

[4007: A-31]

Interview with Orval Faubus, former governor of Arkansas, at Madison, Arkansas, June 14, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: About your father, I've read that he had a great deal of influence. Your father.

Faubus: Well, yes. He taught me some of the basic principles of life, you know. Like one of the lessons was if you want to hoe a little corn, hoe it clean. He did everything, as near as he could, exactly right. I remember, he and his brother used to make cross ties, you know, railroad ties. Larry would make about three while my father was making two, simply because my father took more pains using these we use in the hills. More careful about it. He got them as near as he could to the exact size. Hewed them very smoothly. Same way building a fence, clearing a field or cultivating a field. He could have gone through and plowed it and hoed it without being so meticulous. Made more profit from his labor. But he was just more particular and careful. Whether those traits are taught or inherited, I don't know. I sometimes think they're more inherited than taught. He was that way and I was that way too. But I admire him very much for that. And then he said always make your word good. If you tell a man you'll do something, be sure and do it. If you're not sure you can, don't tell him. He was known as an honest man. He always tried to pay his debts and it was very difficult in those days. He's was a very liberal philosophy. He went beyond the old populists, I guess. In fact he became a member of the socialist party back when it was considered radical. Quite unpopular. But he would be appalled now at the, some

Interview number A-0031 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

of the ideas of the so-called liberals of this age. You know, when they let down in their morals or their way of doing things. I never shall forget. . . . He was in the hospital with his fatal illness when medicare became effective. He died in late July. So with his final bill, he was eligible for medicare. I was visiting in the hospital with him and he was worrying about it. He said "I'd like to go home. I'm just laying here running up a bill." He always worried about bills and it would be difficult to pay. And I said "Well, dad, you don't have to worry so much about that, now. You're eligible for medicare. They'll take care of all of it except 10%" I believe it was, or 20%. He said "Yes, but a good thing shouldn't be abused." He'd simply be appalled now at handing out food stamps to able bodied young people. Now he would be in favor of some kind of work program for them. You know, if they were in need. Because he thought there was enough work to do in this country. It ought to be done and people could be paid for it. But to give an able bodied person who's able to work, just give them cash or food stamps, which is the same thing, I guess what you'd call the dole, as an old time socialist who believed in work, he'd be appalled by that. So the liberalism of today has gone far beyond what even the populists or the socialists believed in at that time. Incidentally, I feel the same way about it. No nation has ever survived that started giving away the earnings of working people to those who don't work if they're able. Now for those who are unable, you know, disabled persons, old people. . . . I never shall forget when he got his first social security check. \$21 I think it was. He was proud of it as he could be because he felt like he'd earned it. He'd paid in the tax when he was working. And here was something he could count on every month that he lived. And that's something my father had never been able to

look forward to. Because making a living in this country was rather uncertain during the times he was active. There were increases. I guess he was getting up close to \$40 a month by the time he died. But he still worked. In fact when he got to be an invalid, he'd crawl from one end of the garden to the other, hoeing a row. Crawl back doing hoeing, weeding. Then get his crutches and go to the house. I came by to visit him once when I was governor and he and his wife--my step-mother. . . . My mother died in 1936. And they were fixing a chicken house to raise broilers. Some old buildings that they were repairing. Putting them in shape to [raise] broilers. And he couldn't stand without crutches. So they had a chair and they'd move that chair along and he would sit and his wife was handing him nails and holding the planks while he did the nailing, did the work. The farthest thing from his mind was a person who was able bodied and could work should decline or refuse to work and then live on the labor of others. Yet he was known as a radical. I guess now he'd be a conservative. With those views.

J.B.: How would you describe yourself, philosophically?

Faubus: That's a little difficult. You know I've been labeled everything. One of my buddies in the army one time. . . . We were going through basic training. We were privates in basic training Camp Walters, Texas. And he said I was a practical idealist. I guess if I had to apply something which I think comes nearer to describing me that that would be it. I've never been a conservative in that, you know, I wanted the few to still be rich and the poor not have an opportunity to advance. Opportunity for everyone. And yet I was classes as a liberal in my early days. Quite liberal. Because I was I guess what you'd call populist. Many have labeled me that. But now I'd be called conservative

by some because I don't believe in going so far with some of these programs as to abuse the program in such a way as to destroy them when they're good programs if administered properly. Like the food stamp program. It's very fine to help these old people, help the disabled, help, you know, widows with children. Need somebody to take care of them. I advocated old age pensions. The first one in this county. Running for county office. You know, before anybody else thought of that. It was considered radical. But I've seen all that come to fruition. Social security. What you call welfare grants or old age pensions, whatever people call them. Private pension plans, governmental pension plans. Didn't have any for state employees when I became governor. They weren't even under social security. So I put all of them under social security and we expanded it to county officials and employees, city officials and employees. And then the nonteaching personnel in the public schools; like bus drivers, cooks, janitors and so forth. They didn't have any retirement benefits. And then we extended social security to school teachers and college people. Which gave them two systems. Their teacher retirement system and social security. Then two years later we set up a state retirement plan for all state employees and later expanded it to all these others. So that now anyone who works for government in Arkansas, when they get ready to retire, when they're too old to work anymore, they have the benefit of two retirement systems. And both of them [actually?] sound. We had to revise the teacher retirement system to make it actuarially sound while I was governor. No one could have been stronger for the great social programs that Roosevelt advocated and put into effect. Unemployment insurance, old age pensions which is welfare, the work projects. Well, the CCC, NYA, WPA, PWA, all those. But each one required that you do something to earn what you got except

for the welfare grants which were for the old and disabled and blind, which is a form of disability, and dependent children.

Walter De Vries: At the end of your sixth term, having been governor for twelve years, were there any major things that you thought you hadn't accomplished that you still wanted to get done?

Faubus: Oh one in particular. We'd made considerable progress but we hadn't got enough done. That's prison reform. Still relied mainly on the trustee system which may or may not work about as well as the other if you have the right prison head and it's administered properly. You know, system, I don't care how well you draw it up on paper, is any better than the people who administer it. The administrators. Under Lee Hensley we had a very good system. He was firm as a rock but fair. Every convict respected him. Bad ones feared him and the good ones sought refuge and sanctuary for their difficulties. But many of them come back and visit him, write letters to him afterward. But we didn't have any means except his iron rule for fairness and certain punishment if they were caught violating the rules. To protect the prisonmates from each other. And that's what your biggest/prison problems. They still don't have because, some time after I left office--in fact I think it's during Gov Bumpers administration--four inmates beat another to death. And they heard his cries for help, but the paid prison guards, I don't think was armed at the time and he was afraid to interfere, afraid to go in. But they just beat him to death. Now if that had happened during my administration you'd have had a big hue and cry, you know, and big headlines in papers. It goes back to that old adage, you know, it all depends on whose ox is gored, what happens. I'd like to see more construction there. Now we built a new hospital, we built new barracks, we built a theatre. We set up an athletic program.

We set up an educational program where they were, you know, earning an 8th grade diploma. High school credits. All approved by the department of education. Furnished free text books. We began a program of furnishing free dentures and dental care for those who needed it as well as improved medical care. And then we started building up a prison welfare fund for the inmates ~~after~~ out of the commissary where they did their trading. And it amounted to, I've forgotten how many thousand dollars, when I left office. That was done under Dan Stevens. Most of these reforms were done when Dan Stevens became the superintendent. One defect of Hensley was, he didn't believe in coddling them, therefore he didn't do enough for the inmates. He protected them from each other and made them work, but, you know, there's something to life besides that even if you're in prison. And through the welfare fund you could send funds to a prisoner's family if they were in difficulty or you could buy him suitable clothing when he left prison and put money in his pocket to leave with. ~~Otherwise~~ ^{Otherwise} ~~Everybody~~ just used to turn them out and some of them that didn't get any money were out on the road hitchhiking. But to protect them from each other, which is needed more now, I guess, than before, you need a system of. . . I'd prefer to call them rooms. More than a cell. Where a man can have his own hobbies. If he wanted a library or material to paint, draw, woodcarving, whatever he'd like to do. And that would be his own private place. And there he would be safe, when he wasn't working or when he was out, any activity that required he would be outside. That hasn't been accomplished yet. It should be as soon as possible. Of course it's a big project. Cost a lot of money for that much construction. But we did more new construction while I was governor than I guess all the other administrations combined. They've had some new construction since then. Prison reform

has continued since I left office. Under Gov Rockefeller and under Gov Bumpers. I think mostly due to the personnel there rather than their active interest, although any progress has had their approval. They must be given credit for that.

J.B.: Any other major goals that you wanted to get done that you didn't finish? Other than prison reform.

Faubus: Well, of course, we hadn't gone far enough in many fields, like highway construction, financial support of education. There was something else, I can't think of it now. But we came from so little, so little, when I was first inaugurated to the point we were when I left office, that it's been comparatively easy to build on that since I left. Man, if we'd had the funds they have now. . . .

W.D.V.: If you think back over that 25 year period from 1948 to 1974, what are the major changes that occurred in Arkansas politics and government in that 25 years? You're one of the few people that was active throughout that entire period.

Faubus: First we changed from one of the most backward states in the union to one of the most progressive. You'd had a progressive attitude in Arkansas for some time among some of the political leaders. But the state was virtually held in bondage by the economic interests. The Arkansas Power and Light Company dominated the state from one end to the other. They played a dominant role in the field of education. It was culturally, economically, and politically. Scarcely anyone who ever [won/wanted?] political office survived without the support of that group. Wasn't just the company itself, but those allied with it. McMath didn't have their favor. I was in his administration. But he was unable to overcome their opposition. They could beat him in the legislature. Keep him from getting projects approved. They couldn't

do that to me. I was strong enough that I got my program. Two of the hardest fights they've had in the legislature were between the rural electric cooperatives and the Arkansas power and Light Company and their allies. We won both battles, but they were the hardest that were fought. And the general assembly split right down the middle and we just won by a small margin both times. Well, that broke the back of what I guess Franklin D. Roosevelt would have called economic royalists in Arkansas. And from then on the people had a say, the progressive people and the people that wanted to do things. They then, that leadership took a subdued role, tried to get along and take care of their company and their stockholders and ceased to attempt to dominate completely or control the political life of the state as well as the cultural life of the state. They still played a leading role economically. Now there were many things that were done in my administration that they joined in wholeheartedly, such as the industrial program. Naturally, it meant more business for them. Each new plant that came was a big paying customer. And all the employees were new customers, individual customers in their homes and small businesses and so on. And they gave fine cooperation in this field, as did most of the economic interests of the state. But that's the biggest change. Was the freeing of the state from complete domination by those who were rich in the economic field. Economic royalists, I guess, would be a good term for them. Now you've seen changes come about, of course, through the growing power of the federal government. Which I guess would be the next biggest. . . . The Federal government's excessive influence or domination in a number of fields. That's just reaching it's apex now, I guess, so what the final results will be we don't know, whether it will be good or bad. I think it was good for the state when we broke the chain of domination

by the economic interests. And an ordinary person could run for office and win without having their blessing or their financial support or political support. That way you had many independent thinking legislators and independent thinking public officials. Not only on the state level, but regional and on the county level also. So we were able to build a steam generating plant at Ozark to supply power for the rural electric coops. So they're not completely dependent on the private power companies for their source of power. Like this county here is 100% rural electric coop. No power company has a line in Madison county. Newton county may be another. They did go into Jasper, the power company did, but I don't know if they do now or not. So people could organize and demand roads and get them. They could build hospitals. We set up means by which they could finance various facilities for service to the people. Hospitals, nursing homes. And then as the state grew richer in finances, during my administration, we began to build many things, like vocational technical schools. To set up a police officers training academy which they needed. Badly needed now. We set up educational television. Built a children's colony. No support anywhere from any powerful interest. Just people who were interested worked with my administration, and we were able to bring those things about. Rebuilt state hospital and one of the finest in the nation. The blind and deaf schools, the same thing. Arkansas was, I think, the second state in the union to authorize the construction of condominiums. We were the sixth state in the union to set up our own control for safety factors and for licensing of atomic power plants. Use of nuclear power. Were the sixth state to sign a contract with the federal government.

W.D.V.: How about changes in the Democratic party?

Faubus: Well, I think the changes in Arkansas at the present time more

or less fit the pattern nationwide. We're in a period of inflation. It's pretty tough on working people and small business people. You know. They got increased income and its continually increased. But the bills are increasing so rapidly that it's hard to take it in fast enough to pay the bills. But so long as they're busy doing that, that's their primary concern. Now if they get unemployed and have time to sit down and study they're going to start pressing whoever they think's responsible for their difficulties. But they don't have much time now, to think about their difficulties or the origin of them. So long as they can work, get the money, pay the bills. And then of course we're paying taxes and no one else has any reason to be discontent. The old people are fairly well taken care of. You have your modern nursing homes for those who want to go there. The others are living on the checks which they get. Welfare, food stamps, social security. Workers get unemployed, they have unemployment insurance which is more lavish than it's ever been. Young idlers, middle aged, of all kinds, if they don't have work all they have to do is go in the welfare office and get a bunch of food stamps. They can live out of the grocery store just as well as those people who are working. So under those conditions, which are nationwide, it seems there's a tendency to vote for the candidates who say nothing. I mean you do a lot of talking. They will. And they're very glib at it, to use one of my father's old expressions. But when they get through you can't really pin anything concrete that they have said for or against anything or what they're going to do about this problem. They'll mention a problem, but they don't offer a solution. And if they say they'll do something about it, they don't say how. Now this is what Fulbright suffered from in his race with Bumpers. Fulbright's always been a specific man. He doesn't just criticize. For

the most part he offers solutions. The only time that I know of when he offered what he said was a solution was to the Vietnam war. You know, he said negotiate. But how do you negotiate if the other fellow won't negotiate? It takes two to do that. So he criticized the war but he didn't offer any solution except that. But for everything else he'd come up with something specific. A plan. How to handle it. And he'd take a stand on various issues. So he suffered from that record. Every time you take a stand you displease someone. Those who are pleased will forget it a lot more quickly than those who are displeased. And so he gathered his critics over the years and then reaped the rewards in the last election. I'm in more or less the same boat. Because in 12 years as governor you have to make an awful lot of decisions. And every time you make a decision, if it's controversial and there's very few things that aren't a little bit controversial, you displease someone. For a time you can favor all the big dams that they are building and displease very few. A few landowners that had to give up their property. But then that grew very controversial. So I blocked the dam on the Buffalo river. Displeased a lot of people. And we'll save save it as a national river. The others are coming up now very controversial. The one over in Saline county. Belle Folley. Cash River .

Well, my opponent in the last election avoided taking a stand on any of them. As did Gov Bumpers. And I guess they were pretty. . . . You know, you have to keep up with the times. It's kind of like the old mariners trimming their sails to the wind. You don't set them for a gentle breeze if it's a storm blowing. And I guess they were wiser than Fulbright or myself. So that's what I see right now in politics. The bland politics, as one national man called them, are doing much better than those who are willing to face the issues and say how they stand and

offer a solution. Now, what the results will be when you come to a time of accounting, that's another question. We haven't come to that yet.

J.B.: Would you have run against Sen Fulbright if Gov Bumpers had not?

Faubus: Yes, I might. Fulbright was due to be beaten. Just as I was in '70 after I got in the run off with Bumpers. If I'd of gotten someone else in the run off, think I might have won. Just as Rockefeller was in '70. If I'd of gotten the nomination I'd of beaten Rockefeller in 1970. But in a run off with Bumpers, didn't have a chance.

W.D.V.: Why do you think he beat you?

Faubus: He's a political phenomenon. He's cool. He's articulate. He doesn't panic. And he's got. . . well, he's just got it. He handled himself amazingly well. I don't think anyone in this state could have beaten Bumpers for any office this time. Maybe not in the foreseeable future. He looked a lot now like McMath did when he first came in. But the times are different. My god, there were so many roads needed to be built when McMath was governor. And you couldn't, maybe build 2% of them. Who was pressing Bumpers for a road? We got so many roads now, you know, that they think

a little bit of interest here and there. Who was pressing him for a hospital or a vo-tec school? They were coming along pretty well. Building them almost as fast as they needed them and many already completed. There weren't many problems to face him. I mean severe problems. Really difficult. Such as Fulbright's faced over the years. Such as I faced, especially in the early part of my administration. And like McMath faced when he was governor. You'd have more delegations down there, pleading for roads in one meeting of the highway commission while McMath was governor I mean intently, zealously, determined. Than Bumpers has had in his entire administration. See, this is a time of affluence. People are making money and spending it. In fact they're making so much money if

they live on a road that isn't improved they can sell and move on to another one, if they want to. You couldn't do that then. You couldn't do early in my administration. It's the difference in the times which influences the attitude of the voter.

W.D.V.: Is there also a difference in the way the media covers governors or candidates. I mean television, has that made a real difference in the--

Faubus: Oh yes.

W.D.V.:--the way the campaign is covered?

Faubus: Back in the time when McMath was governor and before and at the time when I was governor in the beginning, when a candidate for governor went into a town or a county, it was a big event. You had a lot of people turn out. The curious would come. They'd come to listen. They'd come to see, to make up their minds. They've already got their minds made up now before you get there. Television, radio and newspapers. Newspapers so much more widely circulated. And they've had all this drilled into their heads for so long, why you find scarcely anyone going to a political meeting now to hear a man to see whether or not he wants to vote for him or what he thinks about. He already has an impression. The news media is doing more to determine the fate of public figures now and the fate of this country than ever before in the history of the nation, or I guess of mankind. I can remember when I was a youngster, you know, we'd go to a music party if there was one once a month to hear some music. Now you're saturated with it. Radio, television, all the other instruments. Appliances in the household. Sometimes you get tired of it and have to turn it off. Whereas we were hungry for it. Well, that's the way people used to be for, somewhat for politics, especially those who were interested. So they'd go to hear and to see. Even if it wasn't their man and they already had someone they were going to support. They'd

go to see the other speaker, if he came through, just to see about him, size him up. Sometimes change their minds.

W.D.V.: Do you think that was true of your campaign in '70, '74?

campaign trail was already decided?

Faubus: After I got Bumpers it was. Now he was relatively unknown but he had this charisma and he was all things to all people. They didn't know whether he was liberal; they didn't know whether he was conservative. They didn't know what kind of background he had. In fact he had no public record, you know, other than city attorney in Charleston, which is of little note. Important enough, but of little note. So when the press began, you know, giving him this good publicity he'd get as much benefit in one day as I could get in a whole month going and speaking and trying to find people. Talking to them or shake hands. Mail literature or anything else. And it was the same way this time. I made a month's campaign, determined tour of the state. What I could see in the crowds that I came. . . there were so very few of the undecided. Now I changed someone's mind every time I spoke. But I couldn't get to speak to enough people. Wrong time of year. Farmers in the field, even working at night. Factory workers busy at jobs. And why would they go down town listen to a candidate speak when they can turn on a western drama or whatever they want on television. Or get the news. Thirty minutes of Walter Cronkite or somebody else, you know, that speaks with such authority. But the Fulbright, the Senate race was decided at the time they announced. Fulbright spent a million dollars, and he didn't change over 2%. I know from my scientific surveys. Check with Gene Newsom, if he'll open up and tell you. He'll tell you that. Spent a million dollars and he didn't change anything. Part of it got me out of a run off, but [laughter] it wasn't intentional on Fulbright's part. They

told him it was close and he was trying to get enough, you know, black votes that you can motivate with money. He must have gotten out an additional 75- or 80,000. Damned if they didn't vote against him. He lost from anywhere to 65 to 70%. The more of them he got out the worse he got beat. And he was doing it all with his funds. And 75-95% of them voted against me.

W.D.V.: Isn't that a basic change in Arkansas politics? Two candidates are pretty well known. Doesn't make any difference how much they campaign. The decision was probably made long before the so-called campaign even begins.

Faubus: Right. Through the news media.

W.D.V.: Yeah.

J.B.: You said when Bumpers ran against you in '70 people didn't know what he was, liberal or conservative or what. Now he's been governor four years. Do they know now?

Faubus: No, they don't know yet, really. He's. . . I'd say more people would consider him a liberal than anything else, but they really don't know. Many conservatives voted for him even in this election, you know, against Fulbright.

J.B.: You think he'll just remain someone very much in the middle of the road when he gets in the Senate, or will his voting record reflect a philosophical direction?

Faubus: I doubt it. Not enough issues coming up now to determine that. He can keep quiet. Be on a speaking trip or visit home when some controversial issue comes up if he wants to. And he can pretty well avoid being labeled, I think, for a long time. Until he gets nominated for national office and then he'll be to the nation what he was to Arkansas. And if he should get elected to a national office, and fairly good times

continue and no great controversy arises, he might even ~~serve~~^{serve} out his time without ever having to face up to a difficult issue as some office holders sometimes have to and some must do.

J.B.: do you think you may run again?

Faubus: Doubtful.

W.D.V.: What was the impact of Rockefeller on you and the Democratic party and those people in the Democratic party that identify with you?

Faubus: Not a great deal of effect. See Rockefeller ran against me in '64. I was running for my sixth term. And that was against all the odds. I had critics in every corner of the state by that time. But I was still able to win. Actually what Rockefeller gathered up. . . since at that time I'd become classified as a conservative, which I don't think I've ever been. I've always classified myself as a liberal. Not the kind of liberals, you know, you have now, but in the mold of the LaFollettes, Wisconsin, the New Farm Labour party in Minnesota, Hiram Johnson of California, Pinchot of Pennsylvania, Teddy Roosevelt.

J.B.: How about Huey Long?

Faubus: And FDR. Well, Huey did a lot for the common people of his state. They classified him, the press did, as a demagogue. Maybe he was to some extent, I don't know enough about the man and he wasn't permitted to live long enough, you know, to really see. But he built roads; took the farmers out of the mud. He set up housing, of whatever kind he could on the campuses of the college and sent young people of Louisiana to college that never would have gotten to go. He stopped the exploitation of the state by the Standard Oil Company, which had held it in virtual bondage. If you read the history of it and see how they actually ruled it. No man had a chance there, unless he was blessed by Standard Oil. Just like it used to be in this state, you had to be blessed by AP&L. Huey Long broke that bondage. They restored it some-

what after he was gone. And then they said he was a dictator, but he brought them the basic democracy. He was one of the first leaders in the South to abolish the poll tax and let everybody vote. Well, that doesn't, you know, smack too much of a dictator. He was a strange mixture. I guess some of the things he did he had to do to survive against the opposition which he had. Just as some of the things I did while I was governor in the turmoil, you know, that came with the desegregation decisions. I don't know, maybe Huey wished he didn't have to face some of those things, just as I wished I didn't have to face that, that it never occurred, that it would never have been necessary. That we could have made the same progress in harmony and peaceably and with a lot more good will than the way in which it was done. Or the way it's still going. I'd have to say that Huey Long's good overbalanced whatever there was bad about his administration. As an individual, I don't know. I wouldn't want to classify him as an individual. Whether he had desire for power that would have overcome the good that he was doing, I don't know. As I say, he wasn't permitted to live long enough to tell.

W.D.V.: You were saying that by the end of 1966, even though you thought of yourself as a liberal you were classified as a conservative. Now Rockefeller comes in. What does he do. . . ?

Faubus: He came as a liberal because to garner the votes to get elected he had to pick up what I didn't have. And actually, he's more conservative than myself. But he was known as a liberal. Then when Bumpers came along all those people left Rockefeller. In fact the biggest impetus for Bumpers' campaign in the primary came from the Rockefeller people. In nearly every county where Bumpers had an organization, it was made up, basically, of Rockefeller people.

W.D.V.: Democrats for Rockefeller.

Faubus: Yeah. The ones that had become Democrats for Rockefeller. So

they gave Bumpers enough impetus to get him into the run off. Or else we still, you know, might not have been hearing very much about him if he'd of been defeated then. But he contributed a lot to his own success. He was cool, collected. I remember the lady day--

J.B.: Well, what he did in 1970 is contribute to your defeat. Rockefeller, indirectly.

Faubus: Right, right.

W.D.V.: So he did have an impact on you.

Faubus: Yeah, but I don't think he was doing it intentionally. But he set in motion the forces which helped to overcome me in '70.

W.D.V.: And those forces are still strong.

Faubus: A great deal, yes. The same forces now that are the basis of Pryor's strength. And perhaps of Bumpers, although Bumpers is expanded beyond that. I think we'll have to say that. Well, for example, Bumpers voted for Rockefeller. David Pryor voted for Rockefeller. They were what you'd call Democrats for Rockefeller although not openly. So they had a natural affinity with these Democrats for Rockefeller, which for the most part are what you call liberals. More or less follow the Gazette line. The Arkansas Gazette line in state politics. Now Rockefeller had some very decided conservatives for him. Some businessmen. Like Lewis Hurley [?] down at Camden [?] or El Paso. And others across the state. Because these old conservative Republicans saw a chance for victory so they joined in enthusiastically with these new forces that came in. And the combination was what elected Rockefeller. The combination's what elected John Paul Hammerschmidt to Congress in this district. He defeated my friend Jim Trimble.

W.D.V.: So what he did in effect is take what essentially is a Faubus majority in the Democratic party and turn it into a minority. Because

you got what, about 35% of the vote in '70. About the same in '74. Does that represent kind of a hard core of people, amount of support for you?

Faubus: I think I got 36 or 37% in '70. About 33 this last time, but Bob Riley, of course, was getting a lot of my votes because he's a veteran and a Baptist.

W.D.V.: But anyway, it went from a majority to a minority.

Faubus: Yeah. But strangely enough, you find a lot of people who don't think that [we/they?] are voting with those people. Because they have been prejudiced against me by the adverse publicity which has gone on for almost two decades. In central Arkansas there isn't a single newspaper that will give me, you know, even a fair, decent shake.

W.D.V.: Why not?

Faubus: Well, some of it's personal and some of it's philosophical and some of it's based on lack of understanding by young editors who don't really know what the circumstances were when I became governor. They don't actually know what the difficulties were which we had to overcome to get the state started on its economic progress.

W.D.V.: Is it all basically tied to Little Rock?

Faubus: Basically. Not to the Little Rock situation, but to the adverse publicity that comes out of Little Rock. See, then when the Democrat became a pale shadow of the Gazette, why the Gazette became even more dominant and more prominent. Because, like many of my friends said, "Well, if I've got to have one or the other, I'll just take the pure, unadulterated kind. I'll take the Gazette. Why get the Democrat when it's just a pale shadow of the Gazette?" Then the North Little Rock Times, Jacksonville News, Courier, Pine Bluff Commercial. All out there in central Arkansas in your center of population. All of the same mind. All the same attitude editorially and through their news.

J.B.: Did they support you before the desegregation problem at Little Rock?

Faubus: The Gazette supported Cherry against me, basically, in '54, when I was a challenger. Then when Cherry hit me with the commonwealth college issue, Harry Ashmore, then, was sympathetic to me. But the Gazette as a paper, I'd say it's attitude was favorable to Gov Cherry. Then it supported me against Jim Johnson in '56. But then after '57 why it was totally against me, you see, all the way. I mean I could do nothing right. Nothing whatsoever, in any field. Now you know, you and I could disagree on certain issues, certain philosophical viewpoints, but I could still give you credit, say for being honest or for paying your debts or for being a good family man or helping the boy scouts. But see, I could do no good after I displeased the Gazette in '57. And the way they do that, they suppress the news of anything good that's done, you see. Like the children's colony, as judged at an international conference in Canada, is the finest on the North American continent. Well, that might make it the best in the world. I don't know about that, the facilities in other nations

[End of side of tape.]

--and I had to get that thing through the legislature with political muscle. I had a few people who were interested. You know, who had mental retardation in their family.

W.D.V.: Was the Gazette the only paper at that time, say '57, that was really solidly opposed to you?

Faubus: No, there were some that never were for me. Like the old conservative down at Pope.

W.D.V.: But this widespread opposition, when did that develop? All these papers. You say all the papers in central Arkansas won't give

you a break. When did that develop?

Faubus: Following '57. Not for sometime afterward. As these young, liberal people got positions as editors or owners. It was a gradual process. And see, they were raised on the Gazette. Many of them worked there. Then they went out and got papers of their own. And they were all thoroughly indoctrinated to begin with. And they never have checked the record to see if I did any good. They've never checked the record like they have charged me with a scandal of midnight pay raises, but they've never checked the record to see what it was. Not a dime of money was misused or lost. The pay raises were made by the highway director at the time under the wrong authority. Had to be rescinded. And then created great controversy. The controversy was created in the press. And then within two or three months the same raises had been granted because they were deserved by the highway workers. Nothing's ever said about that. And then they say pensions for pals. But they don't name anyone who's getting a pension, as they call it, or retirement benefit that shouldn't have it. And Rockefeller used that widely, you know, in his race against me. Which he lost. And then they used it in '66 when he defeated Jim Johnson. The Gazette used it, you know. But the law wasn't repealed. They examined it and found out it was all right, just and fair. originally got it, it was for the quasi judicial bodies. Workmen's compensation commission, commerce commission and public service commission. They all sit as judges but they don't have to be lawyers. Most of them are. Well, their retirement benefit was modeled after the retirement system for the judiciary. Chancellry and circuit judges. Members of the supreme court. Prosecuting attorneys. Except it's not nearly as lavish. Not nearly as good a retirement system. Not a thing in the world wrong with it. But see, they don't explain that.

And when the burden's left on me without any newspaper or without state wide press, why then you just continue to suffer for it. And they keep on drilling this. . . . It goes back to the old theory that Hitler had: if you'll tell a lie long enough, people will accept it.

J.B.: Governor, you said that Huey Long had to do things, in effect, do things that he perhaps didn't want to do, but in order to do everything that he wanted to get done. And you compared that with your experience in the desegregation crisis. I'm sure you've discussed this many times in interviews, but did you feel that you were misled by President Eisenhower in that situation?

Faubus: No. I felt very strongly that Eisenhower was a fair minded man of good will. And that if there were any opportunity for a settlement it would have to be between the president and myself on that basis. Therefore I did not take an attorney. Now I was misled in this respect. When I got there they had the Attorney General of the United States there and I was not informed of that nor led to believe that there would be any such. The only person that I had with me was my executive secretary, Arnold Sykes, who was not a well informed person on matters of that kind at all, and Brooks Hayes, who hadn't practiced law for years. Just been a member of Congress. I think he is a licensed attorney, not sure of that. Because I didn't think it could be settled by arguing over technical points or legal points. I felt it had to be some kind of understanding, a meeting of the minds, on the basis of good will, and that we both preferred harmony and peaceful methods rather than any other. And in that I do not believe I was mistaken about President Eisenhower. But Eisenhower was not a man of his own. He had to rely, as he always had in the military, on staff. Second nature to him. And I'm not sure that he had the independence to rely completely upon himself.

He was the most misinformed man about the situation in Arkansas and Little Rock than any man I've ever talked to about any subject with which he had to deal in the manner with which Eisenhower had to deal with this problem. In fact on the outside, Hagerty, visiting with Arnold Sykes, asked Arnold if school had begun yet in Little Rock! Heaven sake, that's what the controversy was all about! [laughter.] They had told Eisenhower nothing about the situation. I thought about it in this respect. That if I, as a state executive, had had a controversy with the authorities in a certain county, before I had a meeting with those county authorities or leaders to try to settle an issue like that, I would want all the information there was available about that situation. The personalities and attitudes of the leaders. What was the situation? What had they accomplished before? How near had they come to complying with what was required on the part of the state? Or in the case of the federal government, required on the part of the federal government of the state. He didn't have any of it. And at first he lectured me like a colonel, you know, talking to a second lieutenant. And I sat and listened until he got through. Then I said "Mr President, I have a lot of information about the situation which you may not be aware. And with your permission, I'd like to make it known to you." Then I began to tell him. For example, I was the first governor in all the South to put black men on the state Democratic central committee. Did that in 1954 before I was inaugurated. We desegregated all the institutions of higher learning without any fanfare, without any difficulty. This was accomplished by a meeting with the college presidents where they followed my advice. We had more integrated public schools in Arkansas alone than 11 other states combined that had a comparable problem. We had black people serving as school board members. Aldermen, in some cities like Hot Springs. We had

Negroes on boards and commissions. More in my administration than any other, although McMath had made some progress in this field. And then I went even farther, and we had black people in positions of administration and law enforcement. Like we had some black people in, I'll call it beverage control. Enforcement agents. Never held positions like that before. We had already desegregated all our transportation in Arkansas, and we had a bus system in Little Rock at the time, without any particular difficulty. And most businesses and eating establishments. There were a few that held out. Well, the president was amazed at this information. As most people in the nation could be right now. Because the press never took the trouble to tell anyone. In fact my son was attending an integrated college at the time, .

So when we went back out then, to join Brooks Hayes and Sherman Adams. We had four people in the conference. The president confirmed all of this from Brooks Hayes. So then he called in Brownell. I never shall forget talking to him. Oh yeah, we had black people also in the state committee of the Republican party as well as the Democratic party. Not in the Democratic party until, by my wishes, in 1954 after I was nominated. And I never shall forget the president talking to Attorney General Brownell. Called him Herb. And he began to tell him "Now the governor tells me" thus and so and he cited a number of these things. And Congressman Hayes here confirms it. "Why," he said, "they've even got Negroes on. . ." and he was trying to think of the party machinery central committee and he couldn't think of it. And he said "Oh, you know, the set up." Meaning the political set up. So then he said to him, said "Why can't you go down to Arkansas, or send one of your men and ask the court to postpone the implementation of this order for a certain amount of time and give things a chance to cool off and see

if this won't work out peacably." And I had told the president that in my opinion this was the only thing that might help to bring it about peacably, as it had in Charleston, Ft Smith, Bentonville, Fayetteville and the other schools across the state where integration had already been implemented. And the state supported institutions of higher learning as well. And Brownell--he was a cold faced individual, in my opinion, ruthless, unfair if he had to be to gain his ends, and motivated almost completely by politics. Maybe philosophically also, I don't know the man well enough to judge that. And he told the president, he said "it isn't legally possible. We just can't do it, Mr President. It's not possible at all." Well, it was a complete falsehood. An outright lie. Now the attorney general lied to the president in my presence either intentionally or through ignorance. And either one to me is inexcusable in the attorney general of the United States advising the president on a question that had become so widely known and disputed. So the president just yielded. Wasn't any more that could be done. I started to speak up and to argue, but I'm not an attorney. I didn't think I could dispute effectively from a legal standpoint with the attorney general of the United States. But just as soon as we got away I told Brooks Hayes, I said "Brooks, the attorney general is wrong. I have read the court order. And the Justice Department is invited in by the court to make any recommendations or suggestions that it sees fit." That was in the court order itself. But we didn't have one with us. Because I hadn't gone to argue the legalities of it. I'd gone to try to work out something with the president, in which I was very successful in laying the groundwork for it. And had him in the attitude of trying to help. Now I didn't tell him it would solve the problem, but I told him that was the only opportunity. Said "I can't assure you, Mr President, that this

if you will write the bill to authorize the governor to call an election in the district and let the people vote on what they want to do, then I'll sign it. And then if the occasion arises, I will use the authority which is given me." So that's the way the measure was passed and then when it came up in 1958 I didn't have the authority to close the schools. I had only the authority to call an election, which under the laws, an administrative function of the governor, he can be mandamus'd to do so, if he declined. So I called the election and the people voted, almost three to one to close the schools themselves rather than have them integrated under a federal court order.

J.B.: How about the decision in '57 to refuse admittance to black students?

Faubus: It was the only way to keep some black people from being killed. As one black leader said to me in this campaign, he said "Well, Gov Faubus, you probably saved more black lives than you did white lives."

W.D.V.: The assertion though is that you based that decision on the evidence from the school principal and him alone.

Faubus: Oh no. I had much evidence. But my first information came from the school principal, or superintendent rather.

W.D.V.: You were convinced that that evidence was hard and real?

Faubus: Yes. Wasn't any question about it. I confirmed it from too many sources. And I was trained in intelligence during the war and part of my duties, all during combat, was what you call military intelligence. So you learn something about how to evaluate. And then I spent a lot of time in the court system in the war. I was investigating officer for hundreds and hundreds of cases. I was a special court judge to hear cases. I was defense counsel for many many months and then I was trial judge advocate. Then I sat on a special court and then

I sat on general court. And then I was clerk of the courts here in my county for four years. And as clerk of the courts you sit there. . . . They had many trials and you hear the evidence presented by one side or the other and the arguments of counsel. So from all that experience, I know something about evaluating. You know, how to discount, and how to check something if you're not sure. Sometimes you get a piece of information that sounds fantastic and you think this can't be true and you check it out and find it is. Sometimes you get a piece of information sounds just as logical and reasonable and you just nearly conclude immediately that this is correct. But you check it out and find it isn't. I've done that many times in my experience in the military and as governor. So there's not any question in my mind, none whatsoever. They've been asking for police reports. I found a whole bunch of them the other day back there in the files that I had been unable to find.

W.D.V.: Did you have police reports, police intelligence reports on that? You never revealed that.

Faubus: No, because the people didn't want it.

W.D.V.: No, but I mean since that time you've never revealed that.

Faubus: No, I haven't. I think I'm going to write a book and reveal it then but I can reveal it anytime I want to now.

J.B.: Why do you think the mob ^{failed to} ~~never~~ materialized?

Faubus: When I placed the guard there?

J.B.: Right.

Faubus: Because they had no reason to come then. The state was doing what the mob. . . the results of the action which it took effected the same thing which the mob wanted to have effected. So then I had influence with them. And the police had influence with them. We could ask them to do something and they would. I never shall forget. . . we

had numbers of cases like this. Most of them are in the files, and written reports. Some of them were given to me verbally by the director of the state police. But we had one fellow who was rather aged and he was very radical and he felt very strongly. And he had about three weapons including a repeating rifle. There was a shotgun. I've forgotten what the other was. But he said "Hell, I'm old. I've lived my life. I don't want to see this happen. I'll just go down there and. . . it makes no difference if I get killed. I'll just see how many I can kill before they get me."

J.B.: He made these threats?

Faubus: So I learned about it and I sent the director of the state police to talk to him. He went and checked it out and came back and gave me a description of the man, his name and age and where he lived and everything and said "It's true." And said "He feels very strongly." And my police director was not a flighty man. He was pretty calm and collected and pretty level headed on these things. So I sent him back a second time and perhaps we had to go a third time. And we persuaded the man that that would not do at all, to leave it to the authorities. We were trying to protect the interests of the people and the will of the people as best we could. And any action on his part, you know, of this kind would just make matters worse and might even hurt our chances for success through legal and political means. And we persuaded him to give up his weapons. The police director took them from him. And brought them and kept them in charge. Then I could tell you of a house in [England,] Arkansas and the person who owned it. And on the first morning, when I had word, you know, of the caravans. . . well, they were groups, there weren't any big caravans noticable. People don't travel in noticable caravans, you know, when they're bent on activity of this

kind. But anyhow, the word had gotten out from Little Rock that I didn't want any violence, that this would hurt our chances, that it would hurt my efforts to protect the interests of the people. What was considered then the interests of the whole, the majority of the people. Which no doubt that was the case. So these people from eastern Arkansas--I could name the towns--they came there and they all had weapons in their cars. And this fellow persuaded them to unload them and they stacked them up on his back porch. There was a veritable arsenal, you know, when they got through. And then they went on to Little Rock. They went there but they were peaceable and they weren't going to cause any trouble and they didn't bring any weapons. And that's the reason it helped that way and that's the reason. . . . I wish you'd get the FBI to release that report they made. I think you'll find that they confirmed over and over, that actions were brought about through my influence and on my part of this kind which prevented widespread violence in Little Rock. But, you know, that report hasn't been released to this good day. And yet the judge called for it, it was on the bench. And the Gazette, if you go back and check it's files, you'll find editorials and news stories that were being released, you know, at such and such time. And this is going to show, you know, what Faubus is guilty of and so on and so on. But it hasn't been released yet, because they found, they confirmed these things. I'd like to see a copy of it myself. Now if it had been otherwise, it would have been on desk and he would have released it and the Gazette would have had it in the headlines for ever so long. Now I know what I'm telling you seems a little hard to accept because it's going against everything you've heard, isn't it?

J.B.: Not entirely.

Faubus: Well, most of it, anyhow.

J.B.: Did you realize at the time, though, that this would amount, in effect, to defiance of a court order and what would subsequently follow?

Faubus: No, see I never did defy a court order. When they issued a court order directly to me I evaded each time. I never was in defiance of a court order. Because I based my--

J.B.: Wasn't there a court order to admit the students?

Faubus: But I wasn't trying to keep them from integrating. If it had been peaceful they could have gone right on in. There wouldn't have been anything done more than there was at Charleston or Hot Springs, or Bentonville or any of these other places. I was hoping that it would be that way, but that wasn't the case. Course the Gazette and the ones sponsoring it were largely responsible for building it up because they had built up that they were all going to become heroes. They were going to solve, overnight, problem for the whole nation. And they were going to set the model and planning for all the rest of the state and all the rest of the South and all the rest of the whole nation. And when they began to proclaim this, that's when the other people got interested and alarmed. They said "Well, if it's going to effect us, down here in" Biglow or Elan⁴, or whatever "we better get interested." So you had the two forces coming together with Little Rock going to be the example for the whole state and the rest of the South. That's the reason the rest of the South got interested. Now if Virgil Blossom and Harry Ashmore and Hugh Patterson, and those people who wanted to be heroes, if they had subdued their ambition to be heroes and tried to attain the integration of the schools for what they believed was good and proper reasons and good and proper purpose, they might have succeeded. But I can show you some stories. . . . The reporters were there a week or ten days ahead of time before I ever knew anything about what I was

going to have to do to keep down the bloodshed and the killing. You remember when Dag Hammarskjöld went to the Belgium Congo on a peace mission? And the reporters were reporting it. Well, he took off for a certain city--I've forgotten now which one. So the newspaper reporters always anticipate what's going to. They're afraid someone else will beat them to it. So the dispatch came out that he had landed at the city and been received and everything was okay. Fact of the matter is he never did get there. The plane crashed and he was killed, you know, before he ever arrived at the city. So this reporter was trying to anticipate the landing and have his report out ahead of anyone else. Now that's what they were doing, and as the report went out from Little Rock, about Blossom and Ashmore and all these people who were pushing integration. Before the reporter learned of actually what was happening. And I have that in my files. If they had tried to accomplish, in the Little Rock schools, what we accomplished in the institute of higher learning, without any fanfare, without trying to be heroes, it might have worked and there might not have been any violence. But when they began to proclaim that this is going to set the example for all of Arkansas and all the South, then these other people got interested. My attitude had been, as I told the people in each district, "Now you stay out of that district. You take care of your school affairs in your own district. If they want to integrate Charleston, you stay out and let them alone." Now this wasn't easy to tell some of those radicals. Because they could see every step was taken, see, getting closer to them and they disagreed completely. But I prevailed on them. And I got them to do that. But then Blossom and Ashmore and Patterson made the mistake of setting up Little Rock as an example for everybody. So they got everybody interested. And I explained this to President Eisenhower. He

could understand that, you know. Sometimes in warfare you commit a platoon, and it runs into too much trouble so you commit a company. And then the other side commits some more forces so you commit a batallion. And the first thing you know you've got armies engaged. Becomes a focal point. A battle over some unimportant place where no major conflict was anticipated to begin with. And so the president could understand that. How Little Rock became a focal point because of this. And what angered Ashmore and Patterson so much, of course, was the fact that they didn't get to become heroes. They weren't successful. It became personal with them. It's still personal with Patterson who's the owner and publisher of the Gazette. And of course they lost, they claim, \$2 million in advertising and circulation because of their stand in the Little Rock thing and they blame me entirely for that. They'd have lost out if I never existed, because they were going against what was the overwhelming will of the people at the time.

J.B.: What would have happened if you had called out the guard, made a very strong statement that the court order would be followed and that those coming under the court order would be protected, and that anybody with any other ideas had better just stay off.

Faubus: I might have survived to the end of my term, but that would have been the last you would have heard of me.

J.B.: Have you seen Neil Pierce's book the Deep South States?

Faubus? No.

J.B.: He relates in there an interview he had with both with Gov Rockefeller and with you in which he says Gov Rockefeller related a meeting he had with you the day before school was scheduled to open. In which he said he pleaded with you not to do what you were going to do and that it would end up hurting the state and so forth. That the tone of it was

that you felt you had already been attacked as a racial moderate in '56. That you were going to be vulnerable on that issue. That there were more things you wanted to get done for the state of Arkansas as governor. In effect, that you really didn't see that you had much choice. I think Neil says that you basically denied the account by Gov Rockefeller.

Faubus: No, the last part you stated is basically true. The misinterpretation is that he was wanting me to do just what you suggested in your former question: that I uphold the federal court order. Well, that's the first time in the history of the republic that the federal authority had ever asked a state to enforce its own court order. If it's a narcotics violation they have narcotics agents. IRS agents and the FBI. But here, you see, was ^{Cowardice} ~~Calidice~~ [?] and the complete abdication of responsibility on the part of the federal authorities. But they could sit back and issue a court order that was going to cause literally hell and destroy many people, economically and politically. And they would just sit back and fold their hands and let somebody else reap the storm. Well, hell, it was their storm. A bunch of goddamn cowards for not coming in in the beginning and say "This is a federal court order. We're going to have federal authorities here to see to it that it's obeyed and enforced." Then I wouldn't have been involved. Could have left it alone. But they said no. I called the attorney general's office, asked to speak to him or to someone who could speak for him. Asked him to send a representative to Little Rock. They sent a representative to Little Rock. I conferred with him in my office. And he just said "Governor, we can't do anything until we find a body." Well, that's a legal term, doesn't mean that you have to have a dead body. But in this case it could have been literally true. So they wanted me to do their dirty work. And commit political suicide. Which is what it would

have been. I didn't know it at that time, but that's what it would have been when you look back at it in perspective. Why it was the most cowardly action I've ever seen on the part of responsible individuals. Leave it to us. It would be like a state law which doesn't effect a city like it has city ordinances. Well, you don't call on your aldermen and your city marshall to enforce laws that are state laws. That's the duty of your sheriff, your prosecuting attorney and your state officials. So it would be like us setting up an order, say, for a city that was just going to tear that city apart and then say to the city authorities "Now you all got to handle this." Well, they didn't create it. It wasn't their problem. And the whole city might be, say, 90% opposed to it as well as the officials themselves. But we still sit back and say we can't do anything about it, ma'am. You all have to take care of it. Now I never did do that when I was governor. If it was the state responsibility I went in and assumed state responsibility. And I say to the city authorities "Well, this isn't your problem. Won't ask you to get involved. If you want to help, be fine, but we'll take care of it."

W.D.V.: You said that before 1957 you actively pursued a policy of bringing blacks into the administration and the political party and so on.

Faubus: Yes. Arkansas was known as the most liberal state in the South at that point in time.

W.D.V.: Was the reaction of what happened at Little Rock in '57, did that in any way change your philosophy or ideas about integration or about. . . .?

Faubus: No, not about these other things. Because we continued the very same things. Now it got--

W.D.V.: It must have had some reaction on you, what happened.

Faubus: No, I don't think it did in my attitude because I tried very hard not to permit it to. After all, just because you get in a controversy with somebody--in this case it involved white and black--that doesn't mean that your good black citizens don't deserve the same consideration they always deserved. Or that they shouldn't have opportunities to do well, make progress, just the same as they did before. This did effect a lot of people and it effected the Democratic party in such a way that the very next time it came up--I guess in '60--they threw all the blacks off the state central committee. And I couldn't of kept them on if I'd tried. Because they said "Now, we did this before for you, just a special thing. We adopted the rule to add six more members at large and then we took the people you recommended, all of whom were blacks. Now then, if they get a place on the committee they're going to earn it just like we do." You know, they come up through the ranks, official in a local area and then regional. And there were some who still survived as delegates and came to the conventions. We had black people at each Democratic convention as long as I was governor. And they were always welcome and there were no difficulties. But the party leaders, as a whole, said "No more special consideration. They're asking for equal treatment, so equal treatment they're going to get." You know, if they can earn it and come up through the ranks and win enough votes to get the place, well and good, but we're not going to just put them on, you know, because you say so or because they're black. So it did have that effect, but it wasn't appreciable.

W.D.V.: It didn't basically change your attitude toward blacks and hasn't?

Faubus: No. I believe you can check. . . . I'd like to refer you to a man if you can find him and check with him on that. I believe he'll verify what I'm saying. And that's Lawrence Davis, the president of

AM&M College at Pine Bluff until he retired. Another one was a black man named Martin, from Hot Springs, who was an alderman over there at one time. Elected. In Hot Springs. To the city council. I think that Miss Daisy Bates and L.C. Bates, her husband, will also tell you that they continued to make a great deal of progress. In fact they were making great progress. . . .

W.D.V.: Yeah, they're quoted as saying--

Faubus: . . . as my administration ended. The fact of the matter, Mr Bates came into the office one day with a Mr Pierce, who was head of the Negro Farm Bureau. The Negro. . . black. . . they don't like Negro anymore but that's what. . . you know, they change so often you can't keep up so if I saw something that's offensive, please take it out. And I believe Mr Atchison or Patterson--I can't think which is the name-- head of the Negro teachers organization. And in early 1966 they came into my office for a conference. It had been my experience and it is yet, in most cases, with political leaders that black people come in and sit down and confer. . . We'd say "Now if you decide to do so and so we'd be glad to consider your case. And we'll get together and we'll decide." They didn't say anything like this. The three of them sat there and said "We've come to urge you to run for re-election. We pledge you unequivocally our support." I mean there wasn't any hesitation, there wasn't any we'll consider or if or ands or anything. That's '66. And I said "Well, I appreciate this, gentlemen, but I really don't think I'm going to run anymore." And then I remember asking Mr Bates. . . and he's a slow, methodical fellow and he'd have. . . you know, he was sitting over there and he'd rub his hands on his knees like that. He's slow spoken, calm. And I never found him nothing but reasonable. I remember asking him a question. I said "If I don't run

this time, Mr Bates, what in your opinion will your people do?" And he said "Well, Mr Governor, it's my opinion that my people will support a man that will probably not be in the best interest of Arkansas." And he had reference to Mr Rockefeller. Because not many black people could identify with Rockefeller. He's rich and most of them are poor, like myself. Most of them are working people and he's had his handed to him. Not that he wasn't a good man and a worker himself. I'm not criticizing him, I'm just evaluating a situation, a practical situation. Which turned out that Mr Bates was right. Then about a week later I made a tour of southeast Arkansas. I had so many invitations that you couldn't run down here for one, you know, and back and then go to another section for a while and back. And I'd try to get them if they had affairs that the dates were flexible, to set them in a one or two day period and then with one trip I'd make three or four of these and then come back, you see. So senator Merrill Peterson called me from Dumas and said "the delegation wants to meet with you when you come through here. So if you can tell me when you're coming through I'll have them here at the proper time so we won't delay you very much." I didn't ask him who it was or what it was about. I said "Very well, I'll be glad to meet with them." And so when I got there it was a number of black people. There were two or three Negro black ministers. One or two others who were not. And we went in there a private room that Mr Peterson gave us for a conference. So what they wanted to show me was that Rockefeller was already organizing and they had already been invited to a breakfast in Little Rock. You had to sign up your name and address and that's how they were getting their mailing list ready for the leaders, and so on. They didn't go, because they knew this. And already through that area had come a black man on a payroll. Good pay. Had a nice business card,

you know. Regional representative of the Republican party. I don't remember the exact words, just what it was. His name and telephone number and address. Started working, of course, for Mr Rockefeller. Started organizing for the Republican campaign. And they wanted me to be aware of this and said "Now, the Democrats should be doing something. The Democrats should have someone out here contacting us and organizing." I mean these black people were ready to support me and help me. And I said "Well, I agree with you. There should be some activity on the part of the Democratic party and we've got to meet this challenge of this Rockefeller or he's going to, you know, have a good chance to win." And I said "I'll carry the message back to the party leaders and I'll recommend that they do something. Raise some funds, hire some people and put them out to work." Then one of them asked what I was going to do and I said "Well, I'll recommend this to the Democratic leaders, but I don't think I'm going to run anymore." And one of these [big, grown?] ministers sat back and looked at me just as straight and he said "Governor, you concern me." I said "Why?" He said "If you don't run, you're going to turn this state over to Mr Rockefeller. That just as sure as I'm sitting here. And we want you to run." I said "Well, I appreciate it very much but I don't think that I am." Which of course I didn't and it was only about a week or ten days later that I made my announcement that I wasn't going to run. But now that's some experience with the black people because integration was then going forward peacefully. It hadn't reached the extent to which it has now. The problems hadn't arisen which have arisen now. Like in the schools in Little Rock. They're becoming a shambles. They're. . . well, I can't think of a word hardly suitable, strong enough to describe the conditions in the Little Rock schools at the present time. And most people believe that

a great deal of it's due to the forcible integration and the busing. But none of that was happening then. The integration went forward was peaceable, was limited, and good progress was being made. At least harmony was being maintained. And good progress was being made in other fields. Negro teachers' salaries going up. Welfare program was fine. We initiated the so-called poverty programs under Johnson. They were the most successful in Arkansas that they were in any state in the union. Head start. Youth employment. Green Thumb. Job Corps camps. First one in the nation was set up in Arkansas. The governor had the veto power over those, you remember. Some governors didn't permit them to come into their states at all. That was a provision of the act when it was enacted by Congress--that a governor could reject them and they could not be established. But I accepted them.

W.D.V.: --but you've been seen as a sort of anti-black, anti-integration symbol. How do you feel about that?

Faubus: I think it's false. And I think it's all due to the Arkansas Gazette and the central Arkansas press continuing to hammer at an issue which they know they can hurt me with with certain blocs of people, including the black people and the liberals.

W.D.V.: But didn't you actually campaign on an anti-busing platform in part?

Faubus: No, it had never come up when I was governor before.

J.B.: No, I say in 1970.

Faubus: Oh yeah. I'm opposed to it now. I think it's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard in my life. Three quarters of a million dollars of unnecessary expense in Little Rock, which could go to increased teachers' salaries, buy training aids for children, have better school facilities, or whatever.

J.B.: But you wouldn't have desegregated schools.

Faubus: Well, the basis of the first suit in Little Rock was that they lived in this region, therefore they should be permitted to go to this school in this region. Neighborhood school complex. That was the basis of the suit that brought about this crisis. So now it's completely reversed.

J.B.: -- the Supreme Court decision since that time, which have made changes in the interpretation of what the 14th Amendment requires and I think the Alexander case [unclear] achieve the greatest degree of desegregation.

Faubus: I think all that's beyond the Constitution and beyond the intent of Congress even, at the time. But then if the president doesn't sort of halt the courts. . . . If the chief executive, whoever he is, of whatever party, if he continues to carry out any order of a federal court, no matter how illegal, then they have complete authority. They can rule. If you set up a judicial dictatorship. And it's not just in this field. In the field of, say, law and order, their interpretations of say legal rights, individual rights of criminals.

J.B.: You said that. . . . Is there a way in which a Supreme Court decision can be illegal?

Faubus: Sure, any time it goes beyond the Constitution or the law of Congress, it's illegal.

J.B.: Don't they have the right. . . doesn't final jurisdiction rest with them to determine what the Constitution requires?

Faubus: Well then you're going to destroy the balance of powers of the government, if you give them supreme authority over the other branches.

J.B.: Haven't they had that for almost 200 years?

Faubus: No. They've held it for about the last 20 years.

J.B.: [Something about Marbury vs Madison.]

W.D.V.: You said that had you enforced that court order in 1957 it would have been political suicide.

Faubus: I never would have been heard of again.

W.D.V.: Did the action that you take, did that insure your re-election for a third term?

Faubus: No. I think. . . I always have thought and still feel and now of course it will be a matter of speculation and controversy .

But I felt I could win a third term if this never had come up. Because we had done so much to move the state forward. I'll give you one--

[End of tape. End of interview.]