INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: JAMES W. SMITH

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Chris Dixie's office, Houston, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: --about the Democratic Advisory Council, that DAC group that was put together after [Allan] Shivers. . . .

S: The DAC group was put together in 1953 or early 1954 and I attended the first meeting of it. I believe it was in Dallas or Waco. It could have been in Fort Worth. At that time I was a staff representative of the United Steelworkers of America in the Houston office, and one of my major assignments as a staff representative was the coordination of legislative and political action work for our union in three states: Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. I worked at that assignment until 1957 when Ed Ball, who had been an attorney with Chris Dixie, joined our staff and took on the responsibility of our legislative and political action work. He performed the same assignment during the late fifties and except for a few years all through the time thereafter until he became district director here.

I went to the DAC organizational meeting with some skepticism. I felt that the liberals in Texas were a potential force but still in most cases, at least from the rural areas, tied to a system of politics that was passing out of influence.

G: What kind of a system was it?

S: Essentially courthouse politics, building friends in the specific courthouses of each different county, and then counting on those friends to deliver votes in statewide or national elections by whatever means suited their convenience. It was not people politics as we think of politics in the labor movement. It was not based on the hard work of getting acquainted with voters house to house and door to door and neighborhood by neighborhood, and building a grass-roots organization in which the people themselves have some feeling of participation and a voice. It was very much a politics based upon the leader of each particular county and whether they could sway that leader to their point of view.

This was the sort of politics that Lyndon of course was good at and had been involved in all of his life. It was the sort of politics that Sam Rayburn had grown up with, and Rayburn was probably the most liberal advocate of it that became nationally prominent, or liberal product of that kind of politics. It was rural politics; it was farm territory politics. In Texas it was a kind of politics that ignored the Negroes and ignored the Mexican-American and ignored workers. It ignored their interests as minority group people or as workers. Nevertheless it was the only ally we had. We certainly were opposed to Allan Shivers and the Republican Party of that period. Allan Shivers had clearly become simply the Republican Party's agent for control of the votes in Texas. So we wanted to participate in any effort to change that situation.

Byron Skelton chaired the first meeting of the DAC. He finally got around to asking me and a few other representatives of labor if we had anything to say, and we told him what we thought. The big worry being expressed in that meeting was whether or not the people of Texas any longer had any confidence in the New Deal politicians and the people that had inherited the Roosevelt tradition in Texas. I remember telling Byron in a speech to his first meeting that the trouble was not the lack of confidence of the people, it was the lack of confidence of Byron and people like Byron in the people themselves. So I was very familiar with the origins of the DAC.

G: Well, who contacted you to attend the meeting? Do you recall how you were drawn into it?

S: I may have been contacted by the leadership of the Texas State CIO Council or I may have been contacted by Chris Dixie or Ed Smith from Houston.

G: Did anything tangible come out of that first meeting, do you recall?

S: Not much, a sort of general agreement to form a loose organization and meet again. If I'm not mistaken, Mrs. [Frankie] Randolph had already begun to be active in Houston, had begun the process of helping us create the Harris County Democrats in Houston. I think that was her first exposure to what was happening in the state.

G: Was Rayburn involved early on with the DAC?

S: Sam Rayburn wasn't there. Byron Skelton was clearly representing Mr. Sam.

G: Was there at all a division between the liberals and labor in the DAC?

S: Not in any formal sense. There were divergent views and there were a lot of individual liberals who were closer to labor's views than they were to Byron Skelton's, for example. And I don't want to depict Byron as an enemy of labor in any sense. Byron Skelton was a very decent small-town lawyer and product of the old style of politics, but a good person, a good human being. There were also a lot of labor leaders that inclined much more to the old style of politics than they did to what we in the CIO unions thought was a more appropriate politics of the 1950s.

G: Well now, how did Rayburn become involved with the DAC? Did you go to him or did he go to you?

S: Well, Sam Rayburn took charge of the [Adlai] Stevenson campaign in the closing days of 1952's election. This was the first time he had ever worked closely that I know of with Texas labor. But he was so helpless in the sense of lack of money and lack of organization and lack of literature and lack of experience in managing anything of that sort, that we began to realize there wouldn't be any campaign unless we helped him with everything we had. And ultimately we had about thirty representatives of different CIO unions traveling all over Texas and delivering bundles of literature that we had paid to have printed after Mr. Sam approved them, doing whatever he wanted us to do and running his messages and errands all over the state.

So this was our first real political contact with Sam Rayburn as it regarded Texas politics. The national leadership of labor knew Sam Rayburn as a national political figure, as speaker of the House. But

we had never worked with him out--trade union people in his congressional district had, but statewide we never had.

G: After the election, the 1952 election, did he utilize the Democratic Advisory Committee?

S: Well, Sam was always in a position to control the Democratic Advisory Committee without being formally identified with it necessarily.

G: Was this through Skelton?

S: Through Skelton and the other Texas liberals. All of them that didn't love him certainly feared him. (Laughter)

G: Now another question on the 1952 campaign. Did you feel that Lyndon Johnson did much to help Stevenson in that election?

S: If Lyndon Johnson did anything at all in the 1952 election, it never came to my attention. And that's not to say he didn't do anything. He could have made speeches in Round Rock, Texas or some such thing, and I would never have heard of it.

G: Was there any resentment that he didn't do more, do you recall?

S: I don't at the moment remember feeling resentful. I don't remember expecting much out of Lyndon at that time in that campaign. But I may have been resentful at the time and just don't remember it, you know.

G: What was organized labor's attitude toward Lyndon Johnson during this period from 1952 to 1956?

S: Well, we had very mixed emotions. We supported Lyndon Johnson in the 1948 Senate race and we certainly felt that we were the critical difference in the 1948 State Democratic Convention, which certified the results of that election. I personally was close in that campaign

with former Governor Allred, who managed Lyndon's whole South Texas campaign.

That really was my first campaign. I conducted a campaign for labor and the black leadership in Harris County in 1948 to elect our people to precinct Democratic chairmanships. We had some candidates for state representative that we knew weren't going to get elected, one of Chris Dixie's partners and other people. But it was really our first careful effort to do the grass-roots political work in the city that we wanted to do. So this of course threw us into contact with Jimmie Allred and his campaign for Lyndon Johnson, and we supported Lyndon.

G: Did he get much support from the black community here in that race, do you recall?

S: That was the first election that the black community really flexed its muscles in the Democratic primary. Ed Smith had won a Supreme Court suit in 1946 on the issue of the right of blacks to vote in the Democratic primary, so this was the first election after that. The black community and particularly certain business leaders of the black community who were independently wealthy did make a major effort to get out the votes, to begin to give their people experience in voting. They participated very actively in our precinct campaigns and they certainly did support Lyndon.

G: Did the fact that he came out against Taft-Hartley disturb you in this race?

S: Oh, yes! We had to overcome a lot of anger on our own part and a lot of resistance from our members. Lyndon didn't come out against Taft-Hartley; Lyndon voted for the Taft-Hartley Act and he voted to override Harry Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act. But we sort of swallowed our emotions over that out of a conviction that Lyndon would make a far better senator for the state and for the nation than his opponent. If memory serves me right it was Coke Stevenson.

G: He didn't take a position one way or another I gather, Stevenson.

S: Well, he didn't have to. He was so identified with the conservative forces that dominated Texas politics that everyone just assumed that Coke Stevenson was anti-labor. Except--well, perhaps there were some building trades unions that did not feel that way, but most of them even joined with us in [supporting Lyndon].

G: Did you talk to LBJ about his position in this campaign, or did anyone from organized labor attempt to change his position or mollify it in some way?

S: Oh, yes. I personally was not involved in as many of those meetings as Chris Dixie and Jim Ward, our sub-director here in Houston, and Martin Burns, our district director for the three states. In 1948 I was not in any sense a leader of the union. I was a worker in a steel mill and a very politically interested person. But they did have meetings with him. I never will forget the story that came out of one of those meetings when Lyndon tried to explain to them the difference between having a friend vote against them and having an enemy vote against them. Our district director at that time was a little

Irishman named Martin Burns, who had personally immigrated to the United States in the twenties from the coal mines of England and Ireland. Martin said, "Lyndon, I may be thickheaded, but I cannot understand the difference between a friendly kick in the teeth and an unfriendly kick in the teeth. It's still a kick in the teeth." So we always used to joke with Martin about kicks in the teeth and whether they were friendly or unfriendly after that.

Sure, they remonstrated with Lyndon. I personally, the only experience I had of that kind was that I wrote him a long and I think rather bitter letter after he was elected senator, but not on a labor issue. It was over his participation in the filibuster movement that occurred in 1949, I believe, against some civil rights legislation--oh, an anti-lynching bill or some rather pallid early version of civil rights legislation. And partly I did that because I knew that in his heart Lyndon Johnson was not a racist or a prejudiced person at all. I had campaigned for him in Austin in 1946 and I had listened to him speak many times and I had a number of black friends who were friends of his.

G: Who were they, do you recall?

S: Hobart Taylor in Houston, Carter Wesley in Houston. Taylor was a businessman here and a very successful one.

G: Cab company.

S: Ran a cab company, owned property here and in Detroit. Carter Wesley was the publisher and editor of the Houston Informer. Then I knew a

number of black labor leaders in the longshoremen's union and others who felt that they knew Lyndon, too.

G: Why do you think he voted for Taft-Hartley?

S: Oh, I think Lyndon reflected the views of the rural congressional districts that he represented and the city of Austin residents who never were very liberal on labor issues.

G: You don't think it was part of a statewide voting pattern that he felt like he had to follow rather than the Tenth District?

S: That's possible. We didn't view it that way at the time, as part of an ambition on his part. And also Lyndon always had connections with Brown and Root, and we knew that, and Brown and Root was the major anti-union force in big business in Texas. Most of the oil companies, refineries, were organized; the steel companies were organized. The other major industry in the state, even the aircraft plants in Dallas and the automobile plants in Dallas and Fort Worth were organized. And most of the construction work in Texas was organized, not residential construction, but commercial buildings, industrial factory buildings and that sort of thing. But Brown and Root stuck out like a sore thumb as the not just non-union, but anti-union major employer in the state. And we knew Lyndon was obligated to Brown and Root. We didn't know how obligated Brown and Root was to Lyndon in those days. So we weren't too surprised that we didn't. . . .

G: Did you regard Rayburn as more liberal than LBJ in that period?

S: We didn't think of Rayburn in liberal and conservative terms in those days and I certainly didn't know enough about Sam Rayburn's history

until after he died. I did not realize--frankly all through the period of my political activity in Texas I was unaware of Sam Rayburn's participation in the legislative fights in Congress in the thirties and all the way back into Woodrow Wilson's administration. We thought of Sam Rayburn as a very, very loyal New Deal Democrat who was a supporter of New Deal legislation because he was tremendously loyal to Franklin Roosevelt. And he never dwelled on it in anything that he ever talked about, in speeches we heard. All of his speeches in Texas were essentially aimed at farmers.

G: He did represent a rural district.

S: Well, he represented a district that was a mixture of rural voters and railroad workers. After he died I went to his district to lead a team of trade union people in the campaign for his successor. I first really realized how strong a force the railroad brotherhoods were in that congressional district during that campaign. We got into conflict with Lyndon there trying to elect Bob Slagle, who was the county judge of Grayson County and Sam Rayburn's campaign manager for years and years. Lyndon had a different candidate.

G: Ray Roberts?

S: Ray Roberts, the state senator, yes.

G: Let me ask you about Harris County Democrats. Do you remember that organization?

S: Oh, quite well. I helped organize the Harris County Democrats.

G: Tell me about that group. What was its leaning?

S: Well, the Harris County Democrats started as a vehicle of the liberals and the labor unions in Harris County and the black leaders. The principal power within the organization was Frankie Randolph, because she dedicated eight to ten hours a day, five to six or seven days a week to managing the office of the Harris County Democrats and to the organizational detail work of the Harris County Democrats for years.

G: She herself went down there?

S: She herself. She ran that office.

G: Did she finance it is what I'm saying?

S: She financed it. Whenever she couldn't get help to finance it, she did it herself. But she shared the burden with the unions and with a few plaintiff lawyers here in Houston who made regular donations, Dixie and Ed Smith and Bob Eckhardt and a lot of their friends in the plaintiff law firms. The steelworkers and the oil workers and various other unions, the communications workers, helped foot some of the bills, but our help was probably--no one of the unions probably ever put in as much money as Frankie Randolph put in out of her own pocket. She also shared the burden with some of her friends and family friends in the lumber industry from East Texas. I think the Temples helped her some, and others.

G: Now, I would have assumed that those groups were relatively conservative.

S: Frankie had a way with those kind of people that her family had been associated with. She was enormously respected all through the East Texas lumber industry as a person. And rightfully so. She was a very

strong personality. She was a liberal but she was an honest, decent human being first, and people that liked honesty liked Frankie Randolph, a very outspoken person when she wanted--you know, she was diplomatic, but very plain-spoken.

G: What was she like in appearance?

S: She looked like a sixtyish housewife, small, but not tiny, not a big woman at all. A chain smoker, rather dry wit, never any pretense of being a sexy broad at all, that wasn't her style. She was very much a mother and middle-aged or late middle-aged housewife type of person. But she was very smart, very bright. She had never been directly involved in politics, so far as I know, before the Stevenson campaign in 1952. She had probably donated money to national candidates that were doing whatever she was in favor of at the time. But she was just totally shocked by the idea of Allan Shivers taking over the structure of the Democratic Party in Texas and converting it into a campaign organization for Ike Eisenhower. To her it was not only contrary to her political beliefs, but it was a shockingly dishonest thing for anyone to be able to do that. She made up her mind to do what she could do to prevent that again.

G: Do you know the origin of her feud with LBJ?

S: Well, she looked on Lyndon as a very wishy-washy, unreliable sort of person.

G: Did he make any effort, do you know, to make peace with her?

S: If he ever did, I'm not aware of it. I think Lyndon and his advisers simply never understood Mrs. Randolph and never recognized what a

force she was until 1956. She didn't make speeches. You would not see Frankie Randolph like Kathleen Voigt from San Antonio up at the microphone and the rostrum speaking to a thousand people; that wasn't the sort of thing she'd do.

G: Well now, let's get up to 1956. Let me ask you to describe how the fight for control of the party took place?

S: Well, in 1956, as I say, the motivation that united Mrs. Randolph and labor and the black community and the liberals in Texas generally was that we were determined to prevent Shivers from repeating his 1952 performance for Eisenhower. Sam Rayburn apparently had been thinking in exactly the same terms, and when Sam advanced Lyndon Johnson as an alternative leader and as a favorite son candidate, it created the vehicle that a lot of other people who were courthouse politicians in small East Texas counties and South Texas counties, they could go along with that, too, you see. We worked at our jobs of winning precinct conventions in Harris County and the other industrial counties of the state and winning majorities in the county Democratic conventions that followed, and they worked at building coalitions with the courthouse politicians in the rural counties, Rayburn's people did.

G: Were you surprised by Rayburn's essentially drafting LBJ to be the favorite son and head the delegation?

S: Oh, no. We knew that Sam Rayburn had made Lyndon Johnson the majority leader of the Senate. No, we weren't surprised. It was a logical thing for him to do, and we could not have done it ourselves.

G: You didn't have any ambivalence about supporting LBJ in this?

S: Oh, no! In those kinds of fights, anyone that wanted to join you against the enemy was welcome. If Lyndon wanted to join and bring his prestige, well, we were perfectly willing to let him call himself the leader.

G: Shivers charged that LBJ was being used by the labor-liberal group.

S: Well, everybody is used in politics all the time. He was using us, we were using him. He had objectives, we had objectives. I think the whole skill of politics is the business of finding mutuality of objectives and using one another. That's what politics is all about.

G: So by this standard you would not judge LBJ harshly for using first the liberals and then the conservatives?

S: Well, Lyndon did what he had to do to go where he wanted to go and be what he wanted to be. We always had a lot of worse enemies to compare him with.

G: Now, let me ask you to go back and describe in some detail how you organized the precincts and how you won the fight, the precinct-by-precinct fight against the Shivers people.

S: Well, we had begun, as I said, back in 1948. We in 1948 ran twenty candidates for precinct Democratic chairmen in twenty precincts in Harris County and elected five of them in 1948, and every successive two years we expanded from that base. The precinct Democratic chairman presides over a precinct Democratic convention, which is held at an appointed time and date, place, in each voting precinct. The first key is to have that person favorable to your side in a political

contest. Through him and his friends then in the neighborhood that that voting precinct encompasses you build alliances of people who are willing to have coffee visitations with ladies in their block and hold meetings in their neighborhood to build up interest and concern, usually in people's homes. You do this sort of thing. And then the last couple of months before the convention is actually held, you start what we used to do, door-to-door canvasses of the voters to identify those that were favorable to labor or favorable to our political points of view, to our leaders, and keep lists of those people and keep contacting them and recontacting them and urging them to attend the convention, and finally arranging for them to be driven there by a close neighbor or friend. This was the way it was done in those days, done by both sides.

G: Was the Harris County organization that certainly defeated Shivers here, was it largely made up of organized labor?

S: It was made up of organized labor in the voting precincts where trade union members were a significant force. It was made up of either black trade unionists or black businessmen, or black professional people, teachers and whatnot, in the black precincts. In a scattered few precincts which were not really in the so-called working people's neighborhoods, it was made up of a lawyer here or a well-to-do lady there who just happened to be liberals, you know.

G: Did Johnson have his own organization here in Houston that year?

S: Not to speak of. He had a few friends and contributors, business people that he knew, but he had no effective organization here until

the last--you know, they attempted to put something together, and they perhaps carried a handful of precincts in the fight, ten or fifteen.

And of course one thing that helped us, Brown and Root had an organization of their employees, and they did the same sort of thing with their employees that the trade unions did with our members. The only difference was they were always against us until that particular day. At that round of conventions, they came into the conventions and supported us.

G: Is that right?

S: Oh, yes. We would have won without them; we had won without them.

G: Would the people who passed out the literature, would they be labor union people, went door to door?

S: Oh, yes. All the door-to-door work were either trade union people or black leaders in the black precincts.

G: Then you went from there to the county convention, which--

S: Sure, you elected delegates in the precinct convention. Your precinct would be entitled to a certain number of delegates to the county convention based on the votes cast for governor in the prior election, the prior general election. The number of votes cast for the Democratic candidate for governor in your precinct determined by a mathematical formula the number of delegates you were entitled to. And of course we always had an advantage because River Oaks and the well-to-do sections of the city voted more Republican than our neighborhoods did. So we had more delegates for the same population than they did.

G: Then of course you had the state convention in May. Do you recall the details of that convention?

S: Oh, vividly. We went to the state convention knowing that the delegates there from the counties would be approximately split with Shivers having about a third, and Mr. Rayburn and Lyndon having about a third from the rural counties, and with us having somewhere between 35 and 40 per cent, if all of our delegations were seated. We knew we'd have the traditional arguments within the State Democratic Executive Committee over the seating of delegations and probably have to repeat those hassles in the convention. So it was clear before the convention began, for a week or two, that we would be able jointly to defeat Allan Shivers. And the big differences then became over what to do with the spoils of victory besides--we were all obligated to nominate Lyndon for favorite son, and we didn't mind doing that. But we felt that was really about all the obligation we had. So there were a lot of contests over the details of what would flow from the convention.

The convention was entitled to elect a national Democratic committeeman and a national committeewoman. The convention was entitled to select the delegates to go to the national Democratic convention, the presidential nominating convention. We wanted as many delegates as possible at the national convention because we wanted after the favorite son vote for Lyndon to support Adlai Stevenson. And we wanted as favorable as possible a set of committeeman and committeewoman elected to the national Democratic committee. In particular those of us in organized labor were by that time completely loyal to

Frankie Randolph because of the three years of hard work and the money she had contributed, and the beliefs that she represented and her own integrity. Frankie Randolph didn't automatically agree with you about anything, but you never doubted where she stood. If she didn't agree with you, she would tell you so and give you a chance to explain your position. Frankie wasn't terribly pro-labor, she was just a strong liberal Democrat. And Frankie was good on all the race issues. She was completely against segregation and discrimination and racial prejudice. She just wouldn't tolerate anything of that sort, and we loved her for that. So. . . .

G: One of the memoranda I brought seems to suggest that by this time, mid 1956, the liberals were beginning to soft pedal the issue of desegregation simply because it was so hot.

S: Well, people like Sam Low wanted to believe that, and I suppose others, but you certainly weren't permitted to soft pedal it around Frankie Randolph if you wanted her respect.

G: I guess the best example of that is Ralph Yarborough and his race that year.

S: Well, this is one of the things that--some of the most scorching conversations Ralph Yarborough was ever treated to came from Mrs. Randolph over that subject. If he hadn't changed his position in his later campaigns she never would have helped him financially.

G: But that is an indication of the kind of heat that that issue was generating.

S: Well, Shivers was generating that heat deliberately. Shivers and people like him were conducting a real vicious campaign to appeal to the prejudices of uneducated white people in this state. That was their last desperate hope for getting a majority of the votes, not just in that convention but for their organization, their candidates. And they succeeded with it up until I guess--what really wiped it out was 1958 I guess. From 1958, 1959 on, that issue began to recede. But this was still the period when they were imitating Senator [Theodore] Bilbo and [James] Eastland and [Eugene] Talmadge and so forth. But Texas is not as racist, never was as racist as Georgia and Mississippi, Louisiana.

G: I didn't mean to get you off the track of the fight over the committeeman and committeewoman.

S: Well, the big issue in the convention finally became the election of Frankie Randolph as committeewoman. The day before the convention Lyndon met with a group of labor leaders and tried to persuade them to support his desire to elect Mrs. [Lloyd] Bentsen, and his appeal was that he was willing to divide things equally between labor and himself. He thought that was fair, and he wanted to be fair. Therefore he was willing to go along with our candidate, Byron Skelton, who really wasn't our candidate at all, he was Sam Rayburn's candidate for committeeman. And in exchange it was only right that we should go along with his candidate for committeewoman. Of course, we didn't know Mrs. Bentsen. But we did know that she had campaigned for Eisenhower in 1952, and that was enough for us.

(Interruption)

Funniest story that came out of that meeting was when he finally appealed to each of the trade union leaders who were there to join with him on his equal split, as he called it, and fair play, and one by one questioned them. A number of them were either silent or vaguely indicating they might agree with him, until he got to Jim Ward, who was the sub-district director of the steelworkers here in Houston, and an old personal acquaintance of Lyndon's. Jim Ward had been a student of Lyndon's when Lyndon taught in the Sam Houston High School. Jim and other students had gone up and campaigned for him in his first campaign for Congress. He got to Ward and he said, "Well, Ward, what about you? Where do you stand on this?" Ward said, "Well, Lyndon, I think that you're trying to be fair and I think we should all be fair. The only problem I have with it is that in Houston we're pretty much committed to Mrs. Randolph, so why don't we just trade it around? You take anybody you want for committeeman, and we'll take the committeewoman, split it fifty-fifty." Of course Lyndon was committed to Sam Rayburn for Byron Skelton, he couldn't do that. And he knew that Jim Ward knew he was. So Lyndon's response was to jump up in real anger and hit the coffee table in front of him with his fist, and say, "Goddamn you, Ward, you're just as rockheaded as you were when you were a sixteen-year-old kid." (Laughter) And Ward responded by saying, "Well, Lyndon, I haven't changed, and if you hadn't changed, we'd get along better."

G: Is that right?

S: Yes. Ward and the other steelworkers and oil workers got up and left the meeting and gradually the other labor leaders came out and agreed to join us from Houston in behalf of Mrs. Randolph.

G: Did the meeting then break up in anger?

S: Well, it did as far as Ward was concerned and the steelworkers and Lyndon were concerned.

G: Now I was going to ask you about J. Ed Smith, who was the chairman of the delegation, and his association with LBJ here.

S: Well, Ed Smith and LBJ had been in college together at San Marcos. Ed Smith was probably the most distinguished trial lawyer among the plaintiff lawyers in Houston and one of the most in Texas. A real legal scholar and a very dedicated, decent person, a lot like Ralph Yarborough but a whole lot more polished a person than Ralph Yarborough. And Ed was the chairman of our delegation there. We had elected him in the Harris County convention to fill that role. Ed was a great orator, had a very deep booming voice, although he was a small man. We loved to listen to Ed speak, and Ed was a good speaker and an honest person. He was not a nuts-and-bolts politician, but he was a good man to have for a leader.

So Lyndon threatened Ed unmercifully that if he didn't withdraw Mrs. Randolph from contention, that he would see to it that Ed was never appointed a judge, a federal district judge, which was the height of Ed Smith's ambition, and Lyndon knew that it was. Of course Ed was terribly torn and hurt by the way Lyndon treated him, because Ed was a man that respected friendship. It hurt his feelings very

deeply, and it certainly crushed his ambitions. But it never changed or wavered his support for Mrs. Randolph; it just made him resentful. It also illustrated to Ed Lyndon's inability to understand that this was not a courthouse politician situation. Lyndon actually thought that Ed would come back to our delegation of five hundred delegates and announce that he had decided not to run Mrs. Randolph, and that would be the end of it. And Lyndon should have known better.

G: That delegation was really committed to Frankie Randolph?

S: Oh, of course. Every member of it was a personal friend of hers.

G: Yes. And how was she elected then over LBJ's resistance?

S: Well, we did two things. Number one, we called in all of our chips from delegates from all over the state that were in any sense obligated to organized labor or to the liberal movement in Houston, in Dallas, and San Antonio.

G: Can you give me any example of this?

S: Oh, Woodrow Bean in El Paso, and all of his supporters. Bob Slagle in Grayson County and all of his supporters. They went against Sam Rayburn to support Mrs. Randolph.

G: Did you have to use arguments with them or persuade them?

S: Well, most of those people knew Mrs. Randolph by that time and they liked her. Secondly, most of them were Ralph Yarborough's supporters, and Ralph was very much for Mrs. Randolph. Ralph was obligated to Mrs. Randolph; he should have been. The Yarborough campaign was at its height then for governor, between Yarborough and [Price] Daniel. So she became a symbol of the Yarborough campaign, and the Yarborough

supporters in most cases went with her. We made it our job to buttonhole them, and we knew who they were from every county and every delegation.

We worked the floor of the convention and Lyndon recessed the convention for five hours and called delegation leaders back to an office he had behind the stage to try to change their votes. But he never was successful in getting a majority for Mrs. Bentsen. We had put out a pamphlet as the delegates went into the convention hall that morning, in which we simply reprinted newspaper stories from various Valley newspapers from 1952 in which they had written about Mrs. Bentsen's campaign activity for Eisenhower. It was a social event in Harlingen and those areas of the state. And that influenced a lot of loyal Democrats against Mrs. Bentsen, who didn't have any other knowledge about it. So it became a test of loyalty to the Democratic Party, as compared to loyalty to Lyndon Johnson personally. And the Democratic Party won.

G: What was his reaction to this, do you recall?

S: Oh, Lyndon was bitter and vindictive for quite some time afterward.

G: The Harris County delegation was?

S: In the September convention of that year in which we had again quite clearly a strong majority of the people of the delegates in the counties like Harris County and El Paso and others, Lyndon joined with Allan Shivers to expel us from the convention. And he did a lot of other things. I assume that Lyndon did a lot of things that no one could ever prove that he did.

G: Johnson's view of this reportedly was that he feared that if left unchecked, the liberals would first void Price Daniel's election or nomination and substitute Yarborough. You know, it was a very close race.

S: Well, I was not aware that he ever said that, frankly. It certainly would have been unrealistic.

G: You don't think that he feared that the liberals would--?

S: Lyndon didn't care that much about Price Daniel either. (Laughter)

G: Yes. But perhaps he felt that he had more influence over Daniel than Yarborough.

S: --than he would have with Ralph, and that was true. But Price was a senator running for governor. In Washington he could certainly influence how Price Daniel would vote in the Senate, but in Austin he couldn't influence Price Daniel very much, and if he ever did I'm not aware of it. I don't think Lyndon ever cared what the state government did, so long as they didn't mess with his district or his election procedures. He got Ralph Yarborough in the Senate, who became a loose cannon on the deck as far as Lyndon was concerned. (Laughter) And I don't know if he recognized that was going to happen or not, but it was almost sure to happen. Because other than Price Daniel there was no statewide political figure that had a chance of defeating Ralph Yarborough, unless Lyndon himself could have defeated him. But no one else could.

G: Yes. Is there anything about these conventions, the May one and the September one, that we haven't discussed?

S: Oh, my goodness, I'm sure there are hours and hours that we haven't, but I think we've covered most of the highlights.

G: Well, I thank you.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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