that I think prompted a good bit of conservative opposition to him was his vote to pack . . . well, we called it pack, the Rules Committee. It passed to Kennedy. I guess that was in '61, he voted for that, '60, '61, to increase the size of the Rules Committee. And

well, yes, his generally liberal philosophy.

J.B.: Was his campaign . . .

Treen: Boggs was really the only real strong liberal we had then in Louisiana. Well, he had been in office for a long time and . . .

J.B.: Was his actively campaigning for Lyndon Johnson a factor as far as . . .

Treen: A factor for whom?

J.B.: Well, a factor in your campaign, I guess, a factor as far as his whole opposition was concerned.

Treen: Oh, in the fact that I chose to run, or how I ran?

J.B.: Well, more a factor that you chose to run, I suppose.

Treen: In '64 . . . well, I guess that it was. His . . . he . . . I think he had already . . . I don't think there is any question but that Boggs was going to support Johnson or had already evidenced that he would support Lyndon Johnson. He had always supported the Democrat nominee. McGovern was the only time that he hedged a little bit that I can ever recall that Boggs hedged a little bit on support of the Demo- . . . . No, I think it was a foregone conclusion that he would be a Johnson supporter. I would be a Goldwater supporter and that would provide, yes, an opportunity to defeat him, but we didn't. We got 45% of the vote.

W.D.V.: Here . . . here's one of the . . . . I heard you speak, incidentally, in Atlanta Sunday, and was struck by what you said then and also when we were in Louisiana, you ran '62, '64, '68, almost beat him in '68, ran for governor . . . . Was that the next race after that?

Treen: Yeah.

W.D.V.: And ran for governor and ran better than any other Republican candidate has run and ran again for Congress and got elected. That shows

a great deal of perserverance but . . . on your part, but the thing that struck me was you were doing this and it seems that no one else, the Republicans haven't been able to get other candidates in Louisiana to do that. They haven't been able to get candidates to run. Am I wrong on that?

Treen: Well, it's been difficult. We've had other candidates run. We ran . . . Ben Toledano ran for mayor in '71 and did a very creditable job. Now, impossible place to elect a Republican but he did a fantastic job in that race.

W.D.V.: By and large . . .

Treen: We had some other races in '64 that . . . where we didn't run is where we could have won, probably. Prentis Walker won in '64 and Mississippi goes what? 87% for Barry Goldwater. And they were kicking themselves, I guess, for not running more guys for Congress over there. We ran in the, well, the Boggs district, which was liberally oriented district. We did run a candidate in the 8th district, a complete dud as a candidate and he got about 45%. And we ran another fairly strong race in the old 3rd district, which I am now representing. But we didn't run up in our conservative districts which are the 4th and the 5th, where Wagoner and Passman are. And those are the two and the 6th district, well, yes, we had a candidate in the 6th district. A guy named Claude Crawford and if you ever say it I'll deny it. I can't with the tape on so I won't say it.

J.B.: I'll cut it off.

(Interruption on tape.)

Treen: . . . gotten the right kind of candidates to run. But we have candidates and when Charlton Lyons ran for governor, I'd say that was kind of a beginning of our present era. Well, he ran for Congress in a special

election in '61 and he ran for governor in '64 and elected, that year elected two to the legislature and we elected two in special elections after that but . . .

W.D.V.: One theory we . . . excuse me, go ahead.

Treen: Another factor is McKeithan could succeed himself and when a governor can succeed himself, he pretty well wipes out the other party.

W.D.V.: It's still a little difficult to understand, though, when you can get 40% or more of the vote in a gubernatorial election, that you don't really field very many candidates at all. You have, what, four state legislators who are Republicans?

Treen: Yeah, but we fielded probably 35 candidates.

W.D.V.: Well, we asked Democrats and obviously we got a biased point of view on this as to why that is the case. Why isn't the Republican party stronger? They tell us that it's a policy in the sense of the leadership not to encourage candidates to run and that they are interested in exclusive control over the party and keeping it tight and in the hands of a few people, kind of a post office kind of a . . .

J.B.: And interested in patronage.

W.D.V.: Interested in presidential patronage.

Treen: Absolutely untrue and I say that without, well, I hope with some credibility because I know that the charge is prevalent, but there ain't enough patronage . . . there doesn't begin to be enough patronage to make worthwhile the effort that you've got to put out if you are going to be a leader of the Republican party in Louisiana. I spent ten years of my life. As a matter of fact, one time I computed the amount of time, I spent about 40% of all of my working hours for ten years on the Republican party. And, what, to be able to help to appoint a couple of judges and a marshall?

There isn't enough federal patronage. I mean, there is a lot less than there ever used to be. The post office is gone. That's simply not true. Now, to go back to, say, the . . . to not field a lot of candidates, sometimes leadership does say don't get in that race. And I hope to hell we'll continue. For candidates that run we've got no God-blessed chance of winning and then they want you to go out and raise money and beat your same contributors over the head again and again for these candidates that have no chance, it's ridiculous. I think that the present leadership agrees with that philosophy, that we need to pick and choose our fights. And these people that think, well, we're a growing party. We should throw a candidate into every breach, can't do it. You can't get the kind of money necessary to run. You would destroy your credibility if you keep running and running and losing. At least if you don't show some promise. I think I established some credibility because I showed some progress in these races. But even then, I was helped because just a number of people that just despise the Hale Boggs political position. I could never have gotten support just because they thought I was a sincere candidate. It had to be a reaction to the incumbent. And, well, now I've digressed all over the place. But insofar as trying to keep the party small, patronage — absolutely ridiculous. That charge, I think, might have been more valid some years ago in the Eisenhower years. Well, and the years before that.

W.D.V.: How about the charge of weak party leadership in the sense of not being able to recruit sufficient good candidates?

Treen: Well, certainly you all are sophisticated enough to know that just because you don't have a good result doesn't mean that you don't have good leadership. That doesn't necessarily follow. Just as a good political consultant, the best in the world, can lose a campaign race, and a lousy one can win one.

W.D.V.: Was that for me?

(Laughter.)

Treen: Well, I think I noted that you were a consultant. I don't know what your record is.

W.D.V.: Well, I'll tell you I'll have to score because I want to ask you a question on it. I've always worked for Republicans that are generally progressive, what you'd call moderate Republicans. I got involved in a campaign in North Carolina because of a friendship. I started to work for a Democrat and he won the nomination and two primaries but lost the general election. I was asked on a television program.

Treen: Galifianakis?

W.D.V.: No, Skipper Boles. And, "Have you ever worked for a Democrat before?" The answer was no. "Have you ever lost before?" and the answer was no. The question was, "Does that tell you something?" And what I wanted to ask you was, I guess you perceive yourself as a conservative, or at least you are labeled as a conservative in terms of your ideology or philosophy.

Treen: I am.

W.D.V.: And the fact that you won as a conservative Republican in Louisiana, do you think that might be a model in the sense that if the Republicans are going to win that state, what they need are conservative candidates to win?

Treen: I think the philosophy pays . . . plays a part in the election and the importance of philosophy will vary from district to district. What I am fairly well convinced after being involved in campaigns for some time, my own and others, and being up here in Congress, that it has more to . . . that the result is more dependent upon the activities, the personality, the resources and the activities of the candidate. I mean,

how else do you explain that in two districts lying side by side, you can have a liberal guy representing this district and maybe one of the same demographic makeup represented by a conservative, and look at the Senate. You've got a liberal and a conservative representing the same state and they both get elected over and over again. It's identity of the candidate and I got elected in the 3rd Congressional District because I had a hell of a lot of name identification. And . . .

W.D.V.: Yeah, but the hypothesis is put forward that the way the Republican party can build itself in the South is to field conservative candidates.

I mean, if you look at . . .

Treen: Generally speaking, yes.

W.D.V.: Generally speaking.

Treen: I don't think you can win with the liberals in the South particularly, unless you've got a situation where it is a liberally oriented district and you've got . . . . I think a liberal Republican can win in the South, yes. But your general statement, yes, the way for the Republican party to build in the South is to field the conservative candidates. No question about that.

J.B.: How about moderate . . .

Treen: But the personality of that candidate, how hard he works and the way he is received, his credibility, that's . . .

J.B.: Do you think that outweighs his ideology?

Treen: Hum?

J.B.: Does that outweigh his ideology or his philosophy?

Treen: Well, since we've got to generalize, I'd say yes, it outweighs his ideology. I don't think he can win. I mean that's one of many factors, like money, how well the guy looks, how he performs on T.V., how he meets people, background, but ideology is one factor. But I, you know, take the



personality and resources of the individual candidate and put them on the scale and take ideology and put it on the scale and I think that personality and activities, including the consultant's work and all his ad- . . . all that adds up to a lot more than the candidate's ideology. And I wish it weren't so. I wish it were the other way but I think that's what it is.

J.B.: In the governor's race we drew a map of Louisiana and put the parishes you got a majority of the vote in and compared it with a map of the parishes that Bennett Johnston got a majority of the vote in in the Democratic runoff, the two maps would be almost identical. We heard several interpretations. One is that basically that northern area is the more conservative area and each of you was perceived as the more conservative candidate.

Treen: Right.

J.B.: The other . . . another theory is that more northern votes, to some extent, not from anything you did but from the voters' perception, to some extent reflected just an anti-Catholic bias. And that that helped you in the north, merely by the fact of the matter that Edwards was Catholic and you were not.

Treen: Yes, I think that's . . . I think they are both true. It was an anti-Edwards . . . they didn't cotton to Edwards. And if you've been . . . you say you've been in Louisiana the last couple of weeks?

J.B.: Um-hum.

Treen: So you've read about his attitude towards Las Vegas and gambling, etc., or have you?

J.B.: We've heard some talk.

Treen: Well, he's just a fun-loving Cajun Catholic. And, sure, that hurt him and helped me and helped Bennett in north Louisiana. And those

characteristics helped in south Louisiana against me. They wanted a French who, you know, Cajun governor.

W.D.V.: So you do not interpret that, I mean, the election, of north Louisiana being any future Republican base necessarily?

Treen: Yes, I did say the more, yes. I said that both of the factors you mentioned I think were important. Definitely that north Louisiana is more conservative. There is no question about it. Look at Charlton Lyons' race. Of course, he was from north Louisiana, too.

W.D.V.: Yeah, but you ran . . .

Treen: I'm a south Louisianan running strong in the north. I don't even carry my own parish.

W.D.V.: But he carried some parishes in south Louisiana and you didn't.

Treen: Lyons?

W.D.V.: He sure did.

Treen: Don't think he . . .

W.D.V.: If he didn't carry them, they were some of his stronger counties.

Treen: Yeah, but he didn't . . . no, he . . .

W.D.V.: He got more than 40% of the vote.

Treen: Yeah, that may be but . . .

W.D.V.: Some of his . . . he showed more strength, relative strength, in the south than you did.

Treen: You have to look at the history of the election. The fellow who was eliminated was a south Louisiana Catholic, who lost in the Democratic primary. So he picked up a lot of the pro-Chep Morrison vote, who was the favorite in south Louisiana. But still, despite the fact that the Democrat survivor in '64 was a north Louisiana protestant, Lyons got better vote in north Louisiana, you see, he didn't just pick up the south vote that was unhappy because Chep Morrison didn't make it. Chep Morrison

is a New Orleans Catholic. He still got his strength. I think if you go back you'll find the only parishes he carried were in north Louisiana.

J.B.: There is a pattern in Louisiana for being a fairly staid growth of the same type of urban Republican vote that you find throughout the South, in the urban areas. And I guess I'm going back to my original question, and yet you don't have the success . . . as much success in winning elections there, Republicans don't, as you do elsewhere.

Treen: Well, we haven't had . . . we haven't had the reservoir from which to draw candidates. There's no question about that.

W.D.V.: Do you think that's the basic problem?

Treen: Yeah. Now what . . . when you start we had only  $1\frac{1}{2}\%$  registered Republicans until . . . and, hell, a lot of these were postal employees from the Eisenhower days when you had to be a Republican to get a job. There was just no percentage in getting registered Republican because you don't vote in any of . . . what everybody considers to be the election. I mean for your school board or for your sheriff or all your local officials. What's the percentage? So we didn't have any registered Republicans. Still only have  $3\%$  registered Republicans. So you don't have the reservoir from which to draw candidates. And conservatives by nature . . . well, of course, this applies throughout the South so it wouldn't be innate to Louisiana, but they just by nature don't become candidates.

J.B.: Why is that?

Treen: Well, if you have a conservative makeup, you generally are not the type that likes to put yourself forward and beat your breast and do the things necessary to win elections. If you're conservative, you tend to stay back and not to be the popular guy, the guy that's most popular

with the majority of the people. I mean that's what you got to do to get elected. That's not a conservative trait to move into a constituency and say, you know, I want to be the most popular guy here.

W.D.V.: They're basically idealists and not activists.

Treen: Yeah.

J.B.: I had one Republican Louisianan tell me that . . . that one was nonsense, the idea of being a patronage party, because the kind of patronage that might be available the people in the Republican party in Louisiana weren't interested in anyway. And that that was nonsense. And he also said he felt the argument made on registration problems, that although it presents some problems, he felt that it was too often used as a crutch, as an excuse. And that he felt the basic problem was in the party leadership, not that they didn't want to expand the party so much as too much of the leadership at the top of the Republican party didn't know how.

Treen: Well, I'm not going to say we have outstanding leadership and by that I don't mean that we haven't had some good people. But to find the good person who's got the time to devote to the building of a party is most difficult job. Maybe other states perhaps have been able to solve it. Now, in other words, I think that Charlie Dejoie as an individual is a fine person. So is Jimmy Boyce. But the unique type leader like in Charlton Lyons comes along very, very rarely. And Charlton I think did help a great deal. I think he brought it out of complete chaos which is left in in 1961 when John Minor Wisdom left the party. He left it in the late 'fifties and became a federal judge and he was the party and he became a federal judge there was no party, really. None at all. Charlton Lyons, I think, he was the instrument of putting

it together, starting in '61, '62.

J.B.: So did his death just leave a void?

Treen: Yes, it did. Of course, he had passed out of active leadership long before that. But . . .

J.B.: Was that . . .

Treen: I don't know. I guess I sound like I'm making excuses for Louisiana, but I'm really not. It's a more liberal state. It didn't have the impetus that the other states had because it's . . . it didn't react as violently to Kennedy. It's the most heavily Catholic state in the South, isn't it? By and far?

W.D.V.: Oh, yeah. About 40%. We're not bugging you about this. It's just that it's a real puzzle to us how in the other southern states there appears to be steady growth in the state legislatures, in the Congress and so on. Even like next door in Mississippi. While we just don't see much evidence of growth in the Republican party . . . you are the only evidence of success in the Republican party that you can see back here.

Treen: Well, Mississippi is a much more conservative state than Louisiana. I don't know what their registration situation or problem is over there. You had some fellows running for mayor in Hattiesburg and Laurel, I think, and got elected. I think some of these were switchovers.

J.B.: Did Lyons lose interest after he ran for governor? Or did he have health problems?

Treen: Oh, no, no. No, well, he was pretty old. He was 69 when he ran for governor and he, no, he stayed in leadership for a couple or three

years after that. And there was growth in his race, and you might say they only elected two to the legislature. That was not in a Presidential election, of course. That was in February or March of '64. That was prior to Goldwater being nominated. The big impetus was when Goldwater was nominated. His race for governor was in March of '64.

J.B.: One thing . . .

Treen: When people didn't even . . . conservatives didn't even think we were going to nominate Barry Goldwater for President.

J.B.: Well, one thing I hear a lot of across the South from Republicans is that Watergate is hurting them insofar as candidate recruitment is concerned. It's not hurting too much in other ways . . . not particular . . . doesn't seem to be hurting insofar as financial contributions significantly and nobody is losing members but I keep hearing people say it's hurting on the candidates. Is that true also in Louisiana where you have already had problems with candidates?

Treen: Yes, I think it has hurt because it has . . . it has helped . . . helped is not the right word . . . it has tended to dissuade a number of potential candidates from changing to the Republican party.

J.B.: Where do you see the party heading now? If you could think, say, six or eight years down the road do you think it's going to be . . .

Treen: Well, the probable future of the Republican party I think in Louisiana is dependent to a large extent on what the national parties do and the Presidential election. And I don't think people have any particular reason on a state or local level to say, well, I'm for this candidate because he is a Republican or he's a Democrat. The only thing or the principle thing that gives us impetus is the kind of philosophical stance and the kind of candidates that we nominate for President of the

United States. So I think the future growth of the Republican party in Louisiana and other states, perhaps not to the same extent, is dependent upon who the Democrats nominate for '76 and who the Republicans nominate . . .

J.B.: So you see the growth of the party . . .

Treen: . . . in '76.

J.B.: . . . as tied then to who the Presidential candidates are?

Treen: To a large extent.

J.B.: Do you attribute part of your victory to that? To Richard Nixon's victory in Louisiana?

Treen: To the . . . to all of the events that have caused people in the South to begin to think the Republican party isn't so bad after all, yes. And Richard Nixon's nomination as compared to McGovern's is part of that. Definitely.

W.D.V.: So you relate that to the national party then?

Treen: Yes, to a large extent.

W.D.V.: Well, would you . . . how about in terms of statewide office or the state legislature? That really has little relationship to the Presidential party, does it?

Treen: No, you start off with the problem of the Republican . . . the word Republican does not . . . didn't even have respectability for a lot of people and to most people not even . . . not acceptability at all. So you only begin to tear that down, not by what your state chairman says and your national committeeman that gets a little blob on the back page, but what the headknocker Republican says and does and who he is. The identification of the Republican party in the South is what the national party does. On the Democrat side it's not nearly as true.

J.B.: Well, also doesn't a good deal ride on your performance? I mean you are the first visible Republican officeholder.

Treen: Well, I was going to get to that. I think the Presidential is the most important.

J.B.: Yeah.

Treen: I wish that weren't so, but I think it is. And, yes, I think the performance of the Republicans that we have elected to office and, in turn, the weight you attach depends upon the visibility of that particular office and since mine is probably the most visible then my performance is going to be, I think, important in the growth of the party. Very much so.

J.B.: Yeah, as far as you . . . as best you can answer, is your career intention to stay in the Congress, that is in the House?

Treen: Very honestly, I have not thought beyond about two years and so I'm not sure. My long-range decision will probably be based upon what . . . whether it appears that we are going to make more progress with this Republican party. I've given about eleven years of my life to it and if I can see some progress or some hope and then I would be willing to spend as many years here probably as the electorate would want to send me. But if it would appear to be, you know, really hopeless, then I probably wouldn't. I would probably would opt for getting back to my prior practice.

J.B.: But you're going to run again this year?

Treen: I can't state that publicly.

J.B.: No, I know. This is not . . . our book comes out in '76.

Treen: Yeah.

J.B.: What was the effect on the party in Louisiana when the President in effect endorsed Senator Eastland against the Republican opponent in the neighboring state of Mississippi?



Treen: This was hardly known outside of Mississippi, except among the people who are actively involved. Didn't have much effect because it wasn't partic- . . . because it wasn't known much. So you'd have to ask others about the effect in Mississippi. Wasn't general knowledge.

J.B.: I had one person tell me that it had a very discouraging effect in Louisiana, those who knew about it.

Treen: Oh, I would say this is true. When you asked effect, I was thinking in terms of total electorate. Yes, among those who knew, that were . . . believe, you know, a staunch Republicans that believe in building the party. Yes it had a demoralizing effect.

J.B.: Was that . . .

Treen: And to others I think it was recognized as just, oh, you know, necessity.

J.B.: Was that true in other southern states?

Treen: You mean the effect of the Eastland thing?

J.B.: Among Republicans in other southern states.

Treen: I think . . . I think it did wherever it was known. I think it had a certain demoralizing effect but the people that really knew about it. You've got to recognize these are the Republicans that were strong for what they were doing anyway, so I don't think it caused any of them to back off and say, well, to hell with it. It may have in a few instances. In other words, if I'm strongly in favor of the party, I don't get off the damned horse for every little . . . every discouraging thing that comes along.

J.B.: But it would have the effect, though, of making this type of person say, "Well, I'll still work for the party but I'm not going to break my leg to do it."

Treen: Yes, I think it had a certain demoralizing effect among those that

knew it but I don't think many people knew it, certainly didn't know it in Louisiana. We have a situation in Louisiana where we knew the President wanted . . . did not want an opponent to Otto Passman. We knew he didn't want an opponent to Joe Wagoner and if we had chosen to run candidates in those spots, you know, we had to know that the President wasn't going to give any active support at all to the Republican nominee against those two men.

J.B.: Do you think the party made the right decision in not opposing?

Treen: Well, let's get one thing really clear here. The party doesn't make those decisions and that we don't get off in a closet and decide we want to run in this race or we're not going to run in that race. I mean, we as leaders might make a decision as to whether we will try to find a candidate or we will discourage a candidate. We don't control that situation. You're a registered . . .

J.B.: sense.

Treen: Yes.

J.B.: Oh, you can't stop someone from running.

Treen: Right.

J.B.: And you can't force someone to run but certainly it's appropriate for the leadership of the party . . .

Treen: We didn't go out and . . .

J.B.: . . . wants to get a candidate, they are likely to find one.

Treen: We didn't look for candidates in those districts.

J.B.: Do you think that was a mistake or not?

Treen: No, no.

J.B.: In '68?

Treen: No, I don't think it was a mistake. First of all, we are not

interested solely in, you know, electing a guy that's got a Republican label. Joe Wagoner and Otto Passman are good supporters of the philosophy we believe in and they were both good supporters of Richard Nixon. We don't really have that much incentive. I'd rather have Joe Wagoner as a Republican but we've got to pick and choose our fights and so why go fight our friends when we've got others that . . . and where you can't win, you know. You're not going to beat Joe Wagoner.