

INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 23, 1983
INTERVIEWEE: CHRIS DIXIE
INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette
PLACE: Mr. Dixie's office, Houston, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let's go ahead and start now, and let's talk about 1948 first. Before we turned on the tape you were discussing LBJ and the Taft-Hartley issue in the 1948 Senate race.

D: Well, I've told you. Is that on your record?

G: No. No. That's why I wanted to--

D: Well, one of the things we noticed particularly about him was that he disassociated himself from Franklin Roosevelt and went about the state in the Johnson City Windmill bragging about his vote for the Taft-Hartley Act, and criticizing Coke Stevenson for accepting organized labor's endorsement. That would be the AFL endorsement at that time, the state AFL endorsement meeting in Fort Worth, I believe. As a matter of fact, we all understood that Lyndon, by that time, was a Washington veteran and he had his connection with the lobbyists and leaders of organized labor and they all wanted him and not Coke Stevenson, in spite of his public posture.

G: Any particular conversations with any national labor leaders that you remember?

D: No, but I vividly remember that the local CIO leaders had a meeting with Lyndon down here after he got elected to the Senate, which I

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attended as their lawyer even then. They tried to talk to him about some of his votes and so forth, and his Taft-Hartley vote. He explained that he didn't know much about Taft-Hartley, that he was really concerned about John L. Lewis and that was the reason for his votes. And they talked to him about some of his other votes which were getting increasingly conservative. The highlight of that meeting in my mind was that as we all stood up to go, Lyndon walked over to me and put his arm around my shoulder. He did that because he knew me to be the favorite young lawyer of the CIO crowd. And he said, "I would like to be the kind of a senator you want me to be, but you haven't got the votes." And it was just as straightforward, as simple as that. Later on, the CIO leaders, and I with them, repaired to Kelly's restaurant and talked about the meeting, and the consensus there was that the son of a bitch was right, we didn't have the votes. That's what I remember about that. That was either right before or right after he ran for Senate. I'm trying to [remember]--it must have been right before, that he was lining up his votes.

G: Do you recall who else was there?

D: John Crossland, who was Mr. CIO, the leader of the oil workers. Jim Ward, who was the leader of the steelworkers at that time, he's also deceased. But that's all I remember specifically who were present at that time.

G: Did LBJ bring anyone with him to that meeting?

D: No. Not that I remember.

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So that was about it. That didn't diminish anybody's support for LBJ as against Coke Stevenson. It would be hard for LBJ to commit enough sins in our eyes to make him less desirable than Coke Stevenson. That's almost by definition. At that time the blacks were newly enfranchised and they rallied, those of them who had enfranchised themselves and taken part in the electoral process. They were eagerly in support of LBJ, although of course they didn't have much voting power by that time. Their strength came later. We can take note of that as we go along.

So at this moment I don't remember anything between then and the 1956 convention. I remember that Lyndon was continuing to vote a conservative line. He was growing in the Senate, of course. There was a time when Helen Gahagan Douglas came through Houston and met with a group of us liberals, and we complained about Lyndon bitterly to her. But she just patiently explained to us that Lyndon was wonderful and we just didn't understand the situation. And that Lyndon was doing what he had to do to get re-elected.

G: Did she indicate that he was doing things perhaps to advance the liberal cause that were not publicly known? She must have had some basis for this notion. She herself was rather liberal, wasn't she?

D: Well, the great word about Lyndon during the early 1950s, which was when she must have come through, was that Lyndon had lined up the censure vote against Joe McCarthy. Although Lyndon had not taken a public position, he let others challenge Joe McCarthy, finally Ike

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Eisenhower. But Lyndon did take credit for lining up a completely solid Democratic vote in favor of censure.

G: Before we turned on the tape you also mentioned 1952 and Sam Rayburn's role in that in the Stevenson campaign.

D: That's right. Lyndon did not take very much of a forward position in the Adlai Stevenson campaign. I believe he remained nominally loyal, and it was Sam Rayburn that came down here in the last hours of the presidential campaign with printed-up Democratic material that he shipped all over Texas to what he thought were the Democratic functionaries, the county chairmen, the precinct chairmen and so forth. But by that time, they were mostly disloyal to the Democratic Party. There had been a period going back to the 1940s in which the Texas Regulars, and subsequently Allan Shivers, had ensconced persons disloyal to the national Democratic Party in almost all the areas of Democratic officialdom in this state. You're familiar with that?

G: Yes.

D: So there was no Democratic Party that Sam Rayburn could rally, and Adlai went down to defeat.

G: Were you involved at all in the creation of the alternative Democratic machinery, that Democratic Advisory Council that was set up after the 1952 defeat?

D: Not personally, but my law partner, who was then Arthur Combs, was active in that. I was still fairly young at that time. I'm going to take that back, that would be my former law partner at that time. I was not personally active in that movement though. But a lot of the

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old-line liberals in Texas were. Jimmie Allred was a part of that, if my memory is correct, and J. R. Parten and people of that kind.

G: Did the CIO play a role?

D: It played a role, but it wasn't a very popular associate to have around in those times.

G: It seems to me that there was in that group a component of traditional liberals like J. R. Parten, Byron Skelton, on the one hand, and a labor element as well that was much more of a labor-oriented group rather than just generally a liberal group.

D: Refresh my memory a little bit. Who were the labor people that took part in that?

G: Well, let's see. How about Ed Ball?

D: Yes, he was attached to it, you know, as one of the junior participants. He worked at it. I don't remember the Democratic advisory group being very much of an effective group.

G: How did your involvement in the 1956 political fight between Johnson and Shivers begin? Had you been active in Frankie Randolph's effort to organize the Harris County Democrats?

D: Oh, yes. I had been one of the original organizers of the Harris County Democrats. That happened in March of 1953. It started in the last of 1952. As a matter of fact, Frankie didn't come along until a year or two later.

G: Oh, really?

D: Oh, yes. That's right. But how did I become involved? I became involved in the struggles between Ralph Yarborough and Allan Shivers,

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and it was no problem at all to continue fighting against Shivers for any of us of the liberal coloration. How did I get involved? I was involved intimately in the 1952 and 1954 and 1956 Yarborough races for governor, and in the 1957 race for the special election for the Senate. So in 1956, Lyndon came down here with presidential ambitions and we were in support of him to a certain extent. But his basic approach to the state Democratic Party was to oust just Shivers and a few of his closest political allies, but to leave in charge of the State [Democratic] Executive Committee in the key Democratic places, the ultraconservatives who had served under Shivers and so forth. It was Johnson's view that those people could work with him just as well as they could with Shivers. He wasn't bothered one bit at that time whether or not they were too conservative to really be in step with the national Democratic Party. So when we got to the [May] 1956 [state] convention, we found the liberals had a majority on a legitimate basis.

G: How did you discover that? Was there one vote that tested that issue or demonstrated it?

D: Well, it was demonstrated late in the convention when the seated delegations took their place, and the election of the national committeewoman took place. Lyndon had to pull Mrs. Lloyd Bentsen, I believe it was, out of the race because Frankie Randolph had so much of a majority that it was no contest. But Lyndon held the disputed loyal delegations out of the convention as long as he could, consistent with his needs to present a clean image in the national convention that was

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about to start in which he was going to be a prominent candidate for higher attention.

G: Well, I want you to go into this in some detail, but let me ask you to retrace your steps first of all, and if you can, recall any of the details of that genesis of the Harris County Democrats and how the organization began. You said back in late 1952 or early 1953.

D: After the defeat of Adlai Stevenson we all knew that there was no Democratic Party in Texas, so we got people together who thought in terms of Roosevelt, and we resolved to organize the loyal Democratic faction, loyal to the national party, unwilling to walk out and bolt the national candidate.

G: Was this a movement that was at the county level, or was it at all statewide when you were involved?

D: It was at the county level in the beginning.

G: Was it? Okay.

D: It was at the county level.

G: Was it primarily labor or was it--?

D: No, it was liberals, too. There was Bob Eckhardt, there was J. Edwin Smith, there was Bernice Smith [?]. There were just a lot of old-line liberals around town that participated. We all started tithing to the organization. I began putting in ten dollars a month, I vividly remember, in 1952. That contribution continued without interruption, except for increases, for ten or twenty years, no change at all. That's how the organization started. Some of the unions contributed.

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But the Harris County Democrats were stimulated a whole lot by Ralph Yarborough. He had lost the 1952 election, and he figured out that the Baptist Church members and the Masons were not going to make him the governor. They had all abandoned him in the contest with Shivers, and so he began to run for governor by coming down here on a milk run from Austin to Harris County, and he was making speeches to every precinct group we could get back. Ralph would come down here if he could only talk to ten people. He plugged the Harris County Democrats and we plugged Ralph, and pretty soon we had an organization going that was a significant political thing.

You bear in mind that at that time there was a gradual withdrawal of the Dixiecrat types toward the Republican Party. Ike was in office. It wasn't a strong movement, but it was somewhat--there was no other organization in the Democratic Party for a while there except the Harris County Democrats. We considered that we officially arrived in 1954 when Shivers barely beat Ralph Yarborough on a statewide basis, but lost Harris County to Yarborough by 25,000. And Shivers let out a scream that the trouble was that radical group in Harris County. We were pleased.

G: How did Mrs. Randolph become involved with the Harris County Democrats, do you recall?

D: I've often wondered about that, and I don't know the answer to it. But she brought into the organization a fierce determination. She was a strong-willed woman, and she had financial resources. She came to the office as a full-time volunteer and she brought a paid secretary

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or two with her. She went to precinct meetings time after time, and she literally built the organization bigger than ever with her own two hands and her own financial resources. I still remember her coming to work in a chauffeur-driven fancy car, and at five-thirty or six every evening the chauffeur would come get her and take her out to the River Oaks area for supper with her family. What made her that way, I don't know, except that she was so strong willed and at some point in her life she abandoned the Junior League idea of how to do good in this world and got into this political thing. She was a staunch supporter of Ralph Yarborough's, and she did develop an enormous loathing for Lyndon.

G: Did she have any business connections that would have been advanced by her association with organized labor or the liberal movement?

D: I don't think so. Her inheritance was, as I understood it, the Carter Lumber Company fortune up in East Texas. Her husband was a banker. Not only do I not think she advanced any business interests, I think she could have never come to us, and she could have never done what she did except as between Mr. Randolph and Mrs. Randolph, the leader and the dominant party was the Mrs. That's all. That's all.

G: Did he share her philosophies, do you know?

D: Not that I know of, but he tolerated. Haven't you talked any with her daughters or granddaughters around here? Well, they're in Houston.

G: Good.

D: If they're important to you.

G: They are, or she is.

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D: So that was the story of Mrs. Randolph. How or why she got in that frame of mind, I don't know.

G: Did her animosity toward LBJ stem from that national committeewoman election or did it precede that, do you recall?

D: Well, it could have well stemmed from that. I'm not aware that she had any contact with Lyndon before that. She might have.

G: There was some indication that LBJ even attempted to substitute Kathleen Voigt for Frankie Randolph in that, as the lesser of two evils.

D: To split our vote?

G: Yes.

D: Yes. It didn't work.

G: Do you remember any of that?

D: It just came up at the last moment during a long hard day.

G: Yes. Now there was also an indication that that vote came up when the liberal factions at the convention were very organized and there, and a lot of the more conservative groups had left the convention for one reason or another. Do you think that that was at all a factor?

D: That's not my memory.

G: Okay.

D: My memory is that everybody stayed there, and there was discipline on both sides. Raymond Buck was the permanent chairman of the convention, and he turned out to have a lot of respect for himself and for his own reputation because he did not run a crooked convention, nor did he allow anybody to be counted out. The convention started in the

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late afternoon, I vividly remember a great big guy from rural Texas getting up and demanding that the permanent delegations be seated, that the loyal Democrats were on the outside cooling their heels. And he created such a stir among the loyal Democrat persons inside, that they yielded and brought those delegations in and seated them right then and there. From there on, it was no contest insofar as who was going to win.

G: Was that a decision that Buck made? Did he make the decision to bring them in and seat them or was that a collective decision, do you recall?

D: I think it was Lyndon's decision to bring them in and seat them, because he didn't want the scandal of completely keeping the loyal Democrats out when he was on his way to a national convention. Now it was his plan to slip through a vote for the national committeeman and committeewoman while the temporary roll was still seated instead of permanent. I'm persuaded about that. And they tried a couple of shenanigans to see if they could do that smoothly, and it didn't work and Raymond Buck ran it straight.

Some kind of a report of a committee came out that was designed to authorize a vote on those offices right now, and somebody from backstage came around and alerted me. I was on the floor as the floor leader for the Harris County Democrat delegation, and I got up on a point of information and I asked whether that report meant that the permanent officers were going to be elected before the permanent roll was seated. John Singleton, the substitute chairman, was in the chair

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and I can still see how flustered he was. He swung around and walked backstage and conferred with Raymond Buck, and Raymond Buck came up to the rostrum and said, "No, that's not what that means. The permanent officers will be elected on the basis of the permanent roll." I said, "Thank you. We rely on you, Mr. Chairman," and that was the end of that. So they were trying that, but we had the word. They were trying that.

Lyndon wanted what he wanted in Texas, but he didn't want to appear to be too rough in the May convention. He got plenty rough and mean and ugly in the September convention at Fort Worth, but then after all, the Democratic National Convention was over, and he was not on the ticket and he wasn't too concerned about what the national Democrats thought at that time.

G: Did he at all want to work out a deal with the liberal Democrats here in Texas that he would name the national Democratic committeeman and committeewoman and let them select the state executive committee, and when they wouldn't buy that he tried to influence the other outcome?

D: I don't remember that point. I can't help you.

G: You don't remember any negotiations toward a deal there?

D: I really don't think so.

G: Now, let me ask you, how much do you feel that defeat of the Shivers forces in the precinct elections and in the county elections, the conventions rather, was the result of LBJ's organization? Or was it labor's organization, the liberal Democrats?

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D: Well, in Harris County there was a little coordination between the Harris County Democrat group and the LBJ supporters and retainers to make a majority. But the political strength in that state convention was this--

(Interruption)

D: --Harris County had by far the largest delegation--

(Interruption)

G: Let me ask you to just repeat that last part.

D: Okay. I vividly remember that the power blocs were balanced. The Harris County delegation had about 1100 votes, the figure comes back to me. And Dallas and the next largest delegation, which were the Shivers delegations, between them had about 1100 votes. And that left the power blocs balanced and the choice for the first time up to the smaller counties and communities. And of course Shivers and Lyndon both had good contacts all over the state because they had both recently run for statewide office.

G: Were there any other issues at that May convention? Did you get into whether or not the state executive committee should be replaced then as opposed to later, perhaps in the fall?

D: Oh, absolutely. That was the number-one issue at the start of the convention. Lyndon had to use Sam Rayburn. Sam Rayburn got up there and pulled out all the stops. He laid his reputation and his loyal credentials on the line for the proposition that we've got to keep these people where they are and not disturb them. And on the basis of his appeal, plus the work by Lyndon's lieutenants, they were able

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early in the day to get a vote not to replace the state executive committee.

G: Why did Rayburn take that position, do you know?

D: As an accommodation to Lyndon.

G: Do you think so?

D: Of course. Rayburn believed, like so many do, that the Democratic Party is for everybody. He saw no reason to displace those conservatives. He wanted to wean them away from disloyals like Shivers.

G: Was there any legal question involved, whether or not they could be replaced legally at that point?

D: Lyndon made that argument, but there was nothing to it. The reason there was nothing to it is because those state executive committee people would not get on the stand and state under oath that they were loyal to the Democratic Party. To the contrary, their very principles were to scuttle the Democratic Party and let the Republicans win.

G: In retrospect, was anything gained by leaving them on the committee, leaving the committee intact? What was the effect of that decision to keep them?

D: Well, the effect of that decision was to keep the loyal Democratic elements out of active control of the party. The party was more manageable at that time.

G: I noticed that when they were replaced there were quite a few liberals on there at that--

(Interruption)

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D: And I do think that this is important to remember, that the May 1956 convention was the first convention which was not an Indian war dance against black people, and in which black people were treated with civility and equality. That's the very first time.

G: Seated as delegates?

D: Seated as delegates and as participants in the right to speak and in the right to negotiate and no speeches against them. Why, we had bloodcurdling speeches in our state caucuses and in our county and state conventions against the menace of the blacks. The horrible Supreme Court decision opening the Democratic Party to the blacks, the horrible decision giving blacks the right to buy property, notwithstanding restrictive covenants and things of that kind. Then Brown v. Kansas [Board of Education of Topeka] came out about that time for the integration of the schools. That's one thing Lyndon did that was constructive, and that is he dampened that out. He was on the liberal side about that.

G: Can you relate that change, the blacks being included in the convention, to anything specific that he did or was it just a general position that he took? Did he take any specific measures to ensure that that happened?

D: Well, Lyndon did so many things quietly, and that's one of the things he did quietly. There wasn't any specific action that I heard of.

(Interruption)

When the blacks got the right to participate in the party conventions, we went to the first Harris County convention in Houston, which was

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stage managed by the conservatives, and what did we find in there but that the black delegates had to sit in the back and the white delegates were to sit in the front. Then two years later, the liberals were in charge of the Harris County Democratic convention, and we ramroded through a resolution that from now on all precinct delegations would be seated consecutively by number in order to mix them up. Now we heard speeches about the restrictive covenants and all those other horror stories, none of that took place in the Dallas convention in May 1956. It was just a situation where all the Democrats were just simply accepted.

G: Let me ask you about the national convention. Did you go to that?

D: No.

G: Did you have any information or insights on LBJ's favorite son candidacy at the national convention?

D: No. It's my impression that it was not a significant thing.

G: Okay. Then we come to September and the fall convention. Let me ask you to recount your reminiscences of that.

D: Well, I'm sorry, I was not at the September convention in Fort Worth. The reason for that was that I was the lawyer for the steelworkers union and there was a big strike at the Lone Star Steel Company up in East Texas and I had to be present to tend to that. So I missed that convention altogether. But it was pretty horrible, from the standpoint of manhandling liberal delegations to make them agree to the terms that Lyndon wanted. It was accompanied by strong-arm methods,

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Texas Rangers with guns standing around in an ominous attitude.

Golly, it was almost unbelievable.

So by that time the so-called liberal movement was strong enough to get together at Austin to organize the DOT, Democrats of Texas. You've heard about that. One of our first resolutions up there was directed toward the subject of vote stealing, and we were referring to what had happened at Fort Worth. Dr. Byron Abernethy made a speech against gun-toting Texas Rangers intimidating Democratic conclaves, and sure enough, it wasn't long before the good Doctor was fired. You know that story, too.

(Interruption)

It [the DOT] wasn't an outgrowth, it supplanted it. The Democratic Advisory Council just didn't amount to very much. Let's see, it possibly had a place for as long as Shivers was in the saddle in the official Democratic Party. But the DOT was an outgrowth of the Fort Worth convention and the growing self-awareness of the liberal elements around the state. The AFL-CIO had merged a year or two before that, and that removed an obstacle to unity. The blacks were gradually increasing their strength and participation. All of the Democratic elements were coalescing. So it was the business of Lyndon to dismantle that organization. Jake Pickle, who was working for Lyndon at that time, or with Lyndon at that time, went around the state telling the Democrats that we don't need something like DOT now because Shivers is gone. We don't need that. And they did, of course, prevent this from growing very much.

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G: Do you think that LBJ feared liberal control of the convention because he felt that--

(Interruption)

D: Do I think that Lyndon did what he did at Fort Worth because he thought Yarborough would take over? No, I don't think so. I think that Yarborough, by that time, had not been elected to public office, had he?

G: Well, no, he'd lost narrowly to Price Daniel.

D: Price Daniel, that's right. No, Lyndon wanted to run it because he had plans for the future. After all, it wasn't very much later till he made it on the Democratic ticket as vice president.

G: Did he try to make peace with the liberals after the September convention?

D: Well, he tried to gather us in one by one in his quest for the Democratic nomination in 1960, and this will be a little bit of an interesting story for you. I received a long distance call from Arthur Goldberg, my general counsel, and he said, "Chris, I've had an operation and I can't come see you. Can you come see me?" and I said, "Why, of course. What kind of a question is that?" And I got on the airplane and went up to see Arthur without even asking him what it was about. He was the general counsel of the steelworkers and I was the district counsel.

When I got up there I discovered that he called me up there to line me up to become a part of Lyndon Johnson's organization, and he told me, "Lyndon is over at his office waiting for you now. Will you

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go with me?" I politely but firmly declined, and I just told Arthur that we didn't intend to support Lyndon down in Texas because we knew too much about him and he wasn't liberal enough for us. Then, after Arthur was sure that he had carried out his mission and that I would not go and that he could truthfully report that he had failed to make me go, then he said, "Confidentially, I'm supporting Jack Kennedy, who is the logical one," and so forth. "Will you line up with Jack Kennedy?" But you know, there were seven Democratic candidates, potentials and hopefuls at that time. Lyndon was number seven at the bottom as far as we were concerned, but Jack Kennedy was number six, next to the bottom. There were other people much more acceptable to us, like Adlai or Hubert Humphrey or something. We just weren't willing to settle for these so-so liberals.

G: How would LBJ influence Arthur Goldberg to do that for him or to at least try to persuade you to help him?

D: Oh, that's no problem at all. Lyndon, by that time, was majority leader of the Senate, and he had all the labor legislation where he could corral it or let it get through. The Landrum-Griffin bill was a hot issue up there. Lyndon was riding high. That's the way he reached a lot of people. But he went to that much trouble to line up everybody in his camp. He was a relentless enlister and organizer, and he went to neutralize what he thought was the enemy.

G: Did he ever try to neutralize Frankie Randolph?

D: Well, I doubt if he ever even tried after 1956 because she was too independent and could not be controlled. Now he thought that he could

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reach me by reaching my retainer, but I hadn't planned my life that way. It was in later years that Lyndon tried a different tack. When he was the vice president, my wife Katie and I were in Washington to visit Texas friends and have a good time, and when we arrived at the hotel at two o'clock in the morning, the room clerk was all atwitter because the Vice President wanted to talk to me. Katie said, "The Vice President of what?" "The United States."

Well, the next day Lyndon took Katie and me out on personal escort for a good part of the day. It seems to me now that it was not less than half the day and maybe three-fourths of the day. He took us to the White House, he took us around in limousines, he took us to the Senate and opened it up and put Katie up in the Speaker's chair and authorized her to call the Senate to order. Katie banged the gavel and called the Senate to order and announced that we would hear from Texas first and Lyndon clapped his hands enthusiastically. He was lining me up again, this time by persuasion. On that occasion he told me, "I want to tell you something that's the gospel truth. You're going to have a hard time believing it. John Connally," he said, "didn't even ask me about announcing for governor, and I was really upset about it." And I said, "I don't blame you." (Laughter) Of course I didn't believe him. Yes, he was quite a guy.

G: He wanted you to support Connally, is that right, at that point?

D: Oh, I don't--

(Interruption)

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G: You were talking about LBJ lining you up and speculating on why he might have been doing this.

D: Well, that's what I think, he was keeping his Texas troops in perfect shape, looking forward toward the future.

G: Besides the Arthur Goldberg episode, did you ever receive pressure or influence from national labor people to get aboard the Johnson team?

D: That was the only time. That was the only time.

G: Did he ever try to get people here in Houston, supporters of his, to line you up?

D: No. No. I don't have any memory of that at all. I really don't.

G: In retrospect, how do you view LBJ?

D: Well, later on in 1964, I supported him enthusiastically without any personal contact whatsoever because the opponent was [Barry] Goldwater and we were afraid of Goldwater. [I supported him] because he had done what he had done with his War on Poverty and the civil rights bill and so forth. Frankly when I heard him make his speech, the one we call "We Shall Overcome," I was really taken in and thought that Lyndon's finest hour had come and that he was going to rise above these other things. That was the year that the official Democratic Party put me in charge of the get-out-the-vote campaign, and I worked at it full time for six weeks or so. They made all the money I needed available to me and every door was opened. I had nothing but the green light, and my assignment was to take this enormous black population and get it registered and block walked and get it to the polls. And I did that with great enthusiasm. My partner, Bob Hall, at that

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time, another one of us kooky liberals, got me down to Little Paul's Cafe, and he said, "Boss, what are you doing here? You know what Lyndon is." And I said, "Bob, don't worry about these things. Lyndon had risen above these ignorant things. He's playing to history now." I believed that.

Of course his involvement in the war and the things that he did during the war were base, absolutely base, and represented the exercise in power that he was accustomed to. What do I think of him? I think he's responsible for killing fifty thousand American boys for practically no reason at all in addition to all the other damage. But I will say that if he hadn't been tricked, either by his ego or by his associates up there, into the Vietnam War, and the United States had been given the chance to exploit the War on Poverty and uplift itself, I believe this country and the world would be so much better off today. That was one of those disasters that befell the whole human race.

Now Elizabeth Carpenter was up there practically living with Lady Bird during that time, and I asked Elizabeth how did an experienced man like Lyndon get trapped into that war. The only answer I got out of Elizabeth was, "I think I ought to ask Lady Bird about that." Of course, George Ball has written a book. Have you seen that book? He credits McGeorge Bundy and--who was the man from Ford Motor Company?

G: [Robert] McNamara.

D: McNamara and one or two others for misleading Lyndon. But Lyndon had more experience than they did, if he wasn't intellectually afraid of

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them. I guess he was. So what do I think about him? I think about [how] he came so close to total greatness, in spite of his early years and his character. But the character finally reasserted itself. That's the way I look back on it now.

G: Did he have a philosophical base? In retrospect can you identify him as a liberal or a conservative or an opportunist? How would you--?

D: I came to the feeling that he saw us liberals and those conservatives and all of those principled people as quaint and unmindful of the real world, and he could touch this button and touch this button and just move us around like pawns. That's the way I think about it. He had a sentimental side to it, I suppose, about the poor Mexicans that weren't getting any education. But there was all that other complexity to his character. What do you think this country would have been if Lyndon hadn't gotten sucked into that war?

G: I don't know. I guess there's also the question that if Kennedy had lived, would he have gotten out of Vietnam.

D: Yes. Yes.

G: Would it have been different if LBJ had not come into the White House at all?

D: Well, Kennedy doesn't look as good in retrospect as he did at the time, I'll tell you that. I've been horrified at some of the things that have come to light since.

G: Is there anything else on your knowledge of LBJ that we haven't talked about?

D: I haven't been able to collect my thoughts. You see what a busy day

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I've had. But if I think of something when I'm reviewing the transcript, I'll jot it down. I'll be glad to.

G: Thank you.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Chris Dixie

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Chris Dixie of Houston, Texas, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on March 23, 1983 at Houston, Texas, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall be available to those researchers who have access to the tape.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.

(4) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Chris Dixie
Donor

August 10, 1986
Date

Frank S. Bunker
Archivist of the United States

Aug. 25, 1986
Date

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