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Interview with

Representative

Eddie Bernice Johnson

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Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Eddie Bernice Johnson
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Interviewee: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: August 3, 1973

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place in Dallas, Texas, on August 3, 1973. I'm interviewing Representative Johnson in order to get her reminiscences and experiences and impressions while she was a member of the regular session of the Sixty-third Texas Legislature.

Mrs. Johnson, since this is the first time that you have participated in our program, would you very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, would you tell me where you were born, when you were born, your education, your present occupation, things of that nature. Just be very general.

Rep. Johnson: I was born in Waco, Texas, December 3, 1934. I was born, I think, in a home with a midwife attending my mother. I was the only child of four who was not breast-fed by my mother because she had to have surgery, thyroid surgery, a few days after I was born. I was the second

child. There are four of us--three girls and one boy. I grew up in Waco. I was born, of course, in a rural area. I don't have much recollection of having lived in the rural area because we moved to what they called the city, in Waco, when I was very, very young. I lived in the same place until about 1952. My family resided in the same residence until they moved away in about '57 to California. A freeway came through, so they moved back and moved away from that particular home place, even though the house still exists. But I'm a real native of Waco. I attended elementary school at the East Waco Elementary School, which is now, I think, the J. H. Hines Elementary School in east Waco, and A. J. Moore High School, which, at that time, was the only black high school in Waco. I finished high school there in 1952, I think, at the age of sixteen or seventeen. Then I went to nursing school in Indiana, at South Bend, Indiana. I attended the Holy Cross Central School of Nursing at St. Mary's College there, which is across the street from the University of Notre Dame, graduating in 1955. I had a sister who was older and who was in college at the time, so that was quite a distance. In my home my mother was a real close mother

to her children. We were very spaced, so she had young children all the time. Two of us were close, about a year and seven months apart--my older sister and I. But then my younger sister is almost eight years younger than I am, and my younger brother is eight years younger than she is. So I'm sixteen years older than he. So she was kind of always in the home with children. Consequently, the money was not so much available. I was on full scholarship when I attended college, and my sister was not really on scholarship. So I didn't get a chance to travel home just real often. At that time travel, of course, was by train. It took more than a day to get back and forth, changing trains in St. Louis and Chicago, depending on what route I was going. Of course, at that time, also changing coaches it was still segregated. I would get to a certain spot, and then we (colors) could then be mixed in coaches.

Marcello: Incidentally, at that particular time, did this grate upon you, or did you just kind of accept it as standard operating procedure? Of course, you had to accept it. There was really nothing else you could do, really.

Johnson: Yes, but I was always one that would question it, though. My mother and father were always very, very close-knit.

We were a very close family. So we talked a lot, and we exchanged ideas a lot. My mother did a lot of Y work, YWCA work, and we lived just around the corner from the Y. My father was pretty active in the community and she was, too. We were church-going. My father's attitude, always, was one that indicated his refusal to just accept things . . . well, his parents . . . his mother was more educated. But he chose to leave home about age sixteen and didn't finish college. He always said the reason why he didn't is because at that time he could teach or preach, and he wasn't interested in doing either one. But he did say that he wanted us to do what we wanted to do in life. He wanted us to be happy. But he also wanted us to be independent, and the only way he had learned that we could do this successfully, especially as women, was to be educated because at that time he was dealing primarily with these three girls. My younger brother was born at the time I went to college, but he was not more than over a year or so.

So the emphasis always in our family was on what we could do without excuses. We were never allowed to use excuses that we could not really justify. He was not a

punitive individual. He was one of extreme exploration. We used to frequently laugh, my sister and I, about what questions we knew he would ask. He was a very probing individual, and he would really make you think. He was one that, if I say, "Well, I know I won't be able to do that because I'm black." He'd say, "Have you tried it? What makes you think you can't do it just because you're black? Don't use that as an excuse." Well obviously, there were very real reasons to feel we couldn't do things as blacks. But we never, I think, decided that we would accept and must settle for that the rest of our days. Of course, in my family the philosophy was always that things would get better. There was always an optimistic view that tomorrow is going to be a better day. I think this was fairly common among blacks period. But it was certainly very common in my family.

My father's grandmother was from Brenham, Texas, who was essentially white. And because of having that kind of situation so very close, we were always very aware of the differences in the opportunities and that sort of thing of the blacks and whites. Not that anyone would not be, but it was right within the family. It was so obvious. Also, color was always sort of a subject,

and I think that's one of the reasons that prompted my father to be so encouraging because within our family structure, there were close relatives who could pass for whites and who did. Then I had a first cousin who was very close to me in age. We were probably within a year or so apart. We had features very much alike because I had features very much like my dad's, with the high cheekbones, kind of Indian-appearing, as the people would say. Except she was very, very fair, and had very, very light hair. When we'd visit my great-grandmother, she always had to go in the gate first because she was the special one. She was more like my great-grandmother. So for a long time, this hurt me, and it bothered me that color had so much to do with it. But she never rejected me as an individual, but color was always a part of her conversation when we'd visit.

I think though, as I grew older, it became much more of a challenge. It removed the original hostility that I had, instead of blaming her, I guess I displaced it by blaming society for making it that way because she did have opportunities that we didn't have. She could go in the movie and wouldn't have to sit upstairs or not

be able to go at all. She could go in certain stores and shop and we couldn't. We had to wait in a car for her. She never disowned us as her great-grandchildren. But she could take--we called her Sis--my cousin with her, and there was no question about her. But obviously we couldn't hide. My skin was dark and all. My grandmother--her daughter, my father's mother--was fair-skinned, but she could not pass for anything else but Negro at that time. She married a very dark man, so consequently my father is dark-complexioned. I'm as dark as he is. My mother's very fair-skinned. All of the three girls of us are all dark-skinned. My younger brother's very, very fair with very light hair, which he dyes black (chuckle).

But nonetheless, I think that this didn't work in a negative way for us. I think because we had a religious kind of atmosphere, environment in the home, as well as one of respect for each other and love for each other and caring for each other we took these kind of things and talked about them among ourselves and decided that we could let the world know that this would not be the handicap that we would accept. So we just always felt very positively about things. There were

times when I would do certain things that I was not even aware that I was doing that was different, until someone called my attention to it.

I remember so well back in Waco when I was small, my mother was very careful to keep us very neatly groomed when we were growing up. It was just the two girls of us at my young age. We used to go shopping to get materials to have clothes made. We would go into Goldstein-Migel's, and I never shall forget that store. That's a store in Waco that my father felt that that's where we should shop. Though we shopped at Cox and Mornings a lot, but Goldstein's is where we would get material to have clothes made. I remember one day we went in, and I wanted a drink of water. They had colored water and white water. The colored water was not cold. It was a hot summer day, and we had walked to town from . . . I lived in East Waco, which was on this side (north) of the Brazos River, and downtown was on the other (south) side. So we had walked to town, and it was quite warm, and I wanted a drink of water. So when I drank this water, the other water looked much better. So I told my mother to please help me up, that I wanted to get some of the white water

because it looked like it was cold. So no one was around at the time, so she lifted me. She quickly put me down, and she said, "I saw a lady coming." But she said, "Let me tell you, even though this water's cold, this is not for us." She said, "This water has a sign over it. It's for white." I said, "What do you mean? For white people?" She said, "Yes," Well, that has never left me. And at that point, I started to really become aware that there really were real issues that we were going to have to deal with, to let people know we were people, too.

I'm not aware of having gotten involved in any physical kind of activity when it comes to throwing things, and that sort of thing, but I always had in my mind to work towards changing laws and changing people, with just working with them and dealing with them. So I became much more involved with Y-work where we would mix with whites, and we would go to camp and talk. I'd want them to get to know me. For some reason, for my own emotional stability, I guess, or my own being, my make-up, my emotional make-up, I like people and I like for them to understand me whether they like me or not. I like to be understood, and it bothers me when I feel

that something is being held against me unfairly. So I always had this urge to communicate with people and share with them and let them know that I feel that I have a right to view things in a way if I'm convinced of that. I feel that they have the same right, and we can share this. I might change my mind, but they might change their mind. But if we don't, we really don't have to be enemies because of that. That has been sort of a basic philosophy of mine.

But, of course, when I went off to college, I was really not aware of that much of sex discrimination--being a woman, female--because the color thing had always been the problem. We had to deal with sitting on the back of the buses and standing up if the whites wanted the seats and this sort of thing and waiting until all the whites were waited on at a counter before we got served, or not being served at all in places downtown where others could sit and be served. So it was not toward me as a female; it was toward me as a black. So now that is the one thing that I feel that I have difficulty dealing with, at least with the white liberationists--explaining why it's important to me to work for black rights as well as women rights. I do

recall now that when I was talking about becoming a doctor in high school, that one of the counselors . . . well, we didn't have anyone labeled as a counselor. We would have career days, and some of the people would take on certain roles. One of the people said, "You don't want to be a doctor because women who are doctors are labeled just like women who are servicewomen. They're not considered to be very feminine. It's not a very feminine thing to do." Well, that was an old stereotype that I just sort of accepted, though since going through the particular program in nursing that I did go through, frequently I have said to myself that if I had the same curriculum in a southern school, it probably would have been the same as a medical school curriculum in this area.

I've never met competition in nursing here when I returned to Texas. I felt that I was very well-prepared, and I think that the people that I worked with fully recognized that, because it was an excellent program that I did go through. I have not really regretted being a nurse. I really sort of enjoyed it, really, because it's the same connotation. You're working with people, dealing with people, and helping people, and I like that.

But I do feel that just as I was perhaps misdirected, there probably have been many other women who have been because of old stereotypes. So that is something that I would very much like to deal with. I think it's being dealt with.

But at the same time, we have not overcome the color barrier, which I think is still very much a priority of mine. So the only way that I can describe what I'm about, really, is human liberation. I firmly feel that once people are considered people on their merits and a basis of them being human beings, then we won't really have to worry so much about sex discrimination nor race discrimination. On the contrary, with the women's liberation, I am very much for women rights. I might be considered of the old school, but I still feel that there is just a basic difference. Maybe it's because of the old stereotypes and the way I was brought up. Certainly there is a basic biological difference in the sexes. But there are just certain things that . . . I really feel if women want to do it, fine. But I have no aspiration to be a lineman on a telephone pole. I know that's something that has to be done. I don't really see that as being in a woman's role. But if there

are women who want to do that, they can go right ahead and do it. But because of the kind of things that I think clearly to me separate certain kinds of roles, I think that it's just got to be a thing that individuals will have to be accepted on individual basis.

It's not the same kind of thing with blacks. I think that with blacks, it's not that they're trying to change the whole society and its old stereotyped roles of certain niches as much as it is seeking just an equal opportunity. There are a number of black women who would be extremely pleased just to have the rights of white women, whether rules are changed or not. There are a huge number of black men who would just like to have the same rights as white men, whether it be in the stereotyped roles and the chauvinist roles or what it's supposed to be now, or whether it's the liberated man or woman.

In my own mind, I have my thing worked out as to how I feel about the two things. But I'm really not certain how much understanding that perhaps some of the ultra-feminist movement women feel about the way I stand. I refuse to be punished into something I don't believe in. I'm my own person, and I do what I feel is the thing to do and what I feel that I have pledged to the people

that I represent. I won't be forced to do anything else.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter politics?

Johnson: Well, because I had always been very active in community affairs. I think that was inherent from my upbringing and civic work. The involvement in civic work is catching. It's something that once I got involved in it, I couldn't tear myself apart from it because I just became aware of so many things that we could do, that needed to be done. There were few people that were really that willing to give that kind of time to get it done. Well, I didn't focus on the people who made a choice not to do it because I feel that that's a choice that people have the right to make. But I'm one that sometimes will take on responsibility, probably more than I should. But it was fascinating to me, and I got a great deal of satisfaction out of getting things accomplished and getting things moving constructively. I firmly believe that there are always many ways to accomplish things. I was always one that wanted to do it in a way that I could receive satisfaction without a lot of destructiveness.

So I was in contact with the people who had been involved in politics. There has not been any campaign

since I have been in Dallas of which I didn't participate. Even though I was a federal employee, I found some way to offer what I felt was my responsible load, trying to get someone in office, and primarily blacks. Most of the battles were losing ones in my early days in Dallas.

But nonetheless, I remember so well when I was in school over at TCU in 1967, Dr. Conrad was running for the schoolboard. I was only home on weekends. I was very tired. My load was heavy, and I had a family and all. But I just could not let that go by. So I took my son, and we went up to the shopping center. That's when I got the idea of walking door-to-door to try to encourage people to go vote. The turn-out was very low. There were just not that many people in the shopping center. So then just behind the shopping center was a concentration of blacks . . . well, it was kind of mixed at that time, really. But there was a lot of duplexes, and there was a lot of people there. We started walking from door-to-door campaigning. The personal contacts that we made, I felt, influenced people to go to vote. It was at that time that I decided that we needed voter education in our community, especially the black community. I really felt that we had been out of the

picture so long that we were not aware that we had power to elect someone if we would pool it and get in there and vote and exercise that privilege.

So I started working with voter registration and that sort of thing. Back in 1970 . . . of course, Zan Holmes and I had grown up together practically in Waco. We were classmates during the time when he was there. Zan was up for re-election, and I had worked very hard in his campaign. He came over here. The campaign office for this area was at up in the Lancaster Kiest Shopping Center. This was not very far. He was very tired. Now I really understand how he feels on election night. He said, "Well, you know," he said, "This is my last time around, I believe." He said, "I'd really like to see you replace me when I come out." I said, "Oh, you've got to be kidding." I said, "Can't you see the faces of people if a black woman decided to run for office." He laughed it off, and I laughed it off.

Oh, I guess about six, seven months later another friend of mine approached me. I was at work one day, and he came out. I was in the out-patient area there for the mental health clinic out at the V.A. Hospital. He was visiting. He was on the staff of one of the

Congressmen. He said, "Have you ever thought about running for public office?" He said, "You've done so much in the community, I really think that you'd do well, and I think you'd win." I said, "Well, no, it's been mentioned to me. But I just really don't think that I would."

But then when they started to talk about getting single-member districts Zan was always the kind that if he needed a group of women together, he'd call me because he knew I was always working and would call on groups. Well, he called, and he said, "I've got to have you to get some people together. We've got to alert the black community about perhaps filing a suit to get single-member districts in Dallas County." He said, "We need to have a meeting, and we need to do it as quickly as we can." So he told me that on a Friday. The meeting was to be on the following Tuesday. I contacted about fifty-six different organizations and about twenty-five or thirty other people. I spent the whole weekend just calling and getting them. We had a roomful of people at the meeting. It was a pretty good turnout. And they were all presidents of clubs and that sort of thing that would have contact with

other people. It was really a very enthusiastic crowd to get something done.

At that point, we thought of getting a statement and circulating it. I suggested a statement. Then Marcus Ranger agreed to draw up the statement, which became a resolution, of which I was to take the responsibility of circulating. We got a petition. So I started circulating this through groups and going from group to group to get support for the suit for the single-member districts. In the meantime, of course, Oscar Mauzy and someone else had filed suit, and we joined in with them and got the lawsuit going. Well, when the decision came that we would have single-member districts, Zan said, "You have a better opportunity now than that perhaps what you had before to win. I think you ought to try it." I said, "Well, I don't know. We'll see."

In the meantime, I had been working with a group called Women For Change, to get it organized. It was not in the organizational phase. I was at a League of Women Voters meeting one day, and the idea was mentioned. We got together, and Maura McNeil had a meeting in her home. She still does. We now have a women's center.

We're in the second location. Judge Sarah Hughes was the honorary chairman. The group now functions as really a clearinghouse for all of the different women groups. We have a talent bank. We have task forces. We had a workshop just before the filing deadline.

Judge Hughes had mentioned to me that she would like to see me run for office. I had worked closely with her in this group. When we had the workshop (after the single-member districts ruling), our first general meeting at SMU, she (Judge Hughes) walked over to me and she said, "Eddie Bernice, you have to run. I mean that. You must run for office. We have got to have women like you in office." I said, "Oh, I appreciate that so much." But I said, "But, you know, I have to quit my job if I do." I've worked there fifteen years. Of course, by this time I was a divorcee. I had gotten divorced in 1970, October of '70. I'd been married fourteen years. I said, "Well, I'd really have to give it a great deal of thought because I'm my sole support, and I'd have to give up my job.

So at that point, I don't really know what was happening with the women. But I kept getting contacts from people. Esther Lipshy, who is a part of the Zale

Corporation family, and Shirley Miller, who had worked previously in public relations and in the media . . . she was a housewife at the time, well, homemaker and mother but very active, very liberated, in my connotation of liberated. She had herself together as to her identification and was not concerned about it. These people just kept calling me and encouraging me. Of course, Zan was encouraging me, but he was really not pushing. He really wanted me to make that decision myself. But he kept encouraging me. Then I had a number of other people to start . . . they were spreading the news. People started calling and asking, and saying, "I hear you're running. I hear you're going to run." I had not made any decision at all. So I did go to my chief nurse at the Veterans' Administration Hospital because I felt that it might filter back. I shared with her that I had been approached about this, but I would let her know, because I was fully aware of the Hatch Act and what have you if I decided to run. They were very elated and felt that I was well qualified and this sort of thing. Of course, in Texas the qualifications consisted of being twenty-one, having lived in the state for a year, and being a registered

voter. So, you know, it didn't take very much to be qualified.

But anyway, time was moving along. We decided to pull together the same people, if we could get them together, and get a cross-section of the community, and we decided that after the courts had ruled that single-member districts would be in Dallas County, then we had a breakdown of the percentages of the black population in each district. We felt that at this point it was now time to have independent black representation who could be responsive to the black community. At least this was not only the time, but this was an opportunity. It'd always been time. We had several meetings, and the people who were interested in office were asked to give their names, and they were told they'd be going through a screening committee.

Well, I wouldn't give my name. I just couldn't bring myself to accept that this might be a reality because it took a lot of thought for me. It was a really very big decision. I had a son that I had complete responsibility for, and I felt it proper for me to discuss it with him. So at that time, I was . . . well, frankly, I'll be perfectly honest with you. When I was

first approached, it was long before the single-member districts. That was long back, oh, at least a year before. So I had talked with him about it. He thought it was very interesting. He really wanted me to do it. So when it was getting close and a decision had to be made, I started wondering whether or not he would be able to adjust. I tried to picture what the situation would be like for him because I was quite concerned and felt that I had been both blessed and had had opportunity to achieve a certain position on my job, and I had a substantial income and felt that it was now time for me to offer him the kind of support and opportunity that my parents had offered me and did not feel I could do anything that would cheat him out of this. So that was my biggest hold back--thinking in terms of what would happen to him, and how this would change his life style. All of the pros were there. Many people were telling me what a great opportunity it would be for him to see government functioning, and all, and all. All of this sounded very, very positive. But I had to sit and also think about some of the negatives that we would have to plan for. So I had to do this in my own meditation and work it out with myself.

So after we had the meeting, and I would not give my name and let it go in as one to be considered before this panel, I was then selected by the group to chair the interviewing . . . to chair the steering committee that would be doing the interviews of the people, to come up with the slate that we, the black community, would support. Well, we went through these interviews for about two and a half days. One of the panelists who later became one of my non-supporters said, "You know, Mrs. Johnson, I think that we ought to draft you." I said, "Well, I'll be perfectly honest with you. I have been approached about it. But I just have not made a decision." He said, "Well, could you step out of the room for just a minute?" So I left the room, and when I came back, I was told that the committee had unanimously declared me out of office as chairman of this steering committee and had drafted me as a possible candidate to be presented to the overall group. They wanted to then interview me.

So they did interview me, and when they took the slate in, there were a number of people in the group . . . the people that were attracted to that meeting were not such a cross-section. It was being held in South

Dallas, and so most of the militant aspects of the community were there. The meeting got really kind of heated and loud. The other people just decided it was a waste of time and left. So when it got to my slot, they had to explain what happened. I had been chairman of the steering committee, and the person who made the suggestion didn't say anything. But one of the other men on the committee, Jasper Baccus, got up and explained in detail what happened. Well, of course, there had been two women to put their names in earlier and they had been interviewed. They had placed themselves out as being available for office. Those people were Olga May Rayburn and Jean Freeland. They became extremely hostile toward me because they thought that they had been tricked. I wanted to get up and speak. Zan Holmes was presiding. He kept signaling for me to be quiet, you know, just to let it go on. I was becoming very, very uncomfortable because I felt that they really did not understand what had happened. But nonetheless, when the time came for them to vote on that particular slot, then I did make a statement that if the group decided to nominate and support someone else for the slot, I certainly would be able to support that individual and

I would work for that individual if it was a person that I felt could represent the district as we would want.

So consequently, Marcus Ranger was selected for that slot. I was the first to congratulate Marcus and told him that I would give him my full support. And as far as I was concerned, that was the end of that. I had made the choice that I would not be running.

Well, that was about a week before filing deadline. I was already in the process of trying to get some organizational stuff together and a list and all for him because it would be my district that I had lived in for twelve years. He didn't live in my district, but at that time residence was not really that much of a thing. So I went on to work, and I told them that I had made a decision that I would not be running because I felt that the black caucus group had spoken.

Well, I really don't know what happened. There was a young man, Sim Stokes III, who was working with this group, who had done post-graduate work in campaign management and was working as a Commercial Credit Analyst with the National Bank of Commerce. He had been very visible in the group, and he had seen me function. He walked up to me and he said, "You know, I really hated

to see you get up and pull your name out and not fight a battle." He said, "I have been very impressed with your ability to not be thin-skinned, to sit through that fire, and still walk by those people and speak." He said, "I just cannot believe that." He said, "Really, this is the first time I've been able to see any black woman in the city of Dallas like this since I've been here." Well, he had been a Dallas Cowboy and had been transferred to the Baltimore Colts, I guess, and then had retired and had returned here to work at the National Bank of Commerce.

Marcello: I don't think it's usually referred to as being transferred, but anyhow . . .

Johnson: Yes, traded, I guess, yes (chuckle). So anyway, he came over to my house, that night, and he talked at length about he did not want this to be a door closing. He would like to see me move ahead and pursue the legislative seat anyhow. Well, on the day of the filing deadline, I was at work as usual. Judge Hughes in the meantime had been in touch with me, and she was asking me if I'd decided. I said, "Well, I don't think I'll do it because I didn't get the endorsement of the caucus group." She says, "Well, I don't feel that you have to

have that endorsement as such. You've just got to get out there and prove yourself." So then I said, "Well, I don't have a job." Shirley Miller called, and I said, "I don't have a job." So the next thing I knew, I was being told that an interview had been set up for me to go down to Neiman-Marcus to have an interview, and there was a possibility of a job offer in case I decided to run for office. So I did. I went down. I left work and left my office, had a car accident en route, was one hour late arriving. But they waited for me. A position was made available to me.

Marcello: In other words, this was the type of job that would compensate for your loss in salary for nursing and so on?

Johnson: Having to resign, yes. So the arrangement was that the job was being offered me so that I could have the opportunity to run for office. I said, "Well, I won't take it unless I make a decision to run." Then the person who was interviewing me (Dennis Worrell) said, "But we expect you to run." So I said, "Well, perhaps I will." I said, "But what if I run and lose? Will I still have a job?" He said, "You'll still have a job." So I felt fairly secure about that. He said, "Well, you can start to work here any time you're ready. Just call and let us know when you're ready to start."

Marcello: Was the job as lucrative as the one that you had previously had?

Johnson: No, it was not. However, to some degree I blame myself because they asked me what salary would I demand. I said, "Well, somewhere between . . . I'd have to make somewhere between \$10,000 and \$12,000." So they offered me \$12,000, which was the upper part of the scale. Well, I felt that inasmuch as the position would not be in the role of nursing, I didn't, perhaps, have the background that would be needed, and it would probably be unfair to the company instead of being a little bit more astute.

Marcello: What sort of a job is this at Neiman-Marcus?

Johnson: Well, I was on as an assistant to the vice-president in the personnel division. My first responsibility was just to become familiar with the company and rotate. I now function as a personnel consultant. I am preparing a package to offer a counseling service for employees, based upon the fact that employees who are happy have a higher performance rating. It will not be limited to on-the-job problems but any problem . . . fully realizing that people cannot separate themselves from their problem and leave them at home when they go to work. So based upon that theory, I hope to be able to

offer referral services for any problem that they would have and probably much more so in that area than any on-the-job problem, but it would encompass both. I came upon this idea after having functioned as just an orienting person. People would just sit and talk to me about certain things. Because I had been working with families in group therapy and individuals and couples and all that sort of thing and had the responsibility of making referrals and helping families who were in financial need and all that, I had become very, very familiar with most of the agencies throughout the city and all the services. So as I moved through the different departments and would kind of chat with people, they would share some problems and then I would say, "Why don't you check this?" and this sort of thing. Many times I'd take the time to do it myself. So I found this to be gratifying and helpful.

There is a nurse--they have a small clinic in the store at Neiman's, and there's a registered nurse on duty at all times. One particular morning I was in that area working with the insurance area. There was a man who came in. His wife had had a stroke. They had just purchased a second car because both of them were

working. All of a sudden, she has this severe stroke. She was an employee at the store. He just really didn't know where to turn and what to do and didn't know how to go about getting any kind of rehabilitation. He was thinking in terms of the lack of her income coming in at the time. He was just really very frustrated and very depressed. Of course, all I could see at the time was the very official responsibilities that were being carried out, as I could see, very, very effectively and very efficiently when it came to the paperwork. But the emotional aspect, of which I was very in tune with because that's my field, had not been touched for this man. My own feeling in observing this particular situation is that he could have handled, after he'd settled down a bit, the financial aspects to the point where he could think clearly. But his anxieties were fogging his thinking. So, I asked him if he had a minute and if he could just take a seat. I just started to share with him that this really was not the end of everything, that perhaps if he needed to sell one of the cars that I thought I had seen a bulletin board in the store where he could get someone, perhaps, to take up the payments, and it would not ruin his credit rating because

it appeared that he might not need two cars for a while. When she came home . . . I told him that if he would come back the next day, I could give him a pamphlet. Well, he wasn't sure. So what I did, I called several agencies. I knew where to get all these different pamphlets on strokes and this sort of thing. So I called and had them mailed to him. In the meantime, I told him about the American Heart Association. I told him about the rehabilitation programs that were available . . . the different modifications that could be made in the home. He left looking like a new person which was just delightful for my self-satisfaction.

So just after that happened, Dennis Worrell who is the vice-president of Neiman-Marcus personnel division-- is my immediate boss--he happened to waltz in. He's an extremely cheerful person who makes personal contacts with employees as much as possible. He came in for some other reason during the time that I was talking with this man. So when he left, comments were made back and forth. One of the insurance ladies who is supervisor of the insurance division there, Ernestine Turner, said, "I've never seen a person change so much in that short a time." So he says, "What are you talking about?" So

she explained what she had observed. He said, "You know, we might be able to use something like that." He said, "I like that. I appreciate that." So then later we were talking, and I said, "You know, I really enjoy that kind of thing and it's closer to what my background is in." So he says, "Okay, maybe we can use some of that." So that stemmed the idea of me putting this package together. I had not completed at that time my rotation through the different departments. I have not really inaugurated this on an official basis. Even now I'm still getting it together. But the people are aware that I'm available, and they can talk with me. It's not a threat to the supervisor versus the employee and this kind of thing. So hopefully that I will be able to spent enough time to be able to be really effective in this particular area.

Marcello: Who was particularly responsible for getting this position for you?

Johnson: Well, I still would have to go back to Shirley Miller, who has a relative, Tony Briggie, who is the director of public relations at Neiman-Marcus. I have a feeling that she might have contacted Tony, and Tony might have gotten her in touch with Dennis. But nonetheless, it

was Dennis who made the contact with me and made the appointment. Then after he did this, he said, "I know that when I tell Stanley what I've done, he'll wonder what kind of head I have on me for my budget." He said, "And I'll call." Well, the next call that I received was from Stanley Marcus. He said he'd like very much to meet me and see what everybody was talking about. So I went down and we visited, and he assured me that he fully supported Dennis in making this decision to hire me, that he was very gratified, and he was very pleased to be able to give me the job. He felt that sometimes people who were not able financially to run for office might be some of the better people once they're in. He assured me that there would be no political strings attached. I can truthfully say there have not been. He told me that whatever decisions I ever made, they would be mine, and the company would not interfere. Not on any occasion has the company interfered with anything that I've done.

Marcello: But the main thing is, you have been able to participate in politics knowing full well that this job is available when you return from Austin?

Johnson: Yes. I worked that out prior . . .

Marcello: I assume that your compensation continues in the meantime while you're in Austin?

Johnson: Well, no, not altogether. When I first went in, the agreement was just on the salary. Then what I would eventually do would be based upon the outcome of the campaign. They were very generous to me. They waived all of the things that you have to . . . probationary kind of things and what have you and offered them to me right away and did not require me to be on a time clock or have to put in forty hours a week. They allowed me to go and come as I needed to all during my campaign and to receive telephone calls and what have you. But just being me, I felt that I needed to offer service for the work. As my campaign manager said, I really worked too hard. My campaign manager became Sim Stokes, IV, who had spotted me earlier. I'd like to finish the story about me filing for office when I finish about the job. When I did win and it was then a reality that I would be going to Austin, I had another conference with Dennis. I said, "Well, I have now won myself a \$4,800 a year job." So he said, "Well, perhaps when you get ready to go on that salary, we cannot take you off the payroll, but we can supplement it. So I agreed to this.

When I moved to Austin and found that my expenses were pretty great and trying to maintain two places, I made only one request and that was to let the adjustment take place around March 1. At that point, it did take place. So my total income now is \$12,000 including the \$4,800. I have not asked for the increase again since I have returned. I really feel that if I'd ask I'd get it. As a matter of fact, I probably do need to ask for a raise because my legislative work is very demanding, and it's all coming out of my pocket.

But anyway, back to the other. On filing deadline day is when I received the telephone call. I had left my office and stopped by the shopping center up there to get some things to help my son make a poster board for class. We were sitting back there in his room making a poster board and the telephone rang. I did leave the office a little early that day because I was just not tied to the hours. I was putting in a service and didn't rush about getting home. When I got this call, I had this frantic person on the other end saying, "Where have you been? I have been trying to reach you at your job. You were not there. You were not home." I said, "Oh, I stopped by the shopping center and I'm

sitting here now helping Kirk with a poster board." It was Sim Stokes saying, "Look, I'll explain later, but right now (it was 5:20 p.m.) get downtown to the Adolphus Hotel and file for office in District 33-0. I'll meet you there. Pronto! The deadline is at six o'clock." I said, "Look, I have a borrowed car." Because I had the wreck going down, my car is in the shop. "I think I'm on empty in the car, and I'm not sure I can make it downtown." He said, "Well, start anyway. Try to get there. But get there by six! You must file for office or we'll lose the seat." He gave me no details. Well, I started downtown with very mixed emotions. I didn't speed. I just went the usual speed. But I got into traffic and decided that it was going to be stalled there for a while. So about three blocks before I reached the Adolphus Hotel, I went into a parking lot, parked the car, and I walked the rest of the way. I got upstairs, filled out the blank, and held it in my hand. About thirty seconds of six o'clock, one of the clerks came over and she said, "If you're going to file, the time is now because the deadline is just in a second or so." So I had gotten it all ready, except for just handing it in. So I finally handed it in. When I handed her

that paper, I looked up and Sim Stokes was looking in the door. He said, "I was so afraid you wouldn't make it that I borrowed a car and I went by your house and you were not there." He said, "I just came on down here but I had to see that you got here."

When I walked out, I was completely in a new world. I didn't know what to do. I wasn't sure that I had done the right thing. I didn't have to pay any money at that time. It's good I didn't because I didn't have any money at that time. So he then returned the car, and followed me home. He said, "Now I'll tell you what happened. Marcus Ranger decided that he was not going to file." He said, "Several people claimed they attempted to reach you but they couldn't reach you to tell you to be sure and file." He said, "But I fear that you will not have the endorsement of the caucus when we go back." I said, "Well, I don't know." Of course, when I decide to do something and . . . when I got home and I realized that I had made a decision, I then decided I was going to do it.

That same night I started calling people in different precincts and talking with them. I called one particular woman, Judy Lott, who just recently ran for the city

council here but she didn't win who had been a part of the group. She said, "Oh, yes, I will support you. As a matter of fact, I know seven precincts that I can deliver for you in the district." She said, "I'm so excited. Let me know. Let me in on everything. I am very excited." So I said, "Oh, good." As it turned out Judy Lott was the first real turncoat. Then I called Attorney Bunkley down the street. He was one of the people who had originally asked me to run. I said, "Bunkley, I did it." I said, "I filed." He said, "Well, I tried to get you. I'm the one who decided to start to try to get you when I heard that Marcus was kind of waivering on whether or not he was going to file today." So I said, "Well, I hope I have the support of the people now." He said, "Oh, you will." Well, ironically enough, those two people didn't support me in my campaign. They supported my opponent. But nonetheless, after that, we went back to the caucus meeting. After a stormy session, I did get the endorsement of the caucus at that time. Sim Stokes had instructed me to remain silent no matter what.

At that time, Sim Stokes said, "You will need a campaign manager." I said, "Oh, my God, I hadn't thought

about running a campaign." I said, "I've always worked in campaigns, but I've never managed one." So I said, "I don't have any idea where you go. I guess I'll have to talk with Zan." He said, "I've managed campaigns. Can't you catch on? I'd like to be your campaign manager." So I said, "Okay, but now I don't have any money." He said, "I haven't asked for any money." He said, "But if anybody asks you what you're paying me, you tell them that you're paying me one meal a day and all the watermelon I can eat in between." So anyway, I really didn't pay him. I didn't have any money to pay him. But later I did give him some money. But all during the campaign, he received no pay because I was spending my money in the campaign and money was hard to come by. Number one, I think because I was a woman. It was new and single member districts . . . this was new to the black community, and for the first time blacks realized that . . . I don't even think until after the campaign was truly over that I gave a couple of speeches and talked about fund-raising and money that blacks realized you have to pay for campaigns. Because in the past, you see, we would have one acceptable black on a slate, and that group took care of the money. I was

amazed when Dr. Conrad, who had always been backed by LEAD, said to me, "Oh, you won't need over \$300."

Marcello: Now LEAD, that's an organization, is it not?

Johnson: Yes, that's the League for the Advancement of Education in Dallas, I guess. Anyway, it's . . . I can't remember what . . . anyway, it's the initials LEAD. Well, my campaign manager said, "That man is crazy to think you can run a campaign on \$300." Well, frankly speaking, I believe Sim Stokes is probably the only black in Dallas that knew anything about running a campaign. But, of course, Dr. Conrad had never had to raise his own money. So at that point, he and Stokes disagreed on that. They never really got together too well as far as philosophy because he said, "If he thinks you can run a campaign on \$300, I don't know much other than he can tell us." But I just kind of kept the peace, and we went ahead. He made me out a daily schedule of activities and helped with getting the funds raised, organized the complete campaign. I really don't know what I would have done without him.

Marcello: What was Stokes' motivation? Just an interest in politics or an interest in you personally to see that you win? He was apparently making quite a few sacrifices here.

Johnson: Yes, he was. I think it was really a challenge to him. He's a person who is, I've learned, very aggressive and very achievement-oriented. He felt that this was a woman's day. He was really much more in tune with the political tune . . . tone, I guess I should say, of the country than what I was. He is a relative of Carl and Louis Stokes. He had traveled across the country. He'd worked in campaigns in other states. He felt that I had an opportunity. He felt that I had the ability, and he felt that I had an opportunity to do it. Joe Kirven had been very closely associated with Stokes. They were very good friends. Joe Kirven had filed as a Republican. This was a non-partisan caucus. He did receive the endorsement of the caucus as the Republican for 33-C, which would have made him an opponent to Sam Hudson as the Democrat black. He eventually pulled out, and I have been told that the real reason he pulled out is because he had planned to use Stokes as his campaign manager. Stokes had committed himself to me before Joe got to him, and because he didn't have the skills or the time to put his campaign together, he just decided to pull out. So he did. He pulled out and did not seek the office. But I really had not ever heard of

Sim Stokes before then. But he was pretty well known around here because he had played ball.

The interesting thing is, he was single, very handsome, very popular with the young women. So this was one way that I was able to get volunteer help. He would attract the young ladies. Of course, I used my home for my campaign headquarters. They would come and all be working around the same table. But they would not talk with each other. They would talk with me or talk with him. But this is one way that he would . . . and I would frequently chuckle with him and say, "Stokes, really, I think it's unfair for you to have all these girls thinking or wondering who was going to win out." He said, "The main thing is, we need the work done." His goal was always on my campaign. He completely stopped dating to amount to anything. His girl friends would call here and ask to speak to him, and I said, "I'm getting uncomfortable. I feel that they're holding this against me." He said, "Don't fret, I'll explain it. Only put Jeannie through any time" he instructed. He told them that the highest thing on his priorities was my campaign at this time. But he had a very, very deep loyalty to my campaign. I really cannot explain

it, except that it seemed that he was challenged by this, and he liked challenges.

However, he had applied for a job. He had functioned as a senior level staff member on the Presidents Advisory Council on Minority Business Enterprise to help write up the program for minority business enterprise when Allan Steelman served as executive director in Washington. He had been on loan, on leave, or whatever from the bank to Washington for one year. When he returned, he had applied for a higher position in Washington. It came through in the middle of my campaign. Four weeks before my first primary, he was to report to work in Washington. Well, he resigned from the bank and took vacation time for that two weeks which got him through that Saturday of my first primary. He had to get a plane out that Sunday in order to report to work in Washington on Monday morning. It left me going into a run-off without him as my campaign manager. Well, he went to a government job. But even with that, he called back every day, two or three times a day, and was still giving directions. He still advised me in my campaign on a day-to-day basis.

In addition, every weekend he flew in. Now that money did come out of my pocket. I furnished it on my

American Express, which I'm still paying back (smile). But he was here, and when that final time rolled around, he got here and did not go to bed the whole time he was here. He worked the whole time. Well, of course, the first primary, we were up at five o'clock that morning--in pouring down rain--putting up the last bit of the signs around polling areas to make sure they would be there when the voters started coming. I did a great deal of my own work--and my son did also including assembling the signs. I did the door-to-door walking. Stokes had me scheduled to walk forty houses a day. Many days, I walked more than that.

Marcello: That doesn't seem like a lot of houses, but I'm sure it really is.

Johnson: Oh! Listen, my feet have never been the same because the areas in which I walked were mostly unpaved streets. You've got houses to touch on both sides. Then when you come out of this area, you've got houses that are distances up hills and down hills. This is a big district. When you talk about trying to contact over 30,000 registered voters . . . I didn't . . . I purposely did not go over into the predominantly white precincts for walking. I fully realized that I could not have walked

that entire district. So I hit strategic and designated spots and areas. Because, you see, my black opponent had run for office before. When he ran before, he had the same support when he ran before that I had this time. His name was already out there. He was a native Dallasite, and I had moved here. He was a married man with a family and a lawyer. I was a divorcee with a family and a nurse and a woman. I felt that I had to somehow get over to the people that this kind of discrimination against me should not be considered. The reason he did not receive black caucus endorsement . . . he was interviewed. He was interviewed while I was still on the committee. He did not receive the endorsement because he had befriended what we call our enemies in the Democratic Party. He had told me long before single-member districts--because my name was being circulated--that if I wanted to win, I was going to have to make friends with the conservatives, that you couldn't win without it.

Marcello: Now who was this gentleman?

Johnson: Berlaind Brashear.

Marcello: When you were talking about him having befriended the enemy, what particular people were you referring to? Do you care to go into names?

Johnson: Yes, I can call names. Well, I can call some names. One, Earl Luna, who is the Democratic county chairman; John Stemmons, the (what is it?) Democratic Committee for Responsible Government, DCRG group; George Boch, is the secretary, I believe of the county . . . Democratic county whatever it is.

Marcello: Executive committee?

Johnson: Executive committee, I believe. But these people really . . . they testified against single-member districts. Luna was one of the attorneys against it. Brashear testified against single-member districts because he had gotten in contact with them. They were really, as far as I'm concerned, using him.

Marcello: Now Brashear was black, also?

Johnson: Yes, I had two white opponents, but we had no problems. I didn't even know they were going to be running. So we never had any real confrontations . . . my real fiery opponent was the black. As a matter of fact, both of the white opponents that lost out in the first primary endorsed me. But we never really had any real clashes. As a matter of fact, when I campaigned, I never even mentioned an opponent. I campaigned for me. I talked about what I had done. I simply said to the people . . .

Marcello: Was this deliberate on your part--to omit any mention of your opponent?

Johnson: Well, it was a . . . yes, it was deliberate. It was deliberate because, number one, I thought that I wanted to campaign for me and not against anyone, number one. Point two is I was not going to advertise his name for him. Point three is that I feel that I have to function in a positive manner. While there were a number of things that I could have said--could have said them, I feel, very justifiably--I was much more interested in selling me. I did not feel that I could bog myself down with trying to degrade somebody else to sell myself. I had my own record to build on. I went to churches. Now campaigns in the black community, I'm sure, are probably different from those in the white. But see, the masses of blacks that are going to support anything--that's why black preachers have been in power--are church-going people. So I made from four to five churches every Sunday. I simply said to the people, "I have no campaign issues. But I am aware of the needs of the people, and I plan to work for those needs." I asked them not to hold it against me please because I was a woman, that no one questioned my sex when I went before

the city council asking for things for the community. No one questioned my sex when I asked for streets to be paved. No one questioned my sex when I worked diligently and hard in the public schools when my child was really in a private school, but I felt that the need was greater there for my input than what the school had for me where he was attending. I said no one questioned my sex when I have walked the streets and worked day and night for other blacks who have sought office. So I feel that at this point, it would not be fair to me for my sex to be questioned as to my loyalty to the community and my independence to the establishment. That was primarily what I was about in selling.

I could specifically name things that I had been involved in. I had been involved with many community things, like the Cancer Crusade. I'm sort of a glutton for punishment, I guess. On my days off, even when I was working as a staff nurse and walking those wards in a uniform everyday, I would work as a volunteer in the black schools where the nurses needed help. During the time that we were doing all the screening for TB, I was working from twelve midnight to eight o'clock in the morning. I'd come home and take that uniform

off and shower, and I'd go work as a volunteer in the public schools throughout West Dallas and South Dallas and areas. That was way back, really, when I was maybe twenty-one or twenty-two, right after I was married. That was a continual thing, and I had that to build on.

When we moved into this neighborhood, I was one of the people . . . I was the person who said, "I think that we need to organize a group and keep a nice community, a nice neighborhood, and get along as people in it." So along with Mr. Harvey Boykin that lives around on Cedar Crest Boulevard and who was working at the Veterans' Administration Hospital at that time, I talked with him about it, and he said, "Let's do it." So we organized the Cedar Crest Civil Club as the two co-founders. We organized to the point where we attempted to stop white flight and build together. We were successful in doing that. We still have some families . . . there was one family that I had grown to be very attached. They both have passed away. Ironically enough, they were the parents of the wife of one of my white precinct judges, who worked against me, incidentally (chuckle). When he died, he

was in the process (he was a retired editor, from what I understand, of Upshaw Publishing Company), of writing a book of how he had come to enjoy living in this neighborhood. When he got ready to sell the home, when they were going into a nursing home, he came to me and said he'd like for me to help to choose the neighbors to buy his home because he wanted the neighborhood to be like it had been. We still have a family, and that family was just as interested in displaying my yard sign as anyone else around here. But we had stabilized. See, this block here was here when we moved. We were the blacks to move into this . . . the first blacks in the block. The rest of the area was built later by others. But we never had . . . problems with our neighbors. This club operated, and we still do . . . we don't meet often. When we first started, we met quite often. We'd have social gatherings, and we would organize. We had to fight diligently to keep apartments out of the residential area, that has been built up after we moved in. So we were able to do that as blacks and whites together. All down on the other end, where the church has been built, and the other end of Lanark, we had to go to court several times to keep

apartments out. So because we were pulling together, I feel, is the reason that we were able to do that. But that was as a result of having organized this little Cedar Crest Civic Club. So we have sort of like block partnership in a sense in that we come together when there is a need. Then for street signs and for bus service and that sort of thing, all of these kinds of things that would happen, they would call me and we would get together and see what we could do.

In addition to that, being a nurse, everybody in the neighborhood who got sick would call on me. I was one of these people who'd get up no matter what time and go do what I could do. It was just sort of a part of me. I was frequently teased by members of my bridge club that many times I would miss going to play bridge to do something civic or to help somebody out. On two or three occasions, I actually would take off from my own job to stay with someone who was ill and needed someone there. The people that I lived with when I first came here, Mr. and Mrs. George Mingo-- Mr. Mingo has now passed away--were both ill at the same time. I just could not allow them to be alone.

They didn't have any children, though they had a few relatives here. I had roomed with them in their home before I married. I left my job and stayed with them. They have always wanted to pay me for that. I said no. I was working for a living. I was getting that pay, and I didn't feel I deserved any other pay from anything else. So it was just always a part . . . I was the one that felt that I was getting the most out of it because I enjoyed it. I didn't have to tell a lot of people about it. I just enjoyed it within me. So it was sort of natural for me to kind of look out for people. I think it had to do really with making sure we got our equal share, and we had to look out for each other.

But the campaign was a quite difficult one on me physically, I guess, and mentally and emotionally, too. But I never wrote a speech. I never waited to hear someone else talk about what they were going to do. I did my own thing, and I did it purposely because I felt that I did not want to be carbon copy of anyone. I did not want to fit into a stereotype mold. I was just me. When I went to a place, I meant to speak.

There were several black ministers that had churches in my district or near my district that were not in

support of a woman running for office. I couldn't get a chance . . . I couldn't get on their agenda. But that didn't turn me away. When they asked for visitors to stand, I would stand. This is kind of routine in Negro churches to ask if you would have a word, and I'd have my word. I would leave my pew and go right up to the front and get me a mike, and I'd have my word and tell them how much I appreciated it and walk right out and didn't care whether they liked it or not. I'd stay through at least the end of the service. If he looked too bad, he wouldn't say anything that day. He'd have to call another meeting.

But I think that the people caught on when they found that I was going to work for it. Even black women had difficulty accepting me. That was the most difficult group that I had to deal with because most black women were at that time, and still are, very lukewarm on the women's movement. I have attempted to talk about what woman's liberation is all about to black women for the purpose of sharing because many of them say, "Oh, you've become a women's libber. Oh, how could you do it?" I feel that no one really understood what that was all about when our basic struggle was a black struggle.

So black women were not really hepped up over me being out there as a public figure. So I think when the tide turned a little bit for the black women, many of them helped me because they were my friends, because of the contacts I had made, because I had gone directly to them, and because I had worked with so many groups that I went to those groups that I had worked with. I had organized groups and worked with groups, and I had completed projects. It was very difficult for those people to turn me down. So they would lukewarmly support me.

But when the first day came for the first primary, I got out there in the rain and pushed my own cards because the women who had told me they would work the polls didn't want to get in that rain. I found that my polling areas were really not being covered. I went from one polling place to the other, along with my son and Stokes, and we pushed cards from one polling place to the other, with my hair being everywhere. It had poured that morning. So that afternoon it did clear up a little bit. But I was out there working for myself because once I made up my mind that I had gotten into this thing, I had no plans for defeat. I never made

plans for defeat. All of my plans were toward winning. That's kind of the way I am about anything. If I'm going to do something, and believe in it, I'll work until I see it become a reality. So that was my intention. I feel that if I had lost, it would have been a disappointment. But it would have been a stumbling block, and that's what I would have considered it--only a temporary stumbling block. But when I went into the run-off, I suffered a lot of abuse at the polls at the first polling time.

Marcello: In what way?

Johnson: Physical as well as verbal. My black opponent evidently had a lot of money because he had a lot of people working the polling area.

Marcello: Well, if he had that outfit you were talking about behind him, there's no doubt that he probably had quite a bit of campaign money.

Johnson: Yes, I was told . . . Judge Sarah Hughes called Zan Holmes, and she said, "Listen, I've gotten word that they are really pumping the money into Brashear's campaign.

Marcello: In the light of the new legislation passed during this past session, it'll be interesting to see what the sources of his income were.

Johnson: Yes, right. However, it was very shrewdly done because a lot of his transactions were in cash. Because one of the people who really got so worked up, one of the Jewish attorneys, started to look into things like that, and he said it's a lot of cash money. There were identifiable names, but the amounts of money that they were contributing didn't seem quite the correct amounts. But he said there was a lot of cash money involved.

Marcello: How was this money being used? Was it used to pay voters to vote a certain way, or just to wage a high-pressure campaign?

Johnson: Well, I can't say it was to pay voters. High pressure campaign, yes. For example, mailing. Everything you do in a campaign is expensive. He had yard signs and all that. He had many, many, many yard signs when I was struggling with my first 250. He was picking them up as fast as I could get them out. I made a joke out of it. I said, "Someone loves my yard signs. They disappear as fast as Stokes had them put up." I would never say anything completely negative. I just would call the attention to the fact that somebody loved them because they were collecting them--you know, this sort of thing. But he had numerous yard signs. And this

enormous mailing. That's one way you can tell when someone has money. Because he was putting a mailing out every week. I put a partial mailing which was really for the first primary. I put a mailing out just to my white precincts because I had not really made much more contact, and just to introduce myself, which was really a profile of what I was about. I mailed it to them and asked their support. But I didn't do anything in the black precincts--no mailing. That cost money. Plus I had to sit here until I almost passed out signing and addressing almost alone, in solitaire, but I did have people going and coming. But most people were working and they could only come in for a short time and this sort of thing. Kids were helping and this sort of thing. But when you're talking about 11,000 pieces of mail, it gets to be kind of hectic for volunteers at a dining room table

Marcello: What was the source of your money, other than your own pocketbook?

Johnson: Of course, the original organization, the caucus, one of the purposes was to get money. But I got \$50 after my campaign was over on that. The source of my money primarily was from individuals, but the largest single

amount of money that I received was from my church, where there were two collections taken up for me. One was in the first primary and one was in the run-off when I did the second mailing.

Marcello: Was this a standard operating procedure in your campaign, that is, to speak at churches or church gatherings and then, perhaps, there would be voluntary contributions or collections?

Johnson: No, not at that time, no. There was no church who took up any contribution for me other than my own church. That was merely to contact people when I went to the other churches. However, my church is one that is a community-oriented church. Anytime we have had any candidate to run . . . Joe Kirven had just run for the school board, and he's a member of my church. They had given him a contribution. So toward the later part of my first primary, they gave me a contribution, I believe, of \$200.

Then the latter part, when I was putting out a mailing all over my district, which was a household mailing that got to be about 35,000 pieces of mail which . . . I had mail sacks all over my living room, my den, my kitchen, because this was my work area, my

house, my home. At that time was when I was working without Stokes, and I was really trying to be candidate, be campaign manager, and be the worker. I was just really . . . now that was my really difficult time, trying to get that mailing out. I was up three or four days without even dozing--addressing and mailing and that sort of thing. Then I would just nap. I'd wake up and start all over again. We had to separate it according to precincts and all that.

Well, my minister was out of the city and he called to see how things were going. I said, "Well, time is running out, and I must finish this addressing." I said, "I've got several more thousand pieces to go." He says, "Well, can you have this done?" I said, "I've already checked into that. The service costs much more than I have." I had gotten bulk rate postage. I said, "I would be doing well just to pay that." So he said, "I'll tell you what. I will be responsible for getting the money to put your last mailing out." So that's when the church took up another collection. He asked me how much it would be. I underestimated it. But nonetheless, they took up that amount of money and contributed it to my campaign. Now that was my largest single, as one thing, contribution.

The other person who gave me the largest amount of money was Judge Sarah T. Hughes. Her name will not appear on my report though my report is accurate. The money would come from someone else. They would tell me, "This is from Judge Hughes." But she would hand it to someone else to give it to me.

After my campaign was over and I had a deficit, Edward Marcus contributed \$250 to my campaign--he and Mrs. Marcus, out of his private money. But that is the only money that the company has given me.

Marcello: Altogether, how much did you spend in your campaign?

Johnson: I spent approximately . . . let's see, I think something like \$5,300.

Marcello: That was actually a pretty cheap campaign.

Johnson: Well, I was going to say I thought that was a lot of money. But when I talked to others, they were spending \$30,000 for the same . . . as a matter of fact I have a distant relative who ran in Houston who won, who just passed through this morning, Anthony Hall. He has the smallest district in the state as far as population the way the lines are drawn. He spent \$30,000. I couldn't believe it.

Well, I did have . . . going into my run-off, I had the endorsement of labor. But I really feel that--

(and they admitted it after my campaign was over)--I really feel they slighted me because they felt it was going to be a losing battle. When I won, the president of the AFL-CIO--I guess that's the central part; I'm not too familiar with unions--Gene Freeland said, "You are one of our surprise victories. We are very proud." I was really surprised that they didn't give me anything to go on. So then that accounted for them not assisting me because I heard other people saying that labor would help with this, that, and the other. Well, the steelworkers came over the last week of my run-off and asked me to order more yard signs. I hurriedly ordered some without paying for them--1,000 signs--and they were delivered the Thursday before that Saturday. They came over here, put those signs together, and put them out by Saturday morning. I will be forever grateful to those people.

Then we had a breakfast for all the people who were endorsed by labor--that they were going to help--and we had the breakfast at the Bonanza Steak House out on Ledbetter that morning of the election. So I got up and got out there about six o'clock. Everyone was getting people assigned to them to push cards in their

polling areas, and pollwatchers and what have you. I just seemed to have been overlooked. They were really working hard for Yarborough. So they kept saying well, if you work . . . you know, throw Eddie Bernice in. That's the way they were doing it. So then there were men who got off . . . I was still there about 7:30 because I was really perplexed. Everybody . . . all of the help was gone and they kept saying others were coming in. Well, at 7:30 about four men had come in who had worked all night and said they were coming if there was anything they could do. I said, "Well, I really need some help in some of my polling places." Those men worked until the polls closed. One of them said, "Well, I think I can work until about eleven o'clock." He worked until the polls closed. I'll be forever grateful to that man. I don't even know his whole name. I just know his last name was Mr. McKee.

But toward that afternoon, I was so physically fatigued that I was just about out. It had to have been nervous energy. My family came in for the run-off. My sister and her husband came from Houston, and my other sister and her husband from Grand Prairie came. My mother came. We split them into precincts to push

cards and all. My mother stayed here. I had a few other volunteers because that was a nice sunny day without rain. That helped. I was working all the polling places.

So about four o'clock Sim Stokes came and he said, "Look, you've had it. You ought to go home, take a shower, and get some rest." I said, "I'm sorry. I can't do it. I'm not going to go this far and throw the towel in." He said, "It's not that you're throwing the towel in. You just need some rest." I said, "I'll rest when the polls close." We had a big argument. He was going to insist upon me resting and eating. But I worked until the polls closed.

When I walked away that day, I had a different feeling from the first time. I just had a feeling that I had won. The first thing we did was start to pick up some of those signs that were around polling areas because they were everywhere. They really did a good job putting those signs out. I thought, "Well, if I let this go now, I won't get a chance to." I went and picked up trucks of signs. We put them in the garage out here. Then I got here about eight o'clock. I was in the shower and one of the girls called

and she said, "Well," she said, "I believe you're leading." I said, "Yes, but according to TV here, the precincts I'm very concerned about, the heaviest precincts, have not come in yet." She said, "Well, get KLIF. It's a lot faster. TV is making me nervous." At 8:30, KLIF had declared me a landslide winner. My son grabbed me, and he just went into tears. It was very, very (weeping) . . . I had no idea I'd do that (chuckle). But that meant more to me--for him to be happy.

Marcello: I'm sure that you probably had a feeling all through that campaign that you were more or less neglecting him perhaps a little bit and this sort of thing.

Johnson: Oh, yes, and he became very ill during the campaign. He had infectious mononucleosis. He refused to be hospitalized. He wanted to be with me. So he stayed here, and I gave him his medicine, his shots and all around the clock with the doctor's directions. I remember that the Times Herald ran a story of family involvement in campaigns. He was so sick that they put off taking our picture, oh, almost until they just couldn't put it off any longer. So he was so weak that I helped him dress, and I helped him to get outside.

He stood there. It's really a very good picture. It doesn't show his health's state at that point. But he had been really sick with mononucleosis. He did get over it, but he had periods when he had to rest a long time afterwards. But he was really my real guiding light. Really, I think that I would have given up.

Marcello: Incidentally, we talked about single-member districts awhile ago and the fact that this obviously helped in your campaign. Have the single-member districts more or less broken the hold or the power of the so-called "Downtown Establishment?"

Johnson: Well, I think so. I really feel that the only way that real true representation can be shown and expressed is through decentralizing voting patterns where all segments of the community can have representation. I really have no qualms with people being represented that think direct opposite of me. But I really feel that people that think like me ought to have representation, too. The only way that we can have representation is through decentralized voting, that is, without the at-large system and with the single-member districts in all aspects. Frankly speaking, with the way the mobility is going, it will work in the long

run to the advantage, I think really, of the citizens who fear the single-member districts the most. For the city council especially because the inner city would have complete control of the elections in this city. With single-member districts, they would probably have more of an opportunity to have the representation that they would want to have. But without them, in the next ten years, with the way the population is moving and the housing patterns, we could have a black mayor if we still had that at-large system and all. Or we would have a majority of blacks on the council. So I think that what happens is that there is a panic thing that things are going to change so drastically from the old tradition if there are single-member districts. But frankly, I feel that it's only fair to the segments of the community. That is the only advantage, as I see it, for blacks to be polarized or browns to be polarized in living. Because the only way you can really have a bloc vote or to have a real advantage in a single-member district is to have a majority of people residing in that district. So it's kind of contradictory, in a sense, when it comes to what it takes to deal with it. But I think that most people will continue to maintain that type of living anyway.

I have no aspirations to just be in a white neighborhood. I am concerned about the kind of neighborhood I'm in, the school that my son is exposed to, whether or not we have a few things in common and that sort of thing. I don't really care what color they are. I'm quite happy with my people. I really forget all about color a lot of the time. I really feel that when people get to know each other and many of these old fears are worked through and old stereotyped ideas have been put aside that we will all probably look back upon this and laugh and say, things, as far as living patterns, as far as desires and all, will not change that much. I really feel that it's a natural thing for people of like philosophies and what have you to cling together. I have friends who live almost to Richardson that I see more often than I see in my block because those are my friends. We see each other often, whereas these are my neighbors. I love them all, and I enjoy living in a neighborhood with them, and we have no problems. But we don't visit because we don't have anything in common, and most of them are black. So it isn't just the color. It's whether you have likes and dislikes alike and whether you have

hobbies that are alike or this kind of thing. I think that once we all have the opportunity to get to know each other as individuals and as people and try to set aside skin color, it will seem so petty what we've had to go through to try to achieve that.

Marcello: Incidentally, in your own district what is the proportion of blacks and whites?

Johnson: At this point I'm not real sure. At the time that I filed, I think it was something like about 55.8 per cent or near that of black population because mine was an in-between district. There was one that was fifty-three something. That was 33-C, where Samuel Hudson is. Paul Ragsdale's district had much more black population. It was something like seventy-two, I believe, or something like that. But within the district, as I view it, I have a very, very diverse district. I have very wealthy whites. I have wealthy blacks. I have poor whites. I have poor blacks. I have poor browns and I have . . . I don't know if I have any rich browns, but earning, middle-income browns. So I think really that every aspect of the city's elements in the population is represented in my district. I have no qualms about representing the

district because I personally feel that when people are represented, and represented fairly, that it has no color. Legislation, good legislation, that people can benefit from having, really has no color. I fully understand that it might have something to do with whether you're business-oriented or whether you're people-oriented. I made it perfectly clear during my campaign, even though I was working for a business establishment, that I was people-oriented.

Marcello: This more or less brings me to my next question. How would you place yourself on the political spectrum-- liberal, moderate? I won't even say conservative.

Johnson: I think it would depend solely on what the issue is. I have been called a black, female, radical liberal. I have been called an ultra-liberal. There was mail put out in the white precincts against me that labeled me . . . I kept a copy. I thought it was interesting.

Marcello: Dallas Morning News, I'm sure, must have called you a flaming liberal or something. I think that's one of their favorite terms, I believe.

Johnson: Oh, yes. There was even an editorial in the Oak Cliff Tribune saying, "A female too? How could she be anything else but an ultra-radical liberal?" Black,

ultra-liberal, radical, female, and this type. So, but to some of the very militant people, I was considered a bourgeois black.

Marcello: An "Uncle Tom." What do you call a female black?

You wouldn't call them an Uncle Tom, I guess. What would . . . in that same category?

Johnson: They would call you either white-oriented or bourgeois. They labeled me as the bourgeois black. But at this point in time that same group of people have found that I was just as responsive. I now have those people as supporters. At the same time, ironically enough, the people who called me the ultra-radical liberal are now some of my supporters because I was quite willing to listen to all of the views. I weighed them, and I would not arbitrarily write anyone off. Nor would I do something just for the sake of pleasing someone. I would weigh it, and I would discuss it, and I would see in my own estimation how the greatest number of citizens could benefit. That's just the way I am. When they ask me about re-election and all, I say I really worked for the people to have a choice of who they'd like to have to represent them. I feel that they still have that choice. When they get tired of me representing

them, they will show me that. I might get tired before that. But nonetheless, I feel that I fought in a sense--and I don't mean physically--but I worked toward the right for people to have a choice. It would be contradictory for me to impose upon them someone that would not be of their choosing. So I know that my time will come to step down for someone else to follow. When that time comes, I hope that I can do it gracefully.

Oral History Collection

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: August 13, 1973

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on August 13, 1973, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mrs. Johnson in order to get her reminiscences and experiences and impressions while she was a member of the regular session of the Sixty-third Texas Legislature.

Mrs. Johnson, since this was your first time in the Legislature, what was the hardest thing that you had to get adjusted to after going to Austin, that is, so far as the day-to-day legislative business was concerned?

Representative Johnson:

Well, actually, as far as the day-to-day activity, I had really not heard that much about the long hours. So that didn't really bother me too much. I think the thing that I had the most difficulty getting accustomed to is the fact that I had staff to assist me. I was a person that basically was responsible for doing a great

deal of my own work, so accepting assistance and accepting the competence of my staff to go ahead and carry out some of the responsibilities without me just being right on top of everything was new to me. That is, composing letters for my checking it out rather than having me dictate every word of the letter and that sort of thing. But other than that, I was sort of ready to work. I knew that I was going to be in for a great deal of work. That part didn't really bother me that much. I would say that the frustration that I had more than anything else was trying to adjust to my mother role as well as being a legislator, that is, hoping that I would be able to get my son to understand the hours. I involved him a great deal. That presented me more of a feeling, I suppose, of guilt than anything else-- and perhaps the possibility of neglecting him. But the work didn't bother me.

Marcello: How about the rules? Most freshman representatives and senators have a lot of frustrating trouble learning the rules. Was that a problem with you?

Johnson: Well, to some degree. I tell you what. When I got there, I got the rules, I read through them, and I attempted to . . . so I grasped things rather quickly.

But as far as the very details of certain rules, it took me awhile to just kind of feel them flow. I just made up my mind that I would not concentrate on learning and trying to remember every detail of the rules. I made up my mind that what I would do is concentrate on the areas that seemed to present problems most of the time. I carried my rules with me . . . of course, I was like anybody else. If things were going in a way that I'd like to see it flow, I was not going to be too concerned about the rules, but it was a situation where it seemed to be getting out of hand and it seemed that my philosophy was being kind of run over, then I started pursuing the rule book to see if there was something that I could challenge. So it was to that extent that I learned the rules. I know the rules in sort of a general sense, but specifically I would have to get the rule book and point out the specific rule. I think that my background in working for the government and being so oriented to rules and regulations was quite helpful. In my campaign I had been challenged by the fact that I was not a lawyer, but that didn't present me a problem at all because I just felt that . . . well, I just did not feel that I had any handicaps when I went. I didn't

feel when I left that I really had any handicaps. I was not any different than any other freshman without experience in the past in this particular role.

Marcello: Well, you had a lot of help down there in that particular session because I think there were seventy-six new representatives.

Johnson: Seventy-seven.

Marcello: Seventy-seven, was it?

Johnson: There were seventy-seven freshmen. I understand there was one person who had served--or maybe two--who had served in previous Legislatures but had not served concurrently. So I think altogether there were seventy-seven freshmen.

Marcello: Is this generally the reason why most freshmen legislators don't seem to get much legislation passed? Is a lack of knowledge of the rules at least a part of the problem for this? Does it become frustrating to be called down on a point of order or something of that nature?

Johnson: Well, I didn't see that so much of a problem this time. I think that the problem that I saw is not the written rule. It was the unwritten rule.

Marcello: In other words, is the House kind of clubby?

Johnson: Well, I think that that's what had happened in the past. When we went down for freshman orientation, the thing

that caused me to look out for myself is that in the particular segment that I attended Representative Nugent was the leader. He was supposed to review the old rules. We had proposed rules being prepared at that time. He completely rejected the proposed rules and almost rejected the present rules which had been passed in the session before by saying, "Well, the rules say it's such-and-such. But the way it works is this." This really turned me off because I felt that certainly we should at least take a look and try to make the rules work since it was a great deal of effort put into it. For that reason, I decided that that's what I would rely on--the rules. If I found that that didn't work, then . . . I've always been a person that would tend to lean toward dealing with the situation when it came up. So I just didn't lose a lot of time worrying about that.

However, I found that the rules really worked this time. I think that probably can be attributed to the new speaker and his new philosophy. I have been told any number of times by the incumbents, the veterans, that this was an entirely different Legislature than any other one in the history of the state. Witnesses who came before committees frequently would express that

they were so pleased that it was such a different view and atmosphere and everything in the House. So I would suppose that I participated in a Legislature that was so different from any other one that we've ever had that we could indeed rely upon the rules. Anyone could call a point of order, and it would be recognized; it would be ruled upon; and it would be studied; and it would not be overlooked.

But that was not the thing that kinked up the legislation. I would say that it was not the thing that kept any legislation from being considered. I think the thing that kept a great deal of debate going on the legislation that did come up was the fact that there were rules that allowed it . . . we had a speaker who was determined to allow the members of the House to run the Legislature as . . . you know, the House sessions and debate according to the rules and not according to his gavel, which I thought was very fair. It did take a lot of time, but I think that it did lend itself to a great deal of learning process for the new people and the old ones to get accustomed to a new regime. In addition to that, I think that it did show some fairness. Now there were a great number of people

that felt that he was not strong enough, even to his own philosophy, and felt that he was probably the only one who would allow a great deal of pushing and maneuvering by the old Mutscher gang.

Marcello: Who was it that seemed to dislike the new amount of democracy that was present in the House of Representatives?

Johnson: Well, it shifted. When things were going against the conservative regime, then he was frequently accused of being Mutscher again. I could not see it being obvious at all. It depended on what days, what thing was up, and where the voting strength was. For example, with the reform legislation it really got to be a conservative versus liberal faction, which I thought was very unfair for the legislation because I really did not feel that the reform legislation was a conservative or liberal issue. But it did split into that faction. So during that time, he was accused of being Mutscher-like. But my own feeling is that if he was acting Mutscher-like, he would have rapped the stuff in because he definitely wanted it. He suffered a great deal of defeat from the changes that were put into the different pieces of legislation. He didn't get all of it through the Senate. Some of it that got

through the Senate . . . well, the ethics bill, of course, was in better shape when it came out. Everything else was worse.

But nonetheless, I think that it just depended on who was in control. There were times when there was legislation that, of course, most of the liberal people were quite interested in but that didn't get the kind of attention that we would have liked. There were people like his real staunch supporters that were quite disgusted with the way he had handled things. Two of the people that were quite disenchanted was a freshman legislator from Dallas County, Jim Vecchio, and Layne Denton of Waco. They had been quite close in relationship. Lane Denton had been one of the leaders of the "Dirty Thirty" and what have you. But they really felt that he was not giving his side--his side was more or less the liberal side--the kind of attention and opportunity. Then Representative Pentony from Harris County, I remember, came to me and said that it was time for us to go and bargain with him and talk with him. I think about ten people out of the so-called liberal faction did visit with him and kind of put some threats there. But he said that you've just

got to organize. Organize the way the other side organizes. You've got to caucus. He said, "I just feel that I would be just as unfair to lean in my direction as to lean in their direction." But once in awhile he would rule and rap things in when it was pretty much in favor, I think, of the people.

I never shall forget one particular night: We were losing like mad. When I say we, I mean my faction. We were on the appropriations bill, and we were really losing. They were just really putting all kinds of conservative riders on. We went and talked with him about a recess. So a motion was made, and it was voted down. But it was not a record vote. It was just a division vote. He rapped us out into recess. At that time, oh, the other faction just went, "Mutscher! Mutscher! Mutscher!" One of the people sitting behind me, James Cole from Greenville, said, "Well, I knew he couldn't hear well. But now he can't see well." But that was the one night that we had to regroup. I mean, we were losing so badly, though it was kind of reconstructed in conference committee. But the liberal faction of people were working that floor like mad, and we just didn't have the votes. We were on the portion that had to do with food stamps and welfare and

this sort of thing. Not anyone in that Legislature had any vested interest in welfare. But it was the liberal faction of people that were more willing to ask for reform and not just cut it off completely and not make it so hard that it would be impossible for people to get it if they need it. But they came really hard on it. It was at that point where I know that he did rule us into recess that night so that we could come back that next day with our full members because it was late at night, and so many of the people had gone and were not there, and we just didn't have the votes. We lacked about four votes of having enough. We hoped that we'd be able to get them back by morning.

Marcello: Incidentally, what committees did you serve on during this session of the House?

Johnson: I served on the Human Resources Committee, State Affairs Committee, and Calendars Committee. They were my choices. I served as vice-chairman of the Mental Health-Mental Retardation Committee, which was a standing subcommittee of Human Resources. That area, of course, was my background. The only committee that I did not ask for out of those was Calendars. The speaker called and asked me if I would serve on Calendars. This was a new committee

and obviously became probably one of the most powerful committees. It was really set up to be a very powerful committee, and he was kind of hand-picking the persons to serve on that committee.

Marcello: How do you surmise that you were chosen to serve on that Calendar Committee? I do want to talk about its functions a little bit, I think.

Johnson: Okay. Well, the only thing I can figure out is that I feel that I always served two functions. I was both female and black. So he had indicated that he would give a balanced representation on every committee. So I can only say that that's probably the thing that caused him to ask me to serve on it. The other thing that I think that probably would enhance that, too, is the fact that it was no question about the fact that I had been somewhat politically successful, and I had a pretty good following, really, across Texas because I had worked in the campaigns for general election when I had no opponent. I just traveled across Texas, and I made a lot of friends. Then I had won that vice-chairmanship at the convention which I still contend had to do with a vote against Roy Orr. So

many people now won't admit that. They just say, "Well, we heard your speech and that convinced us."

Marcello: Now what convention is this that you're referring to?

Johnson: This was the state convention of June of '72.

Marcello: The State Democratic Convention?

Johnson: The State Democratic Convention, yes. I think that in view of that and in view of the numerous invitations that I had to appear in certain places across Texas, the fact that McGovern had sought me out himself to help him in his campaign in Texas, which didn't prove to be too successful . . . but at least the people . . . I noticed the votes where I had visited the different counties. I visited about thirty-some counties for him. He did pretty well because I was reaching primarily toward the minority and labor vote. I was working very diligently for Barefoot Sanders, too. I felt that he had a much better chance, really, than McGovern. I knew McGovern didn't have a chance. But I felt that it deserved some effort. But I really thought Barefoot did. So I really worked hard for especially those two. In general, I spoke out for the Democratic ticket because I felt some loyalty to the ticket because I was on it. Because of that and because

he had realized some of the popularity that I had attained, I think that that is the thing that motivated him to give a seconding speech for him. I think in addition to that, it was the thing that caused him to settle on me being the female and the black for the Calendars Committee.

Marcello: Now when you say the seconding speech for him, you mean again at the State Democratic Convention?

Johnson: No, this was at his election as speaker, on the day that we were sworn in.

Marcello: I see.

Johnson: At no time in the history of the state before had any black addressed the entire House on opening day. No black had ever given any nominating or seconding speech for any speaker candidate in the past. Well, of course, he had indicated that he was going to give fair representation to everyone. So again, I was on one of my campaigns. This particular time, I had taken a trip down to . . . where was I? Lufkin, I think. Jon Voight gave me . . . I mean, he is the one who furnished me a private plane to travel to campaign. He's a star in Midnight Cowboy. I've never seen him on film, and I pledged myself that I would. I haven't been to a movie

in so long. But anyway, he came here campaigning for McGovern and I met him. I was helping in a little headquarters here up in the South Oak Cliff shopping center which is in my district, Democratic headquarters. He was just looking at the number of places that I had been requested to appear. I said to him, "It's impossible. There's no money and I really don't have the transportation. I don't have the money." This was about the second or third day after I had met him, and he said, "Let me do it. Let me pick up the tab." I really thought he was kidding. Then right away his office started calling to see when I needed a plane and this sort of thing.

So this particular time I was in Lufkin for a thirty-county rally for the Democratic ticket. I had a choice as to whether I wanted to speak for the ticket or speak for McGovern. But while I was there, Charlie Wilson, who had been in the House and who was running for Congress, was there. He approached me about . . . and one other former House member who is now a county judge somewhere. I can't remember his name. But anyway, he had approached me and asked me if I would consider doing the nominating speech for Price Daniel as speaker. I said, "Well, perhaps I would."

I said I had committed myself to him in his speaker-ship race. But I said, "I really have not even ever witnessed one, and I don't know exactly how I would go about doing it." So they assured me that they would assist in every way. They seemed so eager to get my answer. So I told them I'd let them know within a week or so.

So I came home and called Zan Holmes and asked him about it. He said, "Oh, Price called me about it and asked me." He said, "He's really very concerned as to how to approach you to ask you to do it." He said, "He asked me if I would help him to kind of get you ready, that he wants to call and ask you. But really, he doesn't want you to refuse him. He really wants a lot of encouragement." I said, "Well, what do you think about it?" He said, "Well, I think it would be a great idea." He said, "I think the exposure would be good for you." He said, "And let's face it, you're freshman, you're female and you're black." He said, "All those categories he needs." So I said, "Well, I guess I'll consider it." But I thought, "That's going to be a big day." All the families would be there.

I was new and I had some reservations about being on the scene at that time.

But I decided to go ahead. So by the time he called me, I said to him that I would go ahead and do it. So his staff got together and put a draft together of the speech. I was so busy moving at the time, getting into Austin and getting situated, that I just accepted it as it was. The morning of the ceremony, I looked at the speech, and it just wasn't me--some of it. So I just started changing it to put me in it. So I changed it to fit myself and what I would say and probably didn't do a total job. If I had looked at it earlier . . . but about ten minutes before it was time for me to walk into the House chamber they were still typing the final part of what I had put together. But that's usually the way I do speeches anyway. But I really think that, politically speaking, it was politically expedient for him to use someone that fit into several categories. So I don't think it was necessarily me as a specific individual person. It was what I represented.

Marcello: Now one of the questions I put to Senator Jordan when I'd interviewed her was if she had any trouble gaining acceptance in the Senate, either as a female or as a

black. She said that there was virtually total acceptance by the senators of her. Did you experience the same sort of thing, or did you experience some hostility? Maybe hostility isn't a good word to use in this case.

Johnson: Well, I tell you what. When I went, I really was accepted very, very warmly. I went in with the idea that I would respect the ideas of others, and I would demand respect for mine. This is what I did. The people that probably had feelings of rejection, of hostility, toward me didn't show it overtly. Later, I had a number of representatives approach me and say that while they were not in favor of the women's lib and this sort of thing, they just wanted to let me know how much they appreciated the fact that I didn't come in asking for special favors and that I was always lady-like and that I always spoke what I felt was right and didn't condemn others for what they thought was right and how much they appreciated it. I had any number of people, any number of the men, to approach me and compare me with Sissy Farenthold. The thing that they would always say is, "The thing that we can appreciate about you is the fact that you don't get up here and scream. You don't lambast everyone for the way

they think. We appreciate you dressing like a lady." Now I never saw Sissy on the House floor, so I really don't know what she dressed like. But I had several to say that they didn't appreciate her not appearing to be lady-like. So I don't know. But this time, of course, there were five of us in the House. Even though I might be sounding very selfish, I think that out of the five of us, there were really only two of us that were really accepted as fellow legislators in the House, and that was Sarah Weddington and myself. There were various little reasons given. However, I felt that I owed some loyalty to the other women, so I would not get into any long discussions about the other women. I would just say, "Thank you" and kind of move on.

Marcello: Incidentally, was there any sort of a clique among the five female representatives in the House?

Johnson: Not really. I had hoped that we would be fairly effective as a group. But the philosophical differences split the group.

Marcello: In what way?

Johnson: Well, you see, Kay Bailey from Houston was extremely conservative but yet a very likeable individual as a

person but very frightened and very cautious and very conservative in her voting patterns. Well, I was not extremely rejecting of her. But there were members . . . well, there was at least one woman who was extremely rejecting of her, which was Chris Miller of Tarrant County. Chris was sort of the ultra-feminist one in the group and thereby really created a great deal of backlash toward women and the women's movement and kind of got the nickname of being the gadfly, of being in everything and this sort of thing and was frequently referred to as the scatterbrain and what have you. I think she was really very bright. But it was the technique, I think, that there was some reaction to.

I called a caucus meeting, and we attempted to pull together. Well, we were able to pull together on one large package. That was the package to do the repealing and the corrective amendments that would bring the statutes in line with the equal legal rights amendment that had been passed during the November election. Well, we all agreed to be the co-sponsors. We also agreed that Sarah Weddington would be the major sponsor, and all of us would assist because Kay was

being extremely cautious. The parts of it that we felt would get into a great deal of controversy, we didn't put into the package, which had to do with rape and the definition of rape.

But by the time it got around to coming before committee, that particular night Sarah couldn't be there. I was in another committee meeting presenting a bill of mine. So Chris went and presented it. When she presented it, she added a couple of things in the package that we had not agreed upon. This presented a problem. As a matter of fact, our major witness was going to be Hermine Tobolowsky from Dallas. Hermine was well-known to the Legislature and had gone down for the last "umteen" years . . . but a number of years to ask for a number of things, and especially had she been working for this equal legal rights amendment for quite some time and was quite well-respected. Well, she was the major witness. When she got up, she realized that this was not the package that had been mailed to her. It left her in a peculiar position. So Chris got up and attempted to try to explain what this was all about. I was there. I got there a little afterwards. It didn't come up before the committee until

about two o'clock in the morning. So when it was all over, I said to Chris, "Now you'll have to explain some of this material to me because it's completely new and it's not what we had in the caucus." Hermine said, "Yes, and to me, too."

Well, it went to subcommittee. It stayed in subcommittee an awful long time. When it did come out of Calendars Committee, it was so late that it just didn't get on the calendar. We didn't have the votes in committee. At that point, it was not really being pushed that hard to get on the calendar for debate.

But the thing that did bother me a great deal about the Women's Caucus is that there was not the kind of loyalty that we had in the Black Caucus. It was not the same kind of respect for each other's views and each other's particular constituency back home. It was also not the kind of loyalty that would keep us as an entity. There was a great deal of snitching to put pressure on certain ones, certain groups, and this sort of thing outside, which caused us to not be a very close-knit, cohesive group.

For example, I was a member of the Catholic church for a long number of years. I left the Catholic church after my son was born. I basically in my own mind do not believe in abortion. But I felt that I should not have the prerogative to deny it to persons who desired to have it. So I had made my position very clear to them. I had made the statement that I did not wish to even deal with the package of legislation in subcommittee. But I ended up getting named as chairman of the subcommittee to deal with it. Senfronia Thompson, who is a black from Houston, is a practicing Catholic now. So we talked about it. Of course, most black people are not for legalized abortion, especially when it comes to the other bills that went along with it--the sterilization and the consent bill, minors without consent of parents. We talked about it among ourselves. We decided that we owed that to the Women's Caucus and as women to support this.

But the thing that irritated me and that irritated her is the fact that Chris was so eager to put the pressure on that she went out and had the different women's groups harass me by phone which, as I told her, "This kind of thing does not move me." If my mind is

made up on something, if I feel that I'm representing the constituency, those are the only people who are going to have any effect on me. So that other stuff they might as well forget. Well, there were sit-ins going on in my office.

This kind of thing I could handle much better than Kay Bailey of Houston. It made her extremely uncomfortable. Therefore, she would avoid coming to the caucus meetings. She was very fearful about what was going to happen. She then started leaning toward me to try to get me to be chairman of the group because she was so afraid that Chris was going to be chairman, which would completely alienate her from the group. Sarah Weddington started talking about me being chairman of the group. I said, "Well, maybe we don't need that. Maybe what we really need is to get a clear understanding as to where we all are coming from and where we stand." Because we had such a togetherness in the Black Caucus that I felt that this could come about eventually with the women.

But it never did. After awhile, I just felt that it probably would not come. Chris really wanted to be chairman of the group. Because of that, I felt that for

me to become chairman would probably create sort of a feeling of rebuttal toward her. So I just kind of forgot about it. I didn't call any more meetings. Periodically, we would caucus on the floor and just let that be. But I really think that we had . . . the greatest thing we had in common was that we were biologically female. But we had many philosophies, I mean, many things that we believed in. Many of them were the same, but our techniques of dealing with them were different. That was the same thing that existed in the Black Caucus, but it did not become a divisive thing. We were able to talk about it very openly and to reach conclusions.

But the hostility built very strongly against Chris. So it got to the point where I was the one who would communicate with Chris the most. I would go over and attempt to approach her in sort of a tactful manner. The thing that I think concerned me the most was that she was not even aware of the hostility that she was creating and the very hostile response that came out of some of this. We were in a committee meeting one night. We were talking about a bill that affected . . . that I did kill in committee by the way, welfare recipients. It had to do with heavier penalties for the people who

would be found on the welfare roles that were ineligible. While I felt that there should be penalties, they certainly should not be as harsh as what they were attempting to put in this bill. I felt that the federal statute certainly covered this, and that if this bill hit the floor, I felt with the tone and the attitude against welfare, it would have passed. So I wanted to kill it in committee.

That particular night in the committee, Senfronia Thompson was sitting there. She was sitting right next to Chris. Chris was saying she was inclined to support this. Senfronia became very, very angry with her. She's a person that lashes out when she's angry. She really lashes out very harshly. She turned to Chris and she said, "You know what you ought to be? You ought to be speaker." So she started going around telling everyone that that was her speaker candidate, which was a very hostile move on her part. But it ended up being kind of getting into the press . . . she called a press conference the next day and told the people that she was going to put her up. It was all a very hostile thing. But it didn't catch on that way, which really got to be sort of an in-House joke, because Chris really loved it

and went along with this. But she wasn't really sure whether this was so.

Senfronia Thompson and G. J. Sutton made a plan that the only way that they could deal with Chris was to make sure that she lost all respect. So, they kept pumping her to do things that would irritate other House members and just did this almost on a daily basis. Now Chris didn't sit very far from me, and that's why I had a pretty good working relationship with her. Senfronia would come over and wink her eye at me and go over to Chris and say, "Go up there and tell him that he said gentlemen and didn't recognize that there were ladies in the House." She'd pop up and go up there and tell him and just irritate these men to death. But she'd come back all smiles and really felt she'd done something, not really realizing what the game plan was. G. J. Sutton would frequently say in our session, "By the end of this session, we will really have her in her place. I think that by then, she will recognize what a fool she is." I just kept saying, "This is really unfair to her." Because I really believe in fairness. I just felt it was not fair. So I wouldn't take part in it. But I was aware of what was going on. It got to be a real joke

among us. But I would just turn and walk off when they were doing it. But it continued throughout the session. Other members became aware of it. But I'm not sure that Chris really ever caught on that those two people really were doing it. But that was the one thing that each time I would get ready to go along with, Senfronia would say, "Look, we're just not going to do such-and-such." So there was a constant little something in the Women's Caucus that just proved it not to be that effective.

There was one bill which had to do with eliminating any discrimination on the part of sex in dealing with credit that all of us did get up and stand together. The only reason why we were able to get them all up at that point is because Sarah was the main sponsor. I really had to be very, very supportive of Kay to get her to stand with us that day. Well, Kay would frequently follow me. If I would go to her and really talk to her very kindly and show her a way that she could justify doing something, she was inclined to go along with it. So she did get up that day and when the camera came close to take our pictures, she became very shakey. I said, "Everything's going to be all right, Kay. It's a very safe deal." So she did stand through it. But

she was very, very cautious, very cautious. She was so sincere about her cautiousness that it was unreal.

One other bill that came up was the conscience clause that was introduced by Von Dohlen. Well, I personally was in support of a conscience clause and had pledged my support. But by the time he got through amending that bill and adding stuff to it, it really went farther than that. So when it went that far I told him that I would not be able to support it. I knew it would pass. But I felt that it was important to show that the women were together. Well, Kay wouldn't even vote. She just left the floor. Even some of the men were saying, "Isn't that sad? Isn't that sad that she's not strong enough to even stand with the women on this?" Because it had gotten to the point where the men had accepted there were certain things that the women were going to stand together on. They had accepted there were certain things that blacks were going to stand together on. So nobody really lost friendship over certain real commitments that you had about things. I certainly didn't lose any. There were a lot of people that I felt very disappointed in. But I didn't go around calling them names and that sort of thing. I just hoped

they didn't come back. There are some that I really hope will not be returning. Of course, there are a lot of them that I'd like not to have return for the mere fact that their philosophy differs. But I know that the people have a right to have their philosophy represented. But there's some people that I felt that really were very weak and did not stand for true representation of their particular constituency. I think it's that kind of thing that really arouses me.

Marcello: Who were some of these people?

Johnson: Well, I think one was Dick Geiger, right here in Dallas. I really feel that he completely ignored the 42 per cent of the blacks in his district. At no time did he consider casting any vote that would represent any of the sentiments that that segment of people had.

Marcello: I seemed to notice that on a good deal of the reform legislation, for example, he was at odds with the speaker on numerous occasions.

Johnson: Right. Now with the reform legislation, I really felt that Dallas County in general had really given a mandate on the reform, especially. I felt really that . . . especially with the Democrats. Now I don't know what the Republicans decided on, but just in moving about,

as we campaigned in sort of the Democratic circles, I felt there was a true mandate from the people, regardless of the color, regardless of philosophy on other things, whether liberal faction or conservative faction, that reform was strictly in the air. I remember so well that . . . I have a white constituency that is very, very conservative. But I put mailings out, and I didn't do any door-to-door campaigning. I put mailings out, and that is the one point which I was advised to really talk about very strongly--was my feeling toward reform. They'd say, "Now look, everybody's wanting reform." This is the same segment of people that he's representing. He's representing blacks in the same general area. Our districts border each other. I feel that he completely ignored them. I think what we have to remember is that we are representing people. There were votes that I cast deep within me I felt that if it was just left up to my opinion, I would have cast a vote differently. But due to the fact that I felt that the majority of my constituency would want a vote cast another way because of the way that they would see it, I then would cast a vote another way. It didn't happen often. But it happened on several occasions that I felt I had an

obligation to cast that vote in representation of the people. Because that's all we are, is representatives of the people. But I did not feel that he was one who gave any attention to his constituency. I talked with him about it several times. He said he just felt like he was representing the people and would just kind of shrug it off. So I never lost any friendship over it. I never argued with him and I never got very heated about it. I just would talk with him about it in a very open way.

That's the way I did on any legislation. I would go directly to the person and talk with them very directly. I would let them know whether I would support them or whether I would fight them, where they could look for me to be . . . I said, "Look, I don't know what my strength is. But with everything I have, I'm going to be fighting this." I would just tell them because I felt that it was better for them to know exactly where I'm standing on something. I like to know exactly where other people are standing. Nothing bothers me more than for someone to tell me one thing and then do another. So I was determined that I would not be that kind. This is what I would do with people that would

approach me from my district. If it was something I knew I couldn't go with, I would tell them that. I would tell them the reason I couldn't. I would say, "If you really feel that I have completely ignored the majority of the constituency in this district, then remember that on re-election." Because I really feel that the majority of people in the district ought to be represented. If they feel that their views are being ignored, show me that in re-election. I just did not feel that I could live with posing one thing and doing another.

Marcello: Awhile ago you were talking about the Black Caucus and I think we need to get something about it into the record. Tell me a little bit about its formation during the session and who the leaders were and what it stood for.

Johnson: Okay, well, actually, when we went down for freshman orientation . . .

Marcello: That sounds funny to hear you talk about freshman orientation in the Legislature (chuckle). But I guess that sort of thing is needed very much.

Johnson: Yes. I understand this was the second time they've held it, and it was pretty helpful. When we arrived,

one thing that we recognized . . . well, frankly, when we actually got to know each other was during the Democratic Convention. All of us ran on the Democratic ticket. We organized a Black Caucus within the Democratic Convention both times, both conventions. It was much more effective the second time around because we knew about what to work toward.

Marcello: In other words, it was better organized.

Johnson: Yes. The first one we had was when they were toying with whether or not . . . well, they were trying to get me to go for the vice-chairmanship. But I really had been approached by the Women's Caucus, and I had rejected the idea, and I really didn't want it. But anyhow, this was the major thing. So we got organized and we started to talk about delegates. I went home and went to bed. We realized that we didn't finish business at that point. So when we went back in September, we were determined to get our share. So we organized, we talked with the governor, that is, the governor elect. We let him know of our demands, and we worked and got the things that we were demanding. We wanted Barbara to be up for the vice-chairmanship of the party.

Marcello: This is Barbara Jordan?

Johnson: Barbara Jordan. So that she could be on the national committee. Well, the Black Caucus in general rejected Barbara. They wanted me to do it.

Marcello: Why did they reject Barbara?

Johnson: Well, from what I could gather from what they were saying, they did not feel that Barbara had spoken to the desires of the black people in Texas.

Marcello: From my interview with her, I can almost see how they might have arrived at that opinion or conclusion.

Johnson: Well, they told her in no uncertain terms. It was a very heated meeting.

Marcello: She's very Establishment-oriented actually, that is, working within the Establishment and this sort of thing. I can see how that might turn off some black leaders.

Johnson: She is not nearly as popular with blacks as she is with whites. She was not popular with that group at all that night. I had to plead and beg because I felt this way. I felt that I would be considered at that point because I had not done anything but win the vice-chairmanship. I'd served on the Credentials Committee, and I had gone against the rest of the four from Texas on most of the votes. I was a Humphrey delegate and the only vote that I really went with them . . . I was going in favor of

Humphrey and again it was the California which was the one that got a lot of publicity. But other than that, I was a lone Texan who would cast an opposite vote every time. They let me know that I would not forget this. Claudia Brummett and Julianna Cowden, who were very close to Briscoe, who are party officials now . . . Julianna is the secretary of the State Democratic Executive Committee. Mack Wallace served on the Credentials Committee, Jack Brunson from Houston, Mack Wallace from Athens, and all of them are now associated, of course, very closely with Briscoe. I was the other member.

Well, my vote was completely independent of theirs at all times, which shocked them and irritated them. But I voted the way I wanted to vote. I felt that I was not sent there to be a carbon copy of anybody. If so, then sorry about that because I wasn't going to be one. So I voted my way. When they called the roll, they'd go, "Texas," and call all the names. They'd all go one way and I'd go the opposite way. It got to be a joke for the Democratic Credentials Committee. But in the underlying kind of a comment they were saying, they would turn and say to other people, "Do you know Barbara Jordan of Texas? She is so intelligent." Implying her as a preference.

Now, I will say this. Jack Brunson had very little to say. He was, I think, a little bit more accepting of my independence. Mack Wallace would say to me, "Look, we don't believe alike. But one thing that you can always be assured of, I won't lie to you." He said, "Because I know that the little I've seen of you, that you'll find me out." He said, "I know that you'll find me out." He said, "So the one thing I won't do is lie to you." He said, "So if you ask me something, I'll tell you the truth." So frequently we would discuss things. I'd say, "Look, okay, tell me about such-and-such-and-such." We would just be talking. I was sitting next to him. He would be very, very honest. He was very conservative. They all were very conservative.

But those two women had it really in for me when we got back to Texas. They let me know that I would not forget. So when we got to Miami, you see . . . and I was not a delegate. Also, my senatorial district filed a complaint which I really didn't know anything about. I didn't know anything about it and didn't want to be bothered with it. They wanted to use my name.

So when we got there, they consolidated these complaints into one. They asked me to go in with the

rest of them. But all the rest of them went in for getting more people for McGovern. I said, "No, I can't do this to my people because every precinct in my district went for Humphrey or are uncommitted." I said, "I will not do this." Even though these were the liberals, and we had filed in together . . . we were together here because they were the liberals. But there it was every man for himself. I was not going to go to that point and forsake my candidate. Because when I went to the polls, the first name I put down as my presidential preference was McGovern. But my precinct went 80 per cent for Humphrey, and they wanted me to be a delegate. So I didn't have anything against Humphrey. I merely went McGovern because that seemed to be the new name on the scene. I really didn't know that much about McGovern. But I did know something about Humphrey.

So after I pledged my loyalty to Humphrey . . . that's one thing I don't do. If I commit myself to something, that's what I'm committed to. So I said, "Up until McGovern gets the nomination, if he gets it, I'm for Humphrey. If he gets it, I'll work for him. Not only will I accept it, I'll work. But I'm Humphrey until that point, until Humphrey is no longer a candidate."

The only time that it appeared that we were together at all is that they were really Wallaceites. If you didn't vote the McGovern way, you were going to vote the other way. Everybody else was in the same bag, which was going to include Muskie and all the rest of them. The Humphrey people were getting very disenchanted with me because I was casting votes according to the merits of the case as I saw it and not for presidential preference. Well, it got to be just a presidential preference battle rather than the merits of the case. So at that point, I started casting more votes for Humphrey.

But they actually sent in special lobbyists to lobby me on that voting. I would look at the merits of it. In an attempt to settle the Texas delegation challenge, they tried to get me to accept being a delegate in order to drop my interest in it. I said, "No, I'm not a sellout. I don't mind not being a delegate. I am interested in seeing equality and equal representation and what's fair. If I get it, okay. If I don't get it, okay. But I'm interested in the other." I said, "I won't sell out." To me that would have been a sellout. Okay, even the Wallace faction--which included Brunson, who was one of the leaders who came to me and

said, "Look, if you will accept being a delegate, we can get this thing all settled. We can withdraw it." I said, "No, I won't do that."

So I continued. I didn't even get counsel. I didn't go looking for legal counsel because the legal counsel that was there was for McGovern. I could not sell my people to McGovern. I had nothing personal against McGovern, but I had a conviction of my commitment to my supporters back here. They were calling and giving me increasing support. Then I had calls from other people saying, "Go this way" and all this other.

But the people who meant the most to me were the ones that I was going to represent. Those were the people who were telling me to stick with Humphrey. Most black people were really for Humphrey. All of my white precincts were uncommitted, which meant Wallace. There were a few people there for Humphrey but most of them were Wallace. So I just felt that I had a commitment to those people. So I would not switch, and I ended up being my own spokesman.

They had gotten 120-some names on that petition because they were telling everybody that I was on their side, which meant that they were not going to have any

difficulty having it stay there. But when I got up and gave my . . . I don't know what you'd call it--it wasn't a speech; I didn't write anything. I just got up and talked about the situation. It broke it down to the point where 40 per cent of the voters went with me. So it gave me enough edge that even the chairman of the committee, Patricia Harris, who is very Establishment-oriented, came to me and said, "Look, you are too strong to stop. You must file a challenge to be heard in Miami."

Well, I had a lot of reservations about it because I felt that I was not organized. But I went ahead and put it in. One of the McGovern delegates from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, said, "I'll do it because I cannot allow this to go unnoticed." So he filed the challenge. By some technicality, it was withdrawn in Miami. We had arranged to get legal counsel. The Black Caucus in Miami had gone on record to support it.

But nonetheless, I knew that when I got back to Texas, these two women that were very close to Briscoe were my enemies. So when we got to the state convention, I felt that we needed more than just the black support. I knew that they would support Barbara. We had the votes on the floor because many of the Wallace people became

disenchanted and left the convention. We had the votes on the floor. Briscoe was so afraid that it was going to hit the floor and cause a vote. If this had happened, we would have won. We would have taken more than we'd asked for.

Okay, so when we got there, we were bargaining for . . . we had come together and we had talked about Mexican-American representation, black representation, what have you. So we had agreed upon that. We had our caucus meeting. Of course, then, that's when all walls broke down in the Black Caucus, demanding that it be me instead of Barbara. Well, I got up and pleaded with them. I knew that the Twenty-third Senatorial district was going to put me up for committeewoman. That was Oscar Mauzy's idea. I felt that I had the votes there and I did. I won it handily. But I really didn't know what I was getting into. I told them, "Barbara's been active in the party longer. The committee's going to be meeting in Washington, and she's going to be in Washington." I said, "She has a better name. Her name is much more well-known." I just pleaded with the people. That didn't help. So I finally got up and I said, "I refuse to run." They pointed out that, "You

refused to run for vice-chairman until we insisted upon it." I pleaded and pleaded. Barbara was sitting right there and would not open her mouth. She would not speak. Barbara is a very shrewd politician. She would not speak.

But finally, I took several leaders out in the hall. One included Albert Lipscomb, and I pleaded with them. I said, "Please, Al, try to get the crowd to go with Barbara." I said, "We've got to win this. We cannot afford to go out there and lose tomorrow." I said, "Look, the whites are not going to go for me. They consider me militant, and so they're not going to accept it." He said, "Yes, but we want people who can reflect us. We don't want this white-Establishment woman." I said, "Al, do it for me, and I will go for committeewoman. Please do it for me." So Al said, "I won't go for her, but I'll stop speaking against her." So he came back in and he got quiet.

At that point, I got up and I nominated Barbara myself, and I gave another speech. Then I had someone else primed to second it. Then we just rapped it in. So the next day, I had to work hard all day long, walking that floor. Periodically, Barbara would stop me and say, "How's it going?" I'd say, "Well, I think it's

going pretty good." Kelton Sams, who is from Houston, was the chairman of the Democratic State Committee Black Caucus. He was negotiating in and out of the office of Briscoe and his staff. I said to Barbara, "Now I think that if we just will remain very quiet and very low-profile today, things will go well." Now if the blacks had realized that we actually had the votes, I really believe that they would have gotten up and nominated me from the floor.

But I really didn't want that, and I didn't want it for two reasons. I felt that we had to get a person who could be effective. I felt that we had to get someone who could deal with these people, who already had their confidence. She had the experience, and she would be available for that. I was going to be a freshman in the Legislature here in Texas, and I didn't feel I could divide my time that much. So for those reasons . . . certainly, it made me feel good that they were that supportive of me. But it was a little bit premature I felt . . . I tried to place myself in Barbara's place. I felt that if I had been in elective office as long as she had, and here is a new person on the scene to come up and be placed ahead could have been embarrassing. Because what happened behind closed doors and what would

have hit the press could have appeared to be rejection. To face it behind closed doors was one thing. But to have to face it in the press, I thought, would be an unfair kind of thing for Barbara. Even though they did not feel that she represented their views that well, she still had a very well-known name. I felt that what if this would happen to me sometime? So I couldn't help but feel that I owed this much to her. We won everything we went after the next day.

Marcello: Incidentally, you mentioned awhile ago that the Black Caucus had approached Mr. Briscoe. Exactly what was his reaction to your demands?

Johnson: At all times Briscoe was willing to go. You see, we had also . . . they had made a visit to his ranch prior to the convention to let him know what we were going to be asking for. He agreed to this. Also, at that point, they took my name. My name had been the one that they had wanted. Well, it was at that point that he said that he would talk with his staff members and let us know. So when we got to Houston, he let us know that some of his people didn't really want to go for my name. Well, I knew who some of those people were. As a matter of fact, when I went into the meeting and saw some of

them, I got up and left because I didn't want to appear like I was there negotiating for myself. But when Kelton came out, he said, "Those two women are the two people in there that are holding tight and don't want to give." See, they knew that if the chairman was going to be a male, the vice-chairman was going to have to be a female. Well, you see, one of those women had been chosen by him as the vice-chairman. So that person, Julianna Cowden, from what I understand, was going to have to give up that position altogether and take chances on being elected from that senatorial district, which possibly was not going to come about. But, you see, they had been hand-chosen by him to be presented to the convention.

Well, it didn't work. But that afternoon about three o'clock, we were assured that we had things going our way. It would happen. Also at that point, we had a test vote. What was that test vote on? They rapped out something . . . it was something to do with the labor thing. I think it had to do with the lettuce boycott that they wanted to do something about. They rapped it out, out of something to do with the platform, I believe. They demanded a roll call vote, and that was a test vote. When they got that vote and won, Briscoe

became very nervous because he knew we had the votes. Our faction had the majority left at that convention. It was at that point that he came in and said everything would go our way but no roll call vote please. It was supposed to be a choice between Billy Carr and Joe Bernal. Joe Bernal had the votes against Billy Carr. Billy had alienated some people. He let both of them have it if we didn't ask for a roll call vote on anything. He just did not want a roll call vote because he knew that if that vote had hit that floor that we would get more than what everything had been set up for. He would have lost complete control of that convention. So we agreed that if everything went according to the way it was set up, we felt that we should at least give that much, that we would not ask for a roll call vote. But when that test vote came about, that was not a part of the bargain. We had already agreed not to have a roll call vote on the other. Then he really knew for sure where he stood. He knew he didn't have the votes. It was at that point that he was not about to rebuke anything that we had proposed. We knew that we would get what we asked for. We did. We realized the power of organization at that point.

Marcello: So this Black Caucus was pretty well on its way even before the Legislature even came into session.

Johnson: Yes. As a matter of fact, we met and we discussed committees. We discussed what committees we were going to distribute ourselves in. We gave up choices in order to let certain people . . . we bargained because we wanted a wide representation in as many committees as we could because we recognized that much of the debate and the input happened in committee. So we did that. We had a long debate on how to organize and how we'd get a chairman and this sort of thing. We ended up by not really putting a great deal of credence into the leadership of the caucus. All of us were having the opportunity to say what we wanted to say and to put our input in, and we were equally respected. We did not want any factions to develop because of who would get leadership roles.

So we felt that there was a push from one of the persons from the Harris County delegation to become the leader. That person was Anthony Hall. Well, Anthony was not . . . well, Senfronia had some real hang-up with Anthony being the leader. So fortunately, the Dallas delegation had no particular problem. But

in the Harris County delegation, see, all the people who had run on the same slate had not won. Senfronia was not on the slate with the rest of them, so she felt pretty much here like she was kind of an outsider and certainly had a lot of hang-ups with Anthony Hall and his family because they were very labor-oriented, and, she felt, had not been fair to her. So because of that, we felt we should not add that kind of problem. We didn't want to bring that into the caucus at all. So G. J. was a loner from San Antonio. Then he was the senior citizen in the group. So we settled on naming G. J. the chairman. Then we decided that if we followed the guidelines, the vice-chairman should be a woman. Well, the meeting was . . . I called the meeting to be at my house. So I wasn't about to take an office. So logically it fell to Senfronia. Mickey was not here. He didn't come for the meeting. We named him as secretary.

Marcello: Mickey?

Johnson: Mickey Leland of Houston.

Marcello: I see. Yes.

Johnson: His real name is George, but he's pretty widely known as Mickey Leland. But we never really functioned in those roles as such, except that G. J. . .

Marcello: Now who's G. J.?

Johnson: G.J. Sutton of San Antonio.

Marcello: G. J. Sutton, okay.

Johnson: G. J. Sutton became chairman. We never really put a great deal of interest or emotion or extra respect to that particular office. However, after we got to Austin, he began to advertise that he was chairman of the caucus. But we had all agreed that no statements would ever be made in the name of the caucus until we all agreed upon it. Then we would have joint statements. But no one would speak out for the caucus. So it did pretty well. I would say that the majority of the people at this point are a little disenchanted with him as chairman. There's some effort going on presently to see if we can't smoothly elect another chairman.

Marcello: Why the disenchantment with him?

Johnson: Well, I think it has been because he really has gone beyond what we agreed upon in speaking out for the caucus. He has written letters and spoken for the caucus when we've not really met. One of the things that really sort of brought it to a head was about last month when he called a meeting and sent us all airmail, special delivery letters and saying to each of us that

the majority of the members had agreed upon this date and to please be there. Many of us rushed down to the meeting and found out that he had not really contacted anyone. He had circulated . . . he says he didn't, but anyway, it had been circulated on his stationery--the agenda for the meeting--and none of the caucus ever knew about it. He made statements saying what we were going to do, and none of the caucus members knew about this. So this created sort of a . . . it created a problem. The problem has not been solved at this point. At this point, there are two or three members who are beginning to feel that the answer is not going to be in leaving the leadership the same because this was not the first occasion. Then the press was invited, and we didn't know about it. They asked us questions, and, of course, the members that were invited didn't know about any of it. He ended up asking the press people to leave. We got some adverse press because of this. None of us were really responsible with the exception of G. J. Then he said that his aide did it without his authorization and this sort of thing. But nonetheless, it's not of a nature that has to do with any philosophical differences to do with the legislation. I think it has primarily to do with the preempting of us as individuals.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that the Black Caucus was much more cohesive than the Women's Caucus. Now why was that?

Johnson: Well, like I say, this particular little problem has developed since the Legislature has ended. During the Legislative session, we met often, at least once a week. We caucused at other times. There was never a time that we disrespected each other's opinion, no matter what. No matter what, we would not discuss each other with someone outside that caucus. We might smile or we might say, "What's wrong?" But it wouldn't be anything that we wouldn't say anywhere. But as far as actually discussing the weaknesses of one to another, we did that to each other. We had very, very heated meetings. They were very private. We excluded everyone but us. We put it on the table. When we felt that someone was on the verge of appearing to be a sellout, we told them straight to their face. We talked about techniques of dealing with certain things. We had a plan. We hit the floor, we knew where we were headed, and we knew that each other knew. We kept in close touch. There was not a day passed that we didn't caucus a little bit on things. We didn't bloc vote. There were a number of times which we didn't go the same way. But when it was something that

some of us had strong feelings about, and we knew we were going to split, we knew that. We knew who was going to split and in what direction and why. There were times when we were free hand when it didn't have anything . . . but we recognized and accepted that we had to represent not only our district but the blacks of Texas. They looked forward to this; they expected this. We felt that we had some responsibility toward them. So, we looked out for blacks of Texas.

There were times when we certainly did not agree on certain things. But we talked it over, and we had one agreement that we never forgot--that if we couldn't go with the majority, we would not go against the majority. So if you didn't want to go with them, you just didn't discuss any cons. You just let it be. This worked very well. If we had anything to say, we said it. I was considered the peacemaker. If there was any tension between two people, one or the other would get it to me. I'd go right to the persons and say, "Look, we can't afford this kind of thing. We have to look out for each other. We have nobody else to look out for us but us. There're eight of us; there're 142 of the other people. We have got to stick together." So we did.

When we saw some of them faltering, we were the first to jump on them. Sam Hudson was absent a lot, and when he was there, he was not on the floor a lot. He was approached about this in the caucus. He was confronted that his attendance was important, his participation was important, and that while you could look up there and see how somebody else is voting and vote that way, but without your vote, we lose sometimes.

Marcello: Did you ever detect any deliberate attempt to split the caucus in some way, that is, on the part of people outside the caucus? They'd offer this member that, this, or another thing in order to get him to vote in such a way that would be contrary to the caucus.

Johnson: Yes, early in the session, there were attempts. But we recognized that this would happen. We talked about this, and we said then that the name of their game would be to divide and conquer.

Marcello: Let me explain why I brought this up. In some of my interviews on the last session of the Legislature, several legislators, liberal legislators, had felt that Barbara Jordan had sold out for the promise of a Congressional seat.

Johnson: Yes, well, we felt our weakest link, as far as loyalty to the caucus was concerned, was probably with Anthony

Hall. We kept a close eye on him. We confronted him often. I think it got to the point that he was almost paranoid about us jumping onto him. But in the long run, I think he was about to see that we had a true loyalty to, first of all, to black people.

Marcello: How come he was the weak spot?

Johnson: Well, because I think that he had a close link with the Harris County District Judge. He had worked for the Commissioners' Court. He was closely related to them and could be swayed easily by them. Then he was very, very committed to his in-laws, the Middleton's, that are very strong in labor, or at least they have a reputation of being strong with labor in Harris County. He also was the one that seemed to be more inclined to be an opportunist than anybody else in the caucus.

Of course, the first bit of this is that G. J. Sutton really wanted to be on the Appropriations Committee. He was the only one who really wanted to be on the Appropriations Committee other than Anthony. He gave way to Anthony having first choice at Appropriations Committee in order to try to break down some of the other-- what appeared to be--little deals that Anthony was making

behind the scenes. Anthony would admit periodically . . . he would give us the impression that he was the one that had the upper hand, and he had the connections and this sort of thing. The more he did this, of course, the more it created distrust rather than respect, which I think he was attempting to create--respect. But it created distrust.

The other thing that came along rather early in the session that created more distrust was the fact that when the Prairie View situation came up, there was an effort on our part to kind of keep hands off for a while because we felt that there was an effort to use us, as blacks, by some of the white members. But we were preempted in the paper in Houston. Now we didn't get nearly as much publicity in Dallas as we did in Houston. At that point we met, and we talked and we talked and we talked and we talked. We decided that maybe we should move ahead into this, if for no other reason than to protect Prairie View, that we were not really after anyone, including Thomas, which he would lead you to think the opposite. But we even said that to him.

Marcello: Now is this the president?

Johnson: This is the president of Prairie View. We were not after anyone. But we were attempting to clear the air and straighten up whatever situation that was unscrupulous going on and try to keep the respect for perhaps at least a first-class college, which we would hope to eventually attain anyway. But we kept getting inklings that our conversations were leaking. I knew I wasn't talking. Everybody else was saying they were not talking, and we couldn't figure it out. But Anthony kept saying that he felt we should not do this because the appropriations had not come up. We had talked with Price, the speaker, who indicated that he had stacks of material that certainly indicated that it needed to be looked into, that people had visited him. We talked with Neil Caldwell, who was chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He said he would pledge us that it would not hurt Prairie View and its appropriations. I went to Fred Agnich, who was on the Appropriations Committee here from the Dallas delegation, and he pledged me his support for Prairie View and said he would get up and fight for it on the floor. Then others approached other people that they knew. So we had that pretty well under control because we felt that . . . Anthony said, "Well,

I'm on the Appropriations Committee." But we felt that one lone black member on the Appropriations Committee was not going to be the turning point anyway. So we felt that it took more than that. So we kept trying.

The resolution was not drawn up by anybody black. I was the one who sent for the resolution out of Dan Kubiak's office. I don't know whether he had authored it or not, but he had drawn it up, and he was about to introduce it. I sent for it. He sent not only that, but a file so stacked with material that would have gotten a great deal of things uncovered and opened and what have you. Craig Washington took the file and to protect Prairie View he kept those files. He wouldn't even give them back to Dan. We kept the resolution. It was my staff who typed the resolution up in another form and removed the original names. It was in my office that they started putting the names on it. Paul Ragsdale just happened to be the person to sign the line. Then Anthony left in the process of getting it together. After Paul signed it . . . first we gave it to Paul, and when we got to the House floor, the people were signing it left and right. Forty-some names were on the thing.

After that, we didn't realize that Anthony had not signed the resolution until after it was introduced because all of us were in the room. So then I didn't know it until it came out in the paper that the lone black member did not sign the resolution. It looked like just caucus members were carrying it. But there were so many names on there that it wasn't even noticed. Well, when we caucused again and asked Anthony about it, he said that he was with us in spirit. He pledged everything. The only reason he didn't sign it is because of the appropriations. We pointed out that we had already looked into prior to that. So I really became quite pointed with Anthony. I said, "Look, man, if you're not going to be loyal to us, buck out. We don't need you if you're not going to be loyal." So I said, "If you don't want to be a member of the caucus, then we're not going to force you. But don't play games with us." I was very upset at this point, and I was one of the few people that would voice myself very openly. But it led to others beginning to open up. Because Anthony and I are distant relatives. On that basis I felt like I could talk with him. The other thing is that I think with my psychiatric background, I was accustomed to

dealing with things openly, regardless of the consequences. So I just put it on the table. We all kind of jumped on him. I really got to kind of feeling sorry for him after that. But he did work on the floor for it.

In the meantime, the only thing that I really felt that brought Anthony over with us altogether was the fact that . . . we were not supposed to be communicating with Thomas. One Monday morning Anthony walked up and he said, "Did you know that damn Thomas played a tape that I called him on the phone to talk with him to do with something with the appropriations? He was taping the conversation and he played a tape at a faculty meeting." He said, "I got a call about it." I said, "Oh, I didn't think anybody was supposed to be talking to Thomas." Well, it was at that point that he went up to every one of the members of the Black Caucus to gain sympathy. But no one really gave him that much sympathy because what it did was make us feel that that was the leak. Because we'd been trying to find this leak. But it was at this point that we put it on the table. But we felt we really had him with us more in that situation than any other time before because he needed us then. So

we were all together, and we did work very diligently together to get support for that resolution. I think that was the point that strengthened us and made us be true believers of sticking together.

Marcello: Awhile ago, you talked about Anthony Hall being an opportunist. In what ways? Just similar to what you related to me on the Prairie View situation or . . .

Johnson: Well, I think he gave us the impression that he wanted to be the one who could say that he could deliver the Black Caucus. He wanted to be sort of the big man in Houston, the leading, most respected black. The rumor is now that he's going to run for a Senate seat. I don't know if that's true or not, but that's the rumor.

Marcello: What were some of the prime issues that the Black Caucus kept before it? In other words, what were the objectives of the Black Caucus in the Sixty-third Legislature?

Johnson: Okay. The main objective was to make sure that we were well-informed on everything. So what we did was put certain things toward certain ones for responsibility. For example, as far as reapportionment and line-drawing and that sort of thing, Paul Ragsdale was considered the one to keep an eye on that because he was on the Reapportionment Committee. Of course, he had been working

very closely with Dan Weiser, who was the person behind him on the single-member district for the school board bill. Well, that was Hutchison's bill, but Hutchison withdrew his name and left Ragsdale's on it. But it took all of us to get it passed. But we left that to him because that was primarily something that he worked closely with Dan Weiser on and showed some interest. That was about the extent of his area of expertise as we would consider it. Because he had a degree in sociology and was basically a good working person, and he had an excellent aide, and that's what really kind of got him by. But other than that, I don't think he really had any real area of expertise. Well, my area of expertise was considered to be in the areas of health and mental health because I am a registered nurse and had specialized in psychiatric nursing and had some knowledge and background and extra study in that area. Education was considered Senfronia's area. She was on the Education Committee and had taught school. So she was kind of considered the watchdog in that area. Craig Washington was considered the legal expert. He was the attorney from Houston who was extremely bright. Anthony was just sort of given the responsibility of letting us

know what was coming up before the Appropriations Committee. G. J. was really not considered to be a specialist in anything in particular. We spent our time trying to keep him informed and keep him in line (chuckle). Hudson was not given any responsibility because he was just not really respected very much. He was not there. He didn't appear to be very bright. We can't tell. But we could not tell from what he had to offer. He was asleep most of the time during the caucus meetings, and he dozed quite a bit during the sessions. Craig, who graduated from the same law school, was pretty critical of him. He was very skeptical of him. We just couldn't put any responsibility in his hands and feel comfortable. In the area of labor, we could depend on Anthony to tell us where labor was coming from. Of course, Senfronia also served on that committee, as well as Paul Ragsdale, I believe. Now Mickey was considered the person to keep us informed as far as all of the legislation to do with the pharmacy bills and Health Maintenance Organization.

Marcello: Who is this?

Johnson: Mickey Leland of Houston. He is a pharmacist and had taught pharmacy at Texas Southern University. He also

was the main sponsor of the health maintenance bill. That did not pass. But he is quite knowledgeable in the area. Well, in these areas we were to keep each other posted. I was also one that was able to keep them posted as to what was coming up and what we needed to get ready for as far as the calendar was concerned and to put influence on what to try to keep off the calendar and what to try to get on the calendar.

Marcello: This Calendar Committee was becoming more and more important, like you say.

Johnson: Yes, yes. The Calendar Committee ended up being one of the most powerful committees. A number of things went my way, and there were several that didn't go my way. But I really can say that I felt that I had some influence.

Marcello: Well, the Calendar Committee, in effect, simply determined when a bill would come up before the Legislature, right?

Johnson: And if it would.

Marcello: If they didn't like a bill, they could put it way back on the calendar.

Johnson: Right, it could be . . . and each member of the committee had influence. Generally speaking, my philosophical view had the balance of the votes in the Calendar Committee.

Marcello: When you say that, you mean that the committee was more or less evenly divided between libs and conservatives?

Johnson: Yes, House Bill 200, which was the reinstatement of the death penalty, I held that bill in committee at least a couple of months after it reached us. The speaker had to come to me and said all kinds of pressure was being exerted on him. If I'd please take my tag off of it, he felt that the people had a right to hear it on the floor and that sort of thing. So I said, "Well, I won't do anything to hurt it. I just won't support it. I won't support it to come out." When it did come up, I did vote against it getting on the calendar. But I didn't make any vigorous noises at the last minute because I'd held it back for a long time. But you see, I had to hold it. That was Craig's area. I knew we had to depend on Craig for that. The penal code was also Craig's area. So we depended on him heavily to guide us through the areas to watch amendments. So Craig had to be out for a trial, during the period when they were pushing to get that death penalty out. I just would not let it come out while he was not there because we had agreed that we would try to amend it to death--at least to try to make it unconstitutional. We were successful in getting that done. I think it's clearly unconstitutional, and I'm sure it'll be tested.

We almost made a decision to take it to court and test it ourselves, as eight blacks. But we decided that we would allow someone else to spend their money to do it because it's so clearly unconstitutional as we see it that we decided that our time and energy would be better spent in some other area. So consequently, I think that in view of the fact that two . . . there are at least two whites at this point that have been charged with crimes that can be tried under this new death penalty--no blacks so far. I feel that it's going to be declared unconstitutional during these first two trials. The first one is in Travis County, where a white fellow was accused of killing a policeman. Of course, the second one is right here with the Rodriquez case. I feel that these two cases will cause some testing of this bill. But this was Craig's area. We could feel very confident about his responsibility in dealing with those aspects of it. So this is how we feel that we were able to spread our talents. We at no time attempted to get the big head that we knew everything about everything. We felt that we had to trust each other in the areas of background and expertise to guide us through certain things.

Marcello: How much recognition did you get from Speaker Daniel?

Johnson: We got quite a bit. He didn't ignore us at any point.

Marcello: Again, do you think this was perhaps a part of his whole democratic philosophy of running House business? Now here, when I use democratic, I'm using it in the context of a small d--his democratic philosophy of running the House--and you think it was more or less in line with that attitude.

Johnson: Yes, well, I'll tell you what. When we felt that we needed to visit with him, he saw us right away. He listened. We'd reason together. But on no occasion did he ignore us, not even since the session has been over. He has kept in close touch. The same way with the governor. At no time did the governor refuse us an audience. At no time did he completely ignore us. We agreed that we would approach the two of them prior to going to the press. Frankly, they give us the impression that they're pretty fearful of us striking out at them in the press, so we have been able to deal with them fairly effectively.

Marcello: Let's talk about some of the more important pieces of legislation that came up during this past session. I guess we might as well start with Speaker Daniel's reform

package, since quite obviously that took a great deal of time at the session. Let's take a look at the ethics bill first of all. Now going back just a little bit, you mentioned that ethics legislation was one of the primary concerns of the people in your district, or at least you felt that way. So consequently, let's talk about the ethics bill, first of all, that was proposed by Speaker Daniel. What were your own reactions to the ethics bill in its original form? Now, of course, this was the one that called for financial disclosure and that sort of thing. That was the meat of the bill anyhow.

Johnson: Yes, right. That bill came through my committee, State Affairs Committee. Most of them came through State Affairs Committee.

Marcello: Right.

Johnson: I had looked at the bill quite closely. Of course, we could tell in committee that the bill would probably have some difficulty because in that particular committee it just depended on whether everyone was there or not, where the balance was. Finney was kind of tricky, who is chairman.

Marcello: What do you mean when you say Finney was kind of tricky?

Johnson: I didn't trust him out of my sight. He was playing a game, a political game. He's running for speaker. He

had bargained with Price Daniel to get the chairmanship of the committee. He would vote, when you were looking at him, in favor of the legislation, and you could see him hinting to his close associates that they didn't have to support it and this sort of thing. But he had an obligation to support it, so we could depend on him to go with the reform bills that came through committee, through finger only but not necessarily in spirit, obviously. That was pretty obvious to members of the committee. But we did get it through committee in pretty good shape.

Nugent was one that was not sincere at all about it. He played real games with that bill. Larry Bales, who was co-sponsoring that bill with him, was extremely sincere about it. Nugent was playing political games. So this was not difficult for even a freshman to recognize right off. You could feel the sincerity and you could feel it when it was a game being played. But I was quite sincere about it. I'm going to qualify that with this. There were many more . . . there were blacks who were quite concerned about crooked politicians, so to speak, but as far as black people were concerned, just about every politician had been crooked to them because

they hadn't gotten their fair share. So as far as the reform package was concerned, that was not a real, real issue in the black community. That was a white issue. I mean, to be perfectly honest with you, black people just didn't have that much to hide. The blacks who were supported and who did win in the black community were trustworthy people. Even beyond whether they were competent or not, they were at least trustworthy. The blacks never really pressured about reform. The reform that they were asking about were things that they needed.

Marcello: Bread-and-butter issues.

Johnson: Right. Welfare reform and public school education financing and that sort of thing--and did really not ask for it in those terms--but they knew what we needed in the community. But as far as the reform package was concerned, that was an issue that was basically a white-oriented issue. But we were, as blacks, committed to support the reform because we all had indicated that we were for pure government. We are indeed for the people being a part of government and knowing what's going on.

In the first place, we feel, as black people, that we cannot get the full potential power out of blacks until we get them informed, until they can see

that they have some input. The more open it is, the closer they'll feel to it. So our primary goal was to bring government as close as we could bring it to the people. In my campaign, for example, black people didn't even know you had to pay for campaigns because in the past there was one person on the slate. Emmitt Conrad, for example, never had to support himself running for schoolboard. LEAD did it. George Allen had to support himself as long as he lost when he was not being supported by CCA. But when CCA picked him up, he never had to worry about campaign money. So the black community had no idea that it cost to run a campaign. They were faced with that for the first time this past election and were not that responsive then because they were a little suspicious. But a little bit of education has come about since then. There's been so much talk about it. I think it'll be a difference. But this is the one reason and the motive behind blacks wanting the government to be more open and to let the people see who to trust and see what's going on. We were interested in getting more record votes and where people stood on certain things and that sort of thing.

But with reform, that was basically a white issue. There were no blacks involved in Sharpstown just like

there's not in Watergate. But we were interested in clean government. Therefore, we were for the ethics bill and the public disclosure. I was for the shield bill. I supported all of it because I felt that we needed openness. I had some reservations about the original form of the lobbyist reporting because I thought it was very detailed, and I wondered whether or not that this would hurt the honest people.

Marcello: In other words, I think as it was first worded it could almost be construed to mean that an individual citizen really no longer had the right to petition his government or his representative or his legislator or whoever it might be. That's been corrected since then.

Johnson: Now that really bothered me. Yes, that's been corrected. That really bothered me. That concerned me more in its original context than any other bill. The other thing, too, is that I fully recognize that you cannot legislate behavior to a degree. Whether a person is honest or dishonest, that cannot be legislated, although I do feel that laws have some effect on people. It at least gives you a handle. So I felt that they were necessary and probably would encourage more honesty. But I thought that with that bill, it might frighten the

honest people, and all it would do for the other ones is that they would just keep on doing it a different kind of way--with handling only cash money, etc., which I know has gone on in the past. That one bothered me. But it has been corrected.

Marcello: Let's go back and talk just a little bit about that ethics bill, since it was more or less the heart of the reform package. You mentioned that certain people on the committee were . . . you got the impression they were playing some sort of games, that is, some of the people on the State Affairs Committee. In what way? What did they do when this bill came up in the committee that gave you this impression?

Johnson: Well, in committee meeting when somebody's discussing a bill, there's a lot of moving about. You can walk off if you don't want to be there when a vote's taking place. If you want to . . . you can look at the factions and see who's sitting there. It only takes one or two votes to see where people are. You can just about tell whether or not you're going to be in a majority or whether you're going to be in a position to break the tie or whether you can just say, "Well, they're going to win anyway, so I went with them." Finney was chairing,

which meant that he really didn't have to vote. That's the prerogative a chairman can always hold, which puts you in a fairly safe spot. But during some of the debate on some of the bills, he would frequently walk off. First of all, he would . . . he immediately put most of it in subcommittee without having much full committee discussion prior. He would absent himself for all subcommittees.

Marcello: Who was usually the chairman of the subcommittee--Nugent?

Johnson: No, now Nugent was not on the State Affairs Committee.

Marcello: Oh, he was not?

Johnson: He was just an author of the bill.

Marcello: I see.

Johnson: Yes, he was the author of one of the bills. But Larry Bales was also, and worked very, very diligently. As a matter of fact, I didn't even know Larry was a freshman until we'd been there over two months because he had . . . of course, living right there in Austin, I guess he'd been in and out. He had worked and knew the details of the rules so well and all the aspects of this particular bill so well that I thought that he was there before. But he was also a freshman. But they were the authors. If an author's on the committee, he can vote but if he's

not, he's at the mercy of the committee. Well, Nugent didn't even come to the committee meetings that much when it was up before committee.

Now the one thing that I have respect for . . . Hutchison rarely went in the same direction that I went. Ray Hutchison's a Republican from Dallas. But whatever way he was, he was open about it and he would give you the rationale behind the way he was going to go. He would look at you in the face and tell you what he was going to do to try to get his way. You knew where he was coming from. He didn't play any games with you. I respect him for that.

There were people sitting there like Joe Hawn that didn't give me the impression he knew where his head was most of the time. He'd sit there and just automatically vote the same way that a certain faction would vote and couldn't explain why. I doubt if he knew what was in half the bills. He might be smarter than I think he is, but he didn't give me that impression. Geiger was the same way. I just have a feeling Geiger was just voting against Price Daniel because that was the conservative thing to do with not that much rationale. As a matter of fact, most of them really couldn't justify why they even voted for the Agnich

amendment because most of them, I don't think, even knew what was in the Agnich amendment and weren't even interested in listening to the debate because by that time, it had become a liberal-conservative kind of faction. They were voting the conservative faction. When I heard that amendment, I got up and went over and asked Agnich, "Is that your amendment?" He said, "Yes, but it's been modified a bit." I said, "What are your intentions? I don't understand."

Marcello: Now we're talking about the Agnich amendment which would have made financial disclosure a private thing, isn't that correct?

Johnson: Yes, be sealed in an envelope.

Marcello: In other words, a financial disclosure could only be made public if a majority of an ethics commission thought that there was some evidence of wrongdoing. Up until that point, it would be sealed.

Johnson: Yes, and the only way they could determine any wrongdoing is for someone to make a complaint. If someone made a complaint and it was found that there was no wrongdoing, they were subject to penalties. So you see, if an average citizen went down there to the county clerk's office and made a complaint and knew they

were going to be subject to penalties if everything was straight in that envelope--and they had no way of knowing unless it was opened, and the only way it could be opened was for that complaint to come about--that was completely eliminating any real process. Let's face it, I don't think we've had one single citizen in Dallas County to go and complain about anything that's being filed down there. Who's going to go to a big monstrosity of an ethics commission that's going to probably be, if it had been created, situated in Austin. It would be essentially like going to the attorney general's office and saying, "I want you to look at this man." No average citizen's going to do that. So to me that's just completely shutting out any right to know.

Marcello: Well, somehow the rationale for the Agnich amendment was that this would more or less cover, or at least take the pressure off, all of those people who held minor offices such as school board members and people of that nature. I still don't understand exactly how that would have protected them. This was the rationale that was put forward. Wasn't the rationale that the original ethics bill would have covered so many thousands of people that it would be unworkable?

Johnson: Yes, but that . . . well, yes, the original ethics bill could have been interpreted. I don't think it was the intent. That part did not come up for discussion in committee, but it did come up in debate on the floor, and it was questioned. After the parliamentarian gave a ruling, it did become apparent that it could very well apply to other than what it was probably meant to be, like elected officials. But it was very difficult to include people that they wanted to include and keep it constitutional without including some of the other people. For example, under the executive branch it was difficult to include the governor and exclude the secretary of state and this sort of thing. For example, the secretary of state is an appointive office but of the executive branch of government. Also, he's the one presently that is receiving these reports. Well, if he's going to receive the reports, then he should not be in a position to . . . well, who's going to receive his, was the question. So in order to include all of these . . . now this was the philosophy behind the ethics commission. It was not originally intended, and it was very difficult, I think, to write the bill to specifically include certain ones and to make sure that it was very inclusive and then

have it be constitutional and exclude others. So that's where some of that came in. However, when I went to Mr. Agnich and asked him for an explanation of his amendment, he simply said to me that what he was trying to do was protect the secrecy and the privacy of privately owned money and business, that he just felt it was unfair to have to reveal every bit of your financial status, that he felt that after you became an elective office that whatever the transaction of money at that point he didn't mind. But to have to account for everything and let the public know, he just thought that was going too far, and his intent was to make sure that whatever he was worth would not be laid out for newsmen to make a hayday out of. Now there was a great deal of debate and discussion over whether or not wives would have . . . so it did include transactions of any family member. I could understand some of that privacy. There were many questions asked like, "What if my wife became an inheritant of an estate? Would I have to report that?" The answer under that piece of legislation would have indicated that it would have to be reported. Frankly, I tried to listen very intently to all the debate because I think there were very, very valid questions asked. The

only thing that I kept going back to is the mere fact that you had offered yourself to be a public servant, and if that was one of the things that would make people feel more confident and to feel a part of government, then you know that prior to seeking office. The main thing I was concerned about is that everyone would be informed about what they were getting into because it is certainly not a life that is private. If you're leading a life that's not private, that's not clean or whatever, if it's something that you prefer the public not know, then you really don't have any business in public office. Before seeking the office, I think they should be aware of the fact that they would be public servants, that people really do have a right to know. If there are any dealings or business transactions going on that they don't want the people to know about, then they really should not be involved in them and call themselves a public servant. On the other hand, I don't feel that any individual is responsible for the actions of another individual, be it family member or whatever. Now I think it's different if you're living under the same roof. If it's a married couple, I think there is some validity in the transactions of the woman.

Marcello: Well, I think Oscar Mauzy would be a good example where both he and his wife are members of the same law firm.

Johnson: Right, yes. President Johnson sold his radio station, and Ladybird bought it, I think, or something. This kind of thing I think that the public would have a right to know. Whether there should be any legislation to prevent this or whatever, I think that's something that should be known. I think it's the same thing with other responsibilities. Just like I think that probably that is valid, I do not feel that the financial transactions or whatever of a brother of a representative or a sister or whatever is anybody's business. I don't think it should be capitalized on because one is a public servant. I don't think all the publicity about the financial status of Lyndon Johnson's brother is fair to him as an elected official. I think it's the same kind of thing when you see in the paper about Senator Clower's brother, instead of saying who he is, the headline reads, "Senator Clower's Brother Picked up for Marijuana!" Well, my feeling is that individual is responsible for himself as an individual, not Senator Clower. I think that when we talk about ethics and public officials, then I think it ought to involve those public officials. They should not have to take the responsibility of other members of

their family or whatever. Naturally, I think if it's of the same family group. But that and everything else including financial disclosure. But I think that as an elected official, that that is one thing that I think the public really has a right to know.

Marcello: Another part of that ethics bill that came up for a good deal of flak in the session was the whole idea of establishing an Ethics Commission to enforce it. What was the big deal about the Ethics Commission? In other words, why was there opposition to having an Ethics Commission enforce this bill?

Johnson: Well, there was a great deal of opposition to the way it would have been chosen. There were some who were opposed to it. The governor was very much opposed to it. The lieutenant governor was very much opposed to it. Price really, I would say, was the only leader in the pack that really was for it. I was for the Ethics Commission because I feel that first of all, the secretary of state right now has the prerogative to do anything he wants to do with an elected official. He is appointed by the governor. If he has any kind of sense, he's loyal to the governor. If the governor wants to get after someone--and believe me in politics this happens--

then all he has to do is say to the secretary of state,
"See what you can find in the financial disclosure of
this person."

Marcello: Now this was before your time in the Legislature, but I think a good example of this would have been Preston Smith and Bob Bullock. I understand--and I'm sure you must have heard about this while you were in Austin-- that Bullock was apparently a real vicious man, really a hatchetman for Preston Smith. I think this is exactly what you'd be talking about.

Johnson: Well, see, and not just those individuals as such, but any situation like that. I would have less respect for a secretary of state who would not respect the governor who appointed him. He certainly could take him out of office if he so chose to do so. If he's going to be loyal to anybody, if he's got any sense he'd going to be loyal to the person who appointed him. If the governor wants to get after someone, he can just say, "Look, get him." They'll find a way. So I feel that unless you're going to have a cabinet-type government all the way, that it certainly should not be just one individual to have the final say-so and to determine whether to . . . because once a statement is made, you can be freed by a

jury or you can be cleared by the attorney general. That might be after an election, too. The reputation can be very well ruined long past. You can be declared innocent at a later time. Ben Barnes hasn't been charged for anything. But he was linked, and he's marred. Preston Smith hasn't been charged with anything, but he was linked and he's marred and he didn't win. The two of them lost, and I think it was clearly because they were connected--so-called connected--with Sharpstown.

So let's face it. I think that the connection, the true proof of connection, is not always the thing that makes the difference. I think it's the implication as well. Once that is implanted in the minds of people, it makes a difference. So my own feeling is that we would have had a better and more objective--at least a cross section of people--if we could have gotten a Commission because that way with . . . they say there was some question about the constitutionality of the naming of the Commission. Well, there's some question about the constitutionality of every bill that's passed. There's some question of the constitutionality of every act. It depends on whether you're for it or against it. If you're for it, you usually won't ask for a testing of it.

Marcello: To a great extent, did this boil down to a liberal-conservative issue, that is, the Ethics Commission?

Johnson: Well, I think that particular aspect of it really went a little bit farther than liberal and conservative. Now, of course, what happened to secure the Ethics Commission . . . you see, four of the bills carried the Commission in it so that hopefully, one of them would get out of there with the Commission. So after one passed and had it on there, of course, that was used against on the other ones, but that was a security kind of thing. But many liberals did not like the idea of a Commission, especially in the Senate. The faction had solidified itself in the House, so there was not that much in-fighting of the liberal-conservative faction in the House. But there was, I think, really to some degree as far as the Ethics Commission was concerned, there was probably a bit more examination from the view of the Commission itself, rather than a liberal-conservative faction in the Senate than in the House.

Marcello: The Senate was apparently overwhelmingly against it.

Johnson: Unfortunately, yes. I was for it. I have no apologies to make for being for it. I'm still for it and it might

be from being naive, and if it is, I'm not any smarter. But it was my belief of the way it could have been chosen--the same way the Constitutional Revision Commission was chosen. The same people would have been asked to select so many people. Then the additional thing about it is that they would have been approved by the House or the Senate or both. Oh, there were all kinds of recommendations for choosing it. Some said by lottery. Some said by retired judges. Some were saying that each judge nominate a person and this sort of thing. But I thought there was a logical way to get one selected. One way I felt that the governor's office would be represented, the lieutenant governor's office was represented, the speaker's, the Supreme Court, the attorney general's office would be represented as selectors. With all of these people, none of them are going to be in the same corner at any time, which means that these people are going to present a diversity. I feel that it adds a bit more credence where there's diversity because one's going to be looking out on the other. Nothing is better to me than checks and balances. While I might have agreed with only one of them, or maybe two, at least other pointers would have been brought out.

If we'd had the shield bill passed, then I certainly felt that we would have a better chance at it because the media makes most decisions by the way it's played up or down. There are more people afraid of the media than they are their constituency. They're more concerned about how they're going to look in the paper than how the voting record is going to look to the people back home, which really appalled me. This is also much more common among the rural legislators especially. When they had the Citizens' Committee, Hobby kept saying that he was just not sure about any of the reform legislation, but he was going to have this Citizens' Conference. Then after this Citizens' Conference, he would then move on with the mandate from the Citizens' Conference.

Marcello: He followed very few of the mandates of the Citizens' Conference.

Johnson: He didn't follow any of the mandates of the Citizens' Conference. He chose me, or he invited me and asked me as a freshman to go and speak to the Citizens' Conference on it. Then he got Nugent. I felt that he got members from the House who were obviously not loyal to the reform package with the exception of me. I just felt that he

chose me because, again, I was three categories. I was a black, I was female, and I was a freshman. He asked me to go and speak before the Citizens' Committee. Well, I had to follow Mark White, who was secretary of state. I listened to his very dramatic speech against the Ethics Commission and wanting it all to come through the secretary of state's office. He was, of course, representing the governor. He followed Hobby, who had told the group the same thing. Well, here is this little old freshman sitting there. My aide was sitting there with a stack of the bills in its present form, in the original form, with the amendments and the analysis and everything. I was all ready to give my little spiel. Well, I made up my mind that I was not going to change. So my opening statement is that I'm a freshman and I full well recognize that I'm following the lieutenant governor and the secretary of state, and I want you to know right off with my first statement that I disagree with what they've said. I just went on with my speech. I just passed out all the different amendments. I discussed the amendments in detail. I had studied for this. I found that they had the original bills. The bill was in the Senate then. It was all torn apart. I went section by

section with the analysis on it. I felt really great when I walked out because I felt that was the first time that I had really bucked the big boys in Austin. Well, I didn't know what was going to happen to any of my legislation after that, but I really didn't care because that's just the way I felt about it. I became closer to Hobby in relationship rather than distant. Mark White was merely going along with the governor. I knew Mark and I couldn't believe that was Mark White standing up there saying those things. I said to them, "Now this man I have high regard for. But I know he was appointed by the governor, and I know that he's speaking for the governor. I think he'd be stupid if he wasn't." I just told them. So it was a mixed audience. Most of them were Hobby supporters and had worked for him in his campaign. I went back to my office and wrote every member a letter pleading with them to support the legislation as it was proposed and what have you and asking for public and open disclosure and what have you. They went on record as supporting that and he still ignored it. So I just feel that that really hurt Hobby. I really do.

Oral History Collection
Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: October 2, 1973

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. This is the third in a series of interviews to get Mrs. Johnson's reminiscences and experiences and impressions while she was a member of the Sixty-third Texas Legislature. The interview is taking place on October 2, 1973, in Dallas, Texas.

Representative Johnson, when we stopped talking the last time, we had just completed the discussion concerning the ethics bill. So let's move on to another piece of Speaker Daniel's reform package. Let's talk first of all about the bill that provided for one term, and one term only, for a House speaker. How did you about this?

Rep. Johnson: Well, of course, the speakership and the power of the speaker was quite new to me when I went. In retrospect,

I felt that it was probably a good idea in view of what I'd heard about the way Speaker Mutscher handled the House. But after getting there and being under Speaker Daniel, I began to have some questions about continuity, I think, primarily because I respected the individual. But when I tried to put it all together and start thinking about whether it was the person you liked or whether it was the principle of it, I decided to go with the one term for speaker. So I did support that particular measure. It was altered some in the Senate, but I did support it as it was in its original form.

Marcello: Of course, ultimately, it was declared unconstitutional, was it not, by the attorney general?

Johnson: Yes, it was.

Marcello: Some opponents of the measure said that one term for speaker would put him at a disadvantage in dealing with the lieutenant governor and the governor, who are elected for four years. Now how did you feel about that? In other words, some people said that the lieutenant governor or governor can wait out a speaker and see who's going to come after him. Have you ever given much thought to that?

Johnson: Well, I really had not given it that much thought. But to some degree I felt that it sort of put the two in a position to ignore the speaker, and it made the speaker appear to be the less effective one because they could easily ignore him. This is essentially what happened, I feel, with the reform legislation. I got the feeling that because Speaker Daniel was the person who authored, or at least was responsible for most of the reform measures, that it was simply ignored by the governor and lieutenant governor at the beginning simply because of the politics of it. Because it seemed to have been popular with the public, and he was really getting a great deal of positive response from his attempt to clean up the House--which, I feel, is what the citizens had indicated they wanted at the polls--and the one way to make him appear to be a failure was to make his program fail. I think really there was some effort put forth in sort of a subtle way for this to happen by the governor and the lieutenant governor.

Marcello: Now did this boil down to a liberal-conservative issue, or did people cross sides on this issue?

Johnson: I think there was a little side crossing. But I got the feeling that it really did split into sort of a liberal-conservative faction in the House. It was fairly consistent from that point on where your allies were. If you were thinking in terms of allies, you could really look back upon the voting record on the reform measures, and that's just about where you were going to find them.

Marcello: Let's move on to still a third piece of the reform legislation. This concerned the bill to end threats and promises and what have you in speakership races. Now how did you feel about this particular measure?

Johnson: Well, I thought that was very positive because I think that it really takes away from the real merits of any legislation. I know that there was much conversation, primarily, I think, by veterans or incumbants, about, "I'm going to wait and see what I'm going to get from the speaker before I determine who I'm going to support," which indicated to me that in the past there had been promises of chairmanships and other special kind of things. I just feel that all of that takes away from the true merits of anything. I understand in the past that no one really could get a bill to the floor unless

they were on the side with the speaker--for the last two speakers--from what I'm told. Now I don't know how accurate this is. But if this was the case, then I can see where someone would say, "If you'll promise me to let this get through the house, then I can go with you," and similar things. I'm also under the impression from what's been said to me that many of the bills that promoted the Sharpstown scandal were eased through on a concert calendar because of the speaker's influence. So because of this kind of thing, and I think because of the danger of people losing sight of merits of legislation and looking primarily to popularity and power, that it certainly is a good idea, I think, not to have that as a part of it. This kind of removes some of the politics from legislation.

Marcello: Now you weren't in the House of Representatives at the time, but previously there had been a pledge card system in existence. How did you feel about that pledge card system, even though you were never a part of it?

Johnson: Well, I have one of those pledge cards in my desk now as a souvenir. It happened to be there when I opened my desk on the floor of the House. I was really kind of

surprised about it. At the same time, it seemed to me like it was a pretty unfair kind of thing. I was not impressed with the pledge card thing at all (chuckle). It was almost like holding a weapon over the head of the person like, "If I give you my pledge card, then this is what you're going to give me back." I think it's important for the person who is seeking the speakership to know who is supporting him. But as far as the pledge card thing is concerned, it just seemed to me pretty much like it's leaning toward the corrupt part of politics. I'm just not that much in favor of it.

Marcello: What does the pledge card look like anyhow? Could you describe it?

Johnson: Well, the one that I have is about, oh, five-by-two, I guess, or two-by-five or whatever; and it has printed on there, "I pledge my support for (was it Price?) any-time that Mutscher is not seeking the speakership." So this particular one was a pledge card as if, "As long as Mutscher's there, he's our god. But if he's removed, then my pledge then will go to . . .

Marcello: Rayford Price.

Johnson: . . . Rayford Price, and I think it was Price that was printed on there. I thought I'd keep it for a souvenir.

Marcello: On the other hand, when Daniel was running for the speakership, is it true that he sent out letters soliciting support? Did you perhaps receive a letter from Daniel soliciting your support in his race for speaker?

Johnson: I'm trying to remember . . . I really don't remember whether . . . I might have received a letter because I know that I did receive letters from several people talking about the speakership. But the reason I decided to support Price Daniel is because he had been endorsed by the "Dirty Thirty." I felt that I had the same philosophical views toward reform as the "Dirty Thirty." So because he was their endorsed candidate, it was on that basis that I made him my particular candidate, and for no other particular reason at that time, except that I felt he was committed to reform. I just simply ignored my other mail. But I remember that the morning of my victory that I received three telegrams from one of the people running for speaker. I decided that they must have sent telegrams to everyone and somehow they ended up sending me three. As I talked about it, everybody else that I talked with that morning also got three from the same person. So I felt like that was sort

of a way to make you remember their name, which was Calhoun. But I don't really remember whether I received a letter from Price Daniel or not, seeking support. I think I had made a choice really before.

Marcello: My next question was going to be what's the difference between a pledge card and a letter from a potential speaker asking for your support?

Johnson: Well, I think there's quite a bit of difference. Well, I don't know . . . yes, I guess philosophically there might be, but tactically, I don't know. But I think that to request support is simply a matter of procedure. I think that is the one way to let people know that you are seeking the speakership. I think it's a very fair, open kind of thing. But to request a pledge card, it seems almost as if you hand that in for getting something back.

Marcello: I see. In other words, in the letter system that Daniel apparently used, there really didn't have to be any reply. In other words, he was saying, "I am running for the speakership. I would appreciate your support" and let it go at that.

Johnson: Probably. I really wish I could remember, but I was in the middle of my own campaign. I just can't remember. I probably did receive a letter from him, but I don't remember. I remember that I received a questionnaire from the "Dirty Thirty" group. On the basis of replies, they were going to endorse candidates. I did want their endorsement. That was the one endorsement I wanted. I didn't think I'd get any money or what have you, but I was committed to reform, and I felt that it would be important to be identified with this group. The one thing that they asked on the questionnaire was, "Who is your preference for speaker?" At that point, I did call Zan, and I said, "As far as I can determine, since the 'Dirty Thirty' seemed to have endorsed Price Daniel, Jr., for speaker, who else is running, and who else would be a choice?" He said, "Well, if you put Price Daniel, Jr.'s name on there, then don't worry about anybody else's because I think that is the answer they're looking for." I said, "Well, does it really make a big difference?" He said, "Well, I don't know but I think that they would have some idea that you've been reading about reform and that you're committed to it if you indicate your choice on there." So I did put

Price's name on there. I really don't know whether I ever got a letter. But I know later in the campaign, he called long-distance one day and said that he was going to be in the city, and he'd like to invite me to, I think, a reception that they were having or he was going to be attending, and he'd like to meet me. So I said, "Okay." But I didn't get a chance to make it to the reception. So I still didn't meet him. But he did call me one day after I sent the questionnaire back. But I think the questionnaire went to . . . it really didn't go to him, I don't think. I believe it went to Lane Denton.

Marcello: He was one of the acknowledged leaders of the "Dirty Thirty."

Johnson: But anyway, in the first primary they didn't make any endorsement in my race at all, which was very disappointing to me. It was only going into the run-off that they endorsed me. I asked them the reason because I was concerned. I did call Lane Denton, I believe, and asked. He said he was equally puzzled as to why, but he would check into it. He did call

back and said the reason why is because there were two identical questionnaires, and there were so many in the race that they decided to just withhold it because they felt there would be a run-off in that race. I didn't think that was a very good answer because they had endorsed . . . well, out of three blacks--we were running as a team--one had gotten an endorsement, which was Sam Hudson. He was also in a position to go into a run-off, so I didn't think that was a very good answer (chuckle).

Marcello: From our previous conversations, you have from time to time remarked that you would consult periodically with Zan Holmes. I assume that since he had been in the Legislature, you more or less considered him to be a type of political adviser to yourself.

Johnson: Yes, I think so. Without a doubt because we had been close when he was in the Legislature. He frequently, as I have indicated in the past, would call and ask me for public feedback and this sort of thing. We had maintained a very close relationship. I considered him my closest ally in politics, so I frequently did call upon him.

Marcello: Okay, let's move on to still another piece of the reform package that was put forward by Speaker Daniel, and this was the antilobby bill. Now my first question is this: how much contact did you have with lobbyists, or how much contact did the lobbyists have with you, during your initial term in the Legislature?

Johnson: Well, when I first went there, there was a lot of "coming by to get to know you" meetings. They'd drop in, and I was really kind of cool toward most of them. I think I got the reputation of being kind of cool or being cold. But I was very, very skeptical of lobbyists, and I really didn't want to be identified with one that lobbyists could get to. As a matter of fact, one of my opponent's strongest supporters, who lives here in my neighborhood, frequently would say to other people that the one thing he felt that I would not be able to withstand if I won was the pressure of lobbyists. So I always thought that the pressure of lobbyists would be so great . . . I felt that I would be able to stand it, but it was overly described, I felt, what it would be. So I started off

being very cool, and I made a statement that, "the first person who offered me anything, that I would call a press conference and expose them." So I think that sort of got around. But frankly, I didn't really have that much pressure from lobbyists because I was very curt with them most of the time and not too tactful and didn't intend to be. If they had something to say, I just wanted them to say it and move on because I was busy.

About the only lobbyists that I felt that I was fairly friendly with were people that I really had a strong interest in what they had. Like with nurses, I am a nurse and I was interested in what they had to say, and I listened to what they had to say. I wanted to hear their point of view. I wasn't sure I'd always go with them, but I certainly was quite interested in their point of view.

I was also interested in labor's point of view primarily because labor was supporting measures that were for working people. So I was interested in knowing what they had to say. I never made any promises as to whether I would support what they would want,

but I was concerned about where they stood with most of the pieces of legislation that would come up.

I was also very concerned with the view of Common Cause because I had been impressed with Common Cause as a people's lobby. Many times I sought their views on certain things. I asked questions. Especially during the reform measures, I would question certain things within some of the legislation that I thought would lead to other questions or would leave a question in my mind as to what it really meant and the implications. I called Milton Tobian, whom I had met here in Dallas, who was working in Austin periodically. So we had a relationship where if he needed to ask something of me, he would call and we'd have a conversation back and forth. But there was never any pressure on me one way or the other. I made it very clear that I was wanting an opinion. When I would complete my conversation, I said, "I don't promise anything, but I just wanted an explanation." When some of the others, especially the big business or oil-oriented folk or what have you, would come by, I just let them know that I probably would not support their stand. I didn't really have that much time when they were around.

But I would listen to what they had to say, but I wouldn't promise anything. There were some that I just simply told them that I feel certain that I don't agree with your view. But if you have time to tell me within five minutes, I'll listen to it. So that was the way it was. I think the heaviest lobbying that I received had to do with the public school finance bill, with I think TSTA people. The other time was from the governor's staff, who lobbied very, very heavily . . .

Marcello: On the same bill?

Johnson: No, no, just on other various measures.

Marcello: I see.

Johnson: I think they started off after me with the Controlled Substances Act. They were not registered as lobbyists, but that's all that I could see that they were doing-- lobbying for his opinion. I felt this was a little bit unfair to some degree because they were just really full-time pressure people.

Marcello: Well, actually, that bill had to be toned down quite a bit, both in the House, I guess, and in the Senate because I think the way it was originally drawn up,

just about anybody who petitioned his legislator could be construed as being a lobbyist and would have to reveal sources of income and things of this nature.

Johnson: Yes, this was pretty strong, I think, in the beginning. I really wanted to support it wholeheartedly because I wanted to make sure that lobbyists would have to reveal themselves and all. But I also was very concerned that a citizen would not be so fearful that they would hesitate to tell you how they felt about issues because I think that without citizenry input, then we've lost sight of what we're really there for. I was concerned about that. There were a number of questions concerning that, and I didn't want the bill to go beyond its intent. I did get concerned primarily as the debate came about and as the questions were being asked and answered. There were implications that this could be misinterpreted, or it could be interpreted to include a number of things that I don't think any of us really wanted to happen. Because as far as I was concerned, this was probably one of the times--maybe I feel this way because I was involved--that citizens had shown much more interest in government in Texas than what I had been aware of in the past, and I didn't want this

to cease. I wanted this to increase because I think that the more input you have, the better you can represent the views of the people. If something happened that they would be so concerned that they were afraid they'd get in trouble if they did it, then I think we would have defeated the real intent of it. There were a number of questions about this. As a matter of fact, there were so many questions concerning the fact that, "What if I go out to lunch with a constituent of mine, and that constituent decides to offer to pay for my lunch. Would this constituent be considered a lobbyist that was not registered?" and this sort of thing. When questions became so specific, and answers were so ambiguous, like, "Well, possibly" then I thought it was really time for us to start taking a real good look at what we really were doing.

Marcello: Now after the bill actually was presented on the floor of the House, did you notice any increase in the activities of lobbyists campaigning against the bill? They probably wouldn't have come to you because you apparently made your position quite clear earlier. So they knew exactly where you stood.

Johnson: Yes. I can honestly say that I didn't have any-
one approach me on that bill. Not one lobbyist did.

Marcello: Okay, let's move on to still another piece of reform
legislation. Let's move on to the open meetings bill.
Then we can follow it by talking about the open re-
cords bill. Maybe, in fact, we can talk about both
of them together, since I think in many respects, they
were certainly similar. How did you feel about the
proposal for this open meetings legislation?

Johnson: Well, frankly, at the beginning I thought that it
might have been going a little bit too far. But the
more I heard the debate, and the more that I realized
where all of the anti-open meetings noises were coming
from, I became much more strongly in favor of it be-
cause they were people that I didn't agree with philo-
sophically. I decided that perhaps this is one of the
reasons why we've had to experience some of the corrup-
tion is because they . . . it's been so much protection.
Why was it so much concern about whether or not a
meeting would be open? I didn't understand why . . . in
the first place, at one point, I was wondering why the
necessity for the legislation because I felt that anyone

could come to the gallery and they could listen to what was going on in debate. But the more we got into it, the more determined and convinced I felt that we needed it because there were just so many people that seemed to feel so exposed if someone actually knew what they were doing and what they were saying and what they were supporting. It seemed to me that it was an effort to protect themselves from the public, which I felt was unfair to the public, if they were going to be representing the public.

Marcello: Who were some of the people who were opposed to this bill?

Johnson: Well, really quite a few. I would say by the time we got to that, the House was clearly defined as to the liberals and conservatives. Most of them were the very conservative, very establishment-oriented people who were very opposed. I know that Fred Agnich was one of the ones who was strongly opposed. Ray Hutchison from Dallas. Geiger, who was a Democrat, was very opposed to it. Ben Atwell was very opposed to it. Well, actually, I would say that out of the Dallas deligation, there were probably five people who were

voting in favor of reform, and the rest of them were voting against it--out of eighteen. Most of the people who were strongly against it were considered very conservative in philosophy.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk then very briefly about the open records bill, since it's closely akin to the open meetings bill. I assume that on this particular piece of legislation you had no objections to it either.

Johnson: No. I was very much in favor of the open records because I know that we have so many people who are, I wouldn't say necessarily poor, but low-income people, who need to have access to records. In the past, it was a situation, it seemed to me, from what all the different testimony that came up, that no one really had access to what's supposed to have been public records but people who knew the ropes or people with money. Yet many times they were the people who needed some of these documents the least. There were a number of questions about trial records where many of the low-income naturally were the ones who were having to go through trials seemingly more often and would be in a position to appeal more often, but they would have to

pay sometimes really high prices just to get copies of a trial report. There were times when they would not even be able to get copies, even after trying to get up the money. So I was really very much in favor of that. I think that a lot of information was hidden. There were many interim studies that had been done in the past that were never revealed because the people on the committees didn't want to reveal what they had found because they didn't agree with what they had found. So they just simply filed them away some place and nobody really knew what they said. It came up several times that there were references in committee meetings about interim studies. I asked some representatives on at least two occasions what the interim studies showed, and the reply was, "Well, I really would like not to go into that." Yet they were people who had been on these committees. Of course, we had access to going and getting them. But I think that with it being very open and with the protection of it to be open, there would have been the opportunity to really kind of know about it even prior to having to go to this length to get it. So I was very much in

favor of the open records. I think that if anybody is honest, there is no reason to hide anything. I think that there would be very few people who would have the time to just pry for the sake of prying. I think that the confidentiality of one's very private life is still protected.

Marcello: How will this open records bill be carried out? Will there be tapes made of committee meetings and things of this nature, or will transcripts be made, or what exactly will the procedure be?

Johnson: Yes, it depends on the kind of meeting. Now for a public hearing, it must be taped. There are some subcommittees that three-fourths of the quorum can vote not to have a recorded meeting. But it's also a meeting where there are not final decisions being made. In subcommittees the decision has to be taken back to full committee. Then, of course, that has to be a matter of public record. Once in awhile, there's rarely any . . . well, I don't know if there's any public testimony without it being recorded unless there's a real . . . no, on one occasion we had a problem with

recording equipment. It was like two o'clock in the morning, so we did make a motion, and it was carried by two-thirds vote that we would suspend the taping of the meeting. It just so happened for that particular meeting we needed that tape later. When it got to the Senate, there was a part of the testimony that we could not review. It had to do with the speech and hearing bill, I think. Yes, I think it was one of the bills that dealt with licensure of either the social workers--the clinical social workers--or the audiologists and speech therapists. By the time it got to the Senate, there was some conflicting testimony, and they wanted to review the tape. I felt that I could remember what had been said. We had more than a majority who remembered what had been said in the testimony and would attest to it and were willing to go to the Senate side and say that, but when we decided to pull the tape, that was the tape that had run out. So then I really realized the importance of having the tapes. These tapes most of the time on matters of that sort are not transcribed unless requested. But they're kept on tape, and you can always go down and listen.

Marcello: In other words, they are kept on file someplace where a citizen can come in and get the tapes if he desires.

Johnson: Yes, now they don't . . . they can't really come in and get them. But they can go down and listen to them.

Marcello: This is what I was referring to.

Johnson: Yes, they have access to listening.

Marcello: Well, still another piece of this reform legislation was the bill to limit the powers of the conference committee to make substantial changes in the appropriations bill. Now I can ask you some questions about the activities of Representative Heatly prior to the session in which you participated. That might be unfair because you weren't there at the time. But how did you feel about limiting the powers of the conference committee to make changes in the appropriations bill?

Johnson: Well, I felt pretty strongly about it because I feel that you always have to think in terms of who's going to be speaker the next time and who's going to be chairman the next time and who's going to be naming these committees. I think that while this time, this particular session, I think there would have been a

fair and balanced conference committee, I can't say that it will be that way the next time and the next time and the next time. So I really felt that it was essential that we have some protection when it came to the conference committee and limiting the powers because from what I'm told, it was a completely dictatorial thing in the past. It was just one man's way, and that was it. If it's going to be that way, then certainly that particular man would probably be in the conference committee. I could not imagine a conference committee on the appropriations bill not having its chairman of the Appropriations Committee in there, which really invalidated any real input from the conference committee anyway, except that if it displeased this particular person, it'd be changed the way they wanted to. I did feel that there were some fallacies still existing within the appropriations bill due to this man's power and the fear that this power would return. There was a great deal of concern that he would return.

Marcello: You're speaking of Heatly once again.

Johnson: Heatly, yes. For example, the Vernon Center in Vernon, Texas, as far as I'm concerned, from the testimony that I heard was just a sore thumb and a facility that really had no business being there except that it was in his area. He had made sure that the money was appropriated. I supported attempts to try to cut this money. But there were so many people who would come to me, who did come to me, and ask if I would get up and try to change it, and see if we could do something about it. They would not do it themselves. Many of them were incumbants, were veterans, who had been there for a while. They said, "We've been able to see his power, and he just might return. He's vindictive." So there was still a lot of fear of this man's power. I simply would say, "Well, I didn't feel that I was that big and strong that I could take on such a monstrosity, if he was one of those." But I certainly felt that if I really and truly felt that it was a waste of the taxpayers' money, or abuse of it, that I certainly would support measures to try to correct this, and I did support them. We didn't get very far

with it, but we cut a little bit. But I still feel that there's a lot of money down the drain. To follow this up, I'm vice-chairman of the Mental Health-Mental Retardation Subcommittee, and one of the things that has been requested is that this particular facility be studied very closely. I've had people on the board of MH-MR come to me and say, "I can't go on record, but I really would like for this to be done." Then people in the area like Dave Allred, who is in that senatorial district, did try to get me to go ahead with the committee meetings while he was away on his military reserve or something so that that area could be gotten and all the licks could be hit while he was out of the picture. I just decided that I was not going to do that. I felt that it was not fair to me and that when the time came, we would treat it like any other facility, and it would not be any particular witch hunt to try to just roll it under. But when the time came, I would simply look at it as every other facility and simply give my opinion on that facility just as the other ones. I still have not seen it. But I received a call today from Dr. Wade's office wanting me to try

to set up a time that he could take me by flight to visit the different facilities. I do hope to see it to see what I really do think about it (chuckle). But I think this is one of the things-- that there's some fear of his power and his position.

Marcello: What sort of a relationship did you have with Heatly during the session?

Johnson: I really didn't have a relationship with Heatly. I was kind of matter-of-fact with Mr. Heatly. He sought me out on several occasions because he had some bills in the subcommittee where I was presiding because Mr. Allred was frequently absent. While the bills were in subcommittee, he came by my office several times because his office is right in the same complex. He's still housed in the Appropriations complex area there. He would come by my office and ask how the bill was coming along. He did ask me on several occasions to see if I could help get it out of committee. But other than that, I had very little contact with him. When I was around him I simply treated him like any other colleague. I would chat with him and speak with

him. He was very cordial to me. He was less cordial when he found that he really could not manipulate me as well as, I guess, what he probably had suspected he could with any freshman. I think that's when he really began to kind of feel that some of his "big, bad wolf" kind of image probably had crumbled a bit because the freshmen just didn't appear to be nearly as frightened of him as incumbants.

Marcello: Incidentally, while we're on the subject of the Appropriations Committee, I would assume that during this session, when debates were initiated on the appropriations bill, that there was more democracy than had ever been seen in the House before.

Johnson: Yes, from what I understand. I think that was one of the reasons . . . I guess I would say one of the reasons why I was able to understand the bill more because it's a huge bill, and we tend--I think all of the representatives--tend to look at areas that you are keenly and individually, specifically concerned with and skim over the other. But just about every aspect of that bill, was gone over pretty thoroughly on the floor, which gave us a better view. So I don't think

the time was in vain or wasted. It did get to be a little boring at times because of all the amendments.

But if we had taken the amendments that we had prepared--about four of us had gotten together--it would have been longer than that. It was really out of respect for Price Daniel that we decided not to go forth with all the amendments that we had. We had a feeling that they probably would not have been adopted, but we wanted to make a point of it. We had about eighty-nine amendments to cut budgets in half--at least half--of agencies that had shown, according to our statistics, discriminatory hiring practices. We had them all prepared. The only thing different was the name of the agency on all of them. We had them ready to go when we hit the floor. But debate was so long, and Price pleaded with us not to present each one of them. We started out but we didn't go with the whole thing.

Marcello: Who were the four people who were going to present these amendments? Who were the other three besides yourself?

Johnson: Okay. Lane Denton, Ben Reyes, Paul Ragsdale and myself. We had them all prepared and . . . well, I take that back. Paul Ragsdale was not with us on that. It was

Mickey Leland, the fourth one. But we decided that that was the only way we could get their attention that we wanted something done about the hiring practices. We felt that one of the main ways would be through the pocketbook because we had invited the agency heads over and formed ourselves an ad hoc committee and had them before us and questioned them. The ones that were so blatant and did not seem to show very much interest in doing anything about it, we just decided that that would be one way to at least call to the attention of the House and to the Senate and to the citizens of the State that this indeed existed. We were promised by the chairman of the Appropriations Committee assistance. Neil Caldwell really negotiated quite strongly with us--that he would try to see that we could come up with some way to insure better employment practices with the amendments but please not to do it and stir up a lot of stuff. That way it might end up hurting in some other area. So it was at that point that the Civil Service people--the Civil Service Commission--people--were pulled in, and they are the ones who really drew up the amendment

that was attached and was sponsored by Paul Ragsdale at that time, that any agency receiving money must have a recording system and must show positive action or affirmative plans to make sure that there was no discrimination on the basis of sex, etc.

Marcello: What were some of these particular agencies that you had singled out? I know one of them already (chuckle).

Johnson: Yes. There were really quite a few. Not too many were left out. There was the University of Texas system, Mental Health-Mental Retardation . . . many of them that were really working very closely with, but they still had some discriminatory policies as we saw it. The Welfare Department, of course, the State Comptroller's Office (chuckle). But really, I really don't know of any that were really that exempt. I think that Bob Armstrong's office was exempt. I could probably name a few of those better than anything else, the ones who were not included. Many of them were either very new agencies or agencies that had shown some effort for affirmative action. There were very few, very few. But I think that Bob Armstrong's was one of the ones that stood out, which was the Agriculture Commission, if I remember correctly. Because I know that when I filed

my complaint, he rushed up to me and said, "Seventy-five per cent of my employees are female. Don't get me." I think that John White in the Agriculture Department . . .

Marcello: Armstrong was in the Land Office wasn't he?

Johnson: Land, yes. I think that John White was another one that might have been exempt. But not too many of them were. Most of them were . . . as a matter of fact, we have 101 prepared to go with now in filing complaints (chuckle). It's a matter of submitting them. We're already to go.

Marcello: We'll come back and talk about this later on. I'll probably wrap up the interview on your battles with Mr. Calvert. While we're on the subject of appropriations still, how would you evaluate Neil Caldwell's conduct as chairman of this committee?

Johnson: Well, I really thought that Neil worked very, very hard and very diligently and really attempted to be pretty fair. I think that he did . . . I think for the first time, perhaps in the history of the whole thing, that the people that commonly would be labeled as liberals felt that they had some input. From all

indications, this had not occurred in the past. It was strictly what Mr. Heatly thought should be in there. So consequently, I think that when it was all over, with the exception of the University of Texas, just about . . . I would say that a great majority was pleased with the outcome of it.

Marcello: Incidentally, I think we should put in the record that this bill got bottled up in the Senate and, of course, never did pass, isn't that correct? It never did pass?

Johnson: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Okay, there's one last piece of reform legislation that I want to talk about, and this is the campaign financial disclosure bill.

Johnson: Yes, that's quite complicated. As a matter of fact, I understand that the different county chairmen are trying to get into some kind of common language some little cards of guidelines or letters or something to instruct everyone how to start reporting, though I still think it's fair. I think it's going to make everyone very careful and very cautious. The interesting thing is I was so extremely careful and cautious before that I don't know how much more cautious I can be this time. I was always so afraid that I would miss one little thing.

But frankly, the leniency was much more frightening to me than this very specific way of reporting. I think that's the way it's going to be with most of the people that really intend to be very honest. Because, for example, I didn't have to file in November because I didn't have an opponent. It concerned me because at the time I won, I was in a deficit. I did have fund-raising activities after the ten-day reporting that helped me defray some of the deficit. But on the other hand, I still had some deficit come November. I had a little money coming in as campaign contributions even though I had no opponent because I actually campaigned in November. But I didn't have to report, which concerned me. It concerned me for a pretty good while, until finally I learned that nobody else reported that didn't have an opponent. So I thought, "Well, I guess it's okay." So I feel much better having some very specific things to do. I was much more concerned not having to report specifically because I felt that there might be some question because I did indeed have some financial transactions in my campaign account. But I didn't have to report that. So I'm pleased that we have it. I just

want to make sure that I understand it well enough to be able to report correctly because I think it did get to be quite complicated.

Marcello: In summing up on this reform legislation, I have a few general questions to ask. How did Speaker Daniel go about selecting sponsors for these particular bills? For example, I know Ben Bynum sponsored the financial disclosure in elections.

Johnson: I really don't know. I remember that when we went down for freshman orientation, he did ask if we had . . . well, I take that back. He did write letters and indicate what the reform package consisted of and some explanation and asked that if you had any desire to sponsor these to please let your wishes be known. Well, I didn't let any wishes be known because I wasn't sure that I was ready to sponsor any legislation. So when we went down for freshman orientation, and again it was an opportunity to go in and look through the legislation, the proposed legislation, and put your name on it if you wished to sponsor. But I still didn't. But I did sign some when I went down when we were sworn in. The day before the swearing in ceremony, I went in and

signed several of them. I don't even remember which ones that I signed. But at the time and reading hurriedly and with many other things on my mind, I just didn't understand, I think it was two of them, very well. I know that I didn't sign those two because I just didn't understand all of the ramifications. That's one thing that I had been reading about and the cautiousness of co-sponsoring when you didn't understand. So those I didn't sign. But I did not want to be a major sponsor on any of them. I didn't feel I was ready at the time.

Marcello: Also, when these House bills got to the Senate, in a great many cases, the Senate either procrastinated on these bills or in a great many instances attempted to water them down. How do you explain the conduct of the Senate?

Johnson: I think they were simply getting along with the lieutenant governor. The Senate had a reputation of leaning conservative this time, though towards the middle of the session, I began to wonder whether it was the Senate or the House that was leaning more conservative. But I think really it was primarily . . . well, I think that because the factions had been so clearly defined in the House as

liberal and conservative that there were some very cautious people on the basis of their real philosophical views. The other part of it is the way the . . . they're fewer in number, and consequently more of them are involved in chairmanships and that sort of thing. I think they were just interested in getting along with their leader and simply follow his wishes because there were . . . the subcommittees, I thought, were very skillfully chosen so that they would be controlled. I don't know of anything that came out that he didn't like.

Marcello: I gather then that you got the impression that Lieutenant Governor Hobby was dragging his feet on this reform legislation?

Johnson: Yes, very definitely. I really felt that. I know that there were some senators that really did speak out and start to ask about the legislation, but they were not in the majority, and I understand they sort of burned a few bridges with the lieutenant governor as a result, too.

Marcello: Some people have said that one of the reasons the Senate delayed on these bills was because they had to refine the bills. In other words, there was a charge on the part

of some senators, or made by some senators, that some of these bills in the House were sloppily drawn up and that they needed to be refined over in the Senate.

Johnson: Well, I think that some of that was just a cop-out, and excuse . . . well, I think there were several things that probably did need to be done, and that was, number one, to remove the Agnich amendment off of the ethics bill. I think that was one. There was another bill that the attorney general had indicated there were sections that could be unconstitutional. I think it was probably a very wise thing to seek his opinion. However, this had been recommended in the House to seek the attorney general's opinion on some of them. But I think essentially it was simply an avoidance kind of thing. It was an excuse because public sentiment was great to move these reform bills on. I think it was simply a way to try to divert the attention away from the fact that they were being stalled.

Marcello: Some critics of the reform legislation have charged that because the Legislature spent so much time on this reform legislation, a great deal of other important

legislation was ignored or received a rather hasty treatment. How would you answer these critics?

Johnson: Well, I just think we need longer time to work on them. I don't feel really that there was too much time spent on reform legislation. I think this state was in such a state that we needed to pass the legislation that would certainly restore some of the confidence in public officials. If it had taken more time, I would have been certainly willing because I don't want to be in an office that people don't want to respect or that they will not respect. I was interested in people having faith in government, and especially young people coming on that will be ultimately leaders of the State and of the country. So I really didn't feel that way. I did feel, however, that we were really kind of pressured for time, but I don't think it had anything to do with reform. I think it has to do with the limitations of time that we had to deal with. This is a huge state with many problems, and we especially had many problems this session. To think that we can meet every two years for 140 days and get all the business taken care of is just kind of stupid.

Marcello: In other words, you're an advocate of annual sessions of unlimited duration?

Johnson: Especially if we have a governor like Mr. Briscoe, who is unwilling to call a special session no matter how important it is. But I really am for annual sessions. I would like perhaps some limitation. My preference would be that there would be a pre-filing time for bills. It's very similar to the Florida plan. Then once those bills are filed, then we work until that legislation's completed. I don't think it'd be that much over what we're doing now. I think it would mean that we would get in there and work because nobody's that willing to stay down that long. Everybody's pretty much ready to get back to earn a living. It's just that when you're working under that kind of pressure, I think that no one makes their best decisions, and everyone's overly cautious or extremely cautious, and they perhaps spend more time because we are so pressured that they just want to hold on a little longer, whereas if we didn't feel the pressure, sort of the super-imposed pressure of time limits, we'd probably get the same amount of work done in the same

length of time. But it'd be a more relaxed atmosphere, and it would not have that much interference with the thinking process.

Marcello: I want to throw out some pieces of legislation that were passed by the Legislature, and I want to get your instant reactions to them. Teenage rights.

Johnson: Well, I was really for teenage rights because I felt really that by age eighteen, if the homework isn't done with parents, then they can wrap it up (chuckle). By age eighteen they can be charged as adults, they can be drafted into service. They have every responsibility but no privileges. So that's the reason I was really for it. I really feel that by age eighteen, if somebody wants to drink or if they want to smoke or whatever they want to do, they'll do it anyway. So I don't see any need to continue to hold that strict line. I think it's a very false kind of premise to think that something's going to happen like that (snaps fingers) at eighteen or age twenty-one. I think that people reach points in their own development and maturity that they're going to start doing certain things.

Marcello: Incidentally, some people have said that this debate on teenage rights boiled down to an urban-rural problem. Did you notice that?

Johnson: Well, I think probably to a certain degree it might have. It had some influence, I'm sure. I can imagine that most of the urban dwellers recognized the reality of the situation, where some of the rural people probably felt like all of a sudden everybody's going to be in bars every Saturday night because that's what they had done (chuckle). Probably I think this might have had some validity to it. I really think it might have.

Marcello: Okay, another topic that came up at the session concerned the easing of drug penalties.

Johnson: I was probably a bit more conservative than some because I had some background in drugs. I was really much more in sympathy with the user than the pusher. I really wanted to hang that pusher to the "Nth" degree. But I really wanted much more understanding of the user because I really feel that it's a symptom, and the real problem is not the drug. So I was really in favor of especially . . . I could have really gone for legalization of marijuana because I felt that strongly about the kind of sentences that our young people were getting.

I had been in a position to see how young people could have their whole lives ruined just by being a felon at age eighteen. Yet, there has been much more documented evidence on the danger and the after-effects of alcohol than marijuana. But all of the penalties with all of these big thousand-years and all for possession of marijuana, it just really had turned me completely off. I was very much in sympathy with a number of young people that had experimented with it and had gotten caught. I've never used it. I don't know what it's like, but I just felt that this was a culture in a way. It was a fad, and it would pass. The more attention given it, the more encouragement, really, that you give to a teenager . . . so while I had some hesitancy in my mind to come out strongly myself for it, I kept thinking that because somewhere down the line maybe research would show that it had some dangerous effect. But research has already shown that alcohol has damaging effects to the body, and yet it's not a penalty to use it. So I had very strong feelings about the marijuana issue.

On the other drugs, I felt there should be some real controls. I certainly was in favor of pushers

having strong sentences. I had some reservations about how the controls are going to take place. I felt that the . . . was it the health commissioner? . . . I just didn't feel that any one person should have so much power and that they would be able to control all of this. So I carried an amendment to have the approval of the board, which was the only amendment I was able to get on the bill. But all in all, I think that it came out to be a pretty good piece of legislation. I understand that lawyers feel kind of confused about what it's really saying about marijuana. Many of them are saying, "Well, essentially it's legalized." I was pleased that it was more lenient on marijuana.

Marcello: Restoration of the death penalty in certain instances?

Johnson: Well, I was very much against that. The reason that I was against it was because of the history of what the death penalty has meant for blacks especially and poor people in this state. For that reason . . . really, two reasons. I have some . . . now I know that if I was subjected or my child was subjected to the mistreatment that I know that many people have been, that out

of emotion I probably would want to say, "Hang him" or "Shoot him" or "Kill him" or whatever. But I think in thinking rationally, I have a lot of my own hangups about people taking others' lives, no matter what the circumstances might be. So I had that hangup in addition to the reality of the fact that poor people and black people or minorities really are the ones who are going to be more subjected to the death penalty. For that reason, I really could not support it. I feel that ultimately if we have a single system of justice, whatever sentences that come along, if we can be assured that people are guilty of crime and they could be consistently sentenced, then maybe I can support it because I'm basically a law enforcement person. But I couldn't support the death penalty with the history, and there's nothing that is indicative to me that it'll change in the future at this point.

Marcello: Without revealing any confidential material, on Sunday I had an interview with DeWitt Hale in Austin. His contention was that justice is fallible, and the death

penalty represents a certain finality. It's been proven in the past many, many times that the wrong person has been convicted. So for that reason, he was in opposition to the death penalty.

Johnson: Well, I think that's true. As a matter of fact, I think my very early experience in Dallas had to do with, I think it was Jimmy Lee Walker or Tommy Lee Walker, anyway, a black guy, a rather young man, that was accused of raping and killing, I think, or either raping, one, near Bachman Lake, a white female and was given the death sentence. Later it was proven that he was innocent. That has really stayed with me. I guess that has really kind of put what Dallas' justice is like in my mind (chuckle). So when I think in terms of the death penalty, I never think about it without thinking about Walker.

Marcello: Let me ask you some more general questions now. On the balance, how would you rate the Sixty-third Legislature in terms of its accomplishments? Are you satisfied with what the Legislature accomplished this time around?

Johnson: Well . . .

Marcello: Of course, you're never completely satisfied.

Johnson: I was going to say, I guess we can never really be satisfied. But I think generally speaking, I can feel pretty proud of what we accomplished. I certainly feel that it was probably the hardest working Legislature in the history of the State. Certainly time and effort was really put into it. I don't see how it could just be erased as not being meaningful. I really am impressed with the effort that was put in this time.

Marcello: Where do you think some of the weak spots were? In other words, what were some of the things that you would have like to have seen done which were not done during this session?

Johnson: Well, one of the things that I think got in the way, at least toward the last, is the Calendar Committee. The chairman of the Calendar Committee and the vice-chairman of the Calendar Committee became speaker candidates. Once this became apparent, it was very obvious to me that the setting of the calendar became very, very political. There were promises, and I mean open promises. I heard them, I was aware of them, and there was legislation that did not get on the calendar simply because it would have

been controversial. It would have been placing them on the spot. They didn't want to be recorded as voting a certain way because they either needed labor's support, or they wanted this one's support, or they didn't want to get out with this one or the other one. There was legislation that simply was killed that way.

Marcello: What sort of promises did you hear?

Johnson: Well, with the minimum wage bill, for example, and with the agency shop, the chairman of the committee just simply said that he just would not accept a motion from anyone to put the agency shop bill because he did not want to be recorded as voting against it. He couldn't vote for it but because he wanted labor's support in his speaker's race, and he also needed the support of . . . well, it was labor vs. big business, and it was either one or the other in the language of the House. He said, "Right now I've got both of them going my way, and I'm not going to do anything to rock that boat." TMA was also a big force with the Calendar Committee.

Marcello: What is TMA?

Johnson: It's Texas Medical Association lobbyists. There was a bill to restructure the Board of Health. They were against it, and they made some agreement with the chairman to block it as long as they could. So by the time it . . . of course, during the last two or three days, anything you wanted on the calendar, he would put it on there because it was too late to do anything about it. So that happened with the minimum wage bill. It happened with the Human Relations Commission bill. These are bills that I had keen interest in, so I remember. The Board of Health bill, the agency shop bill. I had some questions about that. But after I really read it and understood it, I felt with a couple of amendments I could have supported it. But those bills in particular I know were bills that were purposely avoided by the chairman of the committee. The reapportionment bill was another bill that . . . I tried hard to keep it off, but the chairman of the Calendar Committee wanted it on. He wanted it on because he wanted to strike out at Fred Head, who was one of his strongest speaker candidate opponents.

Marcello: Would you care to comment on the future political ambitions of Price Daniel, Jr.?

Johnson: Well, at one time I thought it was rather clear that he was going to be going for lieutenant governor. Now I'm not sure. It's been said to me by one of his aides that he would not be seeking an elective office this next session at all. So now I'm thinking that . . . in my own mind, I certainly feel that he's not finished in politics. I think that he does have something in mind. In my own prediction, I believe that if Attorney General Hill seeks the governorship, I think he will seek attorney generalship. At one point there was some speculation that Hobby would seek the governorship. I think Hobby purposely dropped that in order to kind of seek Price out, to see what his intentions were. But I have a very close ally who worked for Hobby who indicated to me that Hobby would be seeking re-election, and he was trying to pull some things in order to see what was going to be happening with other people. But I think that he will be going with one of the three top spots in the state his next time. Of course, with the four-year terms coming up, if he doesn't seek it this time--and he has indicated he would not be seeking an elective office--then the only thing that I can suspect is that he will be

campaigning and getting his money ready for the next time around because it'll be anybody's show after the next governor's race.

Marcello: How would you evaluate governor Briscoe's first year in office?

Johnson: As a jellyfish (chuckle). He hasn't been a bad governor, and he hasn't been a good governor. He's just been governor, I guess is all I can say about him. I just don't know. I think basically he's a good man, whatever that is. But he has bad advisers--bad from my philosophical views. He's extremely cautious. He's not ever willing to take any kind of stand. The strongest stand he has taken is that he's not going to call a special session, and I think he's nervous every time he says that. He never seems comfortable to me in taking a stand. He never seems comfortable to me in even making a decision. If he can avoid it, he won't make one.

Marcello: How accessible was he as a governor? Did you have any problems or any trouble getting to see him?

Johnson: No, I never had any problem getting in to see him. He was very accessible to me. I can say that. What kind of impact I had on him, I have no idea. I was able to get practically nothing out of him. But I was able to

get one rather significant appointment, I think, and that was a black dentist appointed to the State Dental Examiners' Board. I was able to get his support of the OIC, which was the Opportunities Industrialization Center here, which then had to come through revenue sharing through the mayor. But at least he gave his support of that. I was able to talk to him about a dental bill. I don't know if I talked him into it, but I was able to talk with him, and I think I made some impression upon him in signing the dental bill. I don't know very much more. I talked with him about several things, and many things that he agreed . . . I think that probably the biggest pressure we placed on him was the single-member district bill for the board of trustees here for the school district, and the EEO office--the Equal Employment Opportunity Office out of the governor's office--and the fact that we insisted upon having a black in that slot. I think that we probably made more headway that way. He seemed to have some real fear of embarrassment by the black caucus. When I indicated last week that I would ask for a special session for the impeachment of Calvert, he was very,

very concerned about that and pleaded for this not to happen. Then I said, "Well, I've decided that all I can do is use that as an alternative. I want the man to follow the law. Hopefully I won't get to that. But I understand the black caucus is going to be asking for it." So he was concerned that the black caucus would have him up against the wall on this, and his concern is very valid because this is not over yet.

Marcello: When you called him a jellyfish awhile ago, I assume that you were referring to the fact that he is very, very hesitant to take a stand or a forceful stand on an issue.

Johnson: Yes, and he just seemed not to have any backbone, just sort of a big blob (chuckle). Mrs. Briscoe seemed to have much more decision-making ability than what he did.

Marcello: What gave you this impression?

Johnson: She was always present and never hesitated to put her input into it. The only thing that I did notice, after awhile, when we would take a seat, she would not sit right in the circle. If it was just me talking with

the governor, she would sit and it would just be the three of us. But if it was more . . . if I was in a party of other people, she would kind of sit outside the circle. We'd all be in a circle, and she might be over at the table or at a desk. But she was present, she was listening.

Marcello: She actually sat in on conferences between the governor and the legislators?

Johnson: Yes. I never saw a conference that she was not there. She would always be there pouring coffee and offering cold drinks. She was sort of the hostess as well as listening and . . .

Marcello: And unofficial adviser to the governor.

Johnson: Yes.

Marcello: Or maybe very official (chuckle).

Johnson: She was very much in the picture. She was very obvious.

Marcello: Okay, I think we can close this interview then, by talking about your--I don't want to use the term affair (chuckle)--your battles with Mr. Calvert. How did the whole thing originate?

Johnson: Well, it all started really during freshman orientation in November of '72. When we were down, the different agency heads came in to talk about their agencies and

what they did. They started off by giving statistics on how many employees and this sort of thing.

Marcello: You mean how many employees were black and how many were women and this sort of thing?

Johnson: Well, many of them didn't go . . . they didn't give that. They just gave numbers and what they did.

Marcello: I see.

Johnson: But that was one of my more standard questions that I would ask. So I happened to ask Mr. Calvert this just following . . . I think it was just before Colonel Speir or just after. But anyway, he and Colonel Speir--he's head of the Department of Public Safety--were the two that I kind of . . . but they were the two that seemed to have practically nil minority employees as compared to the numbers. So his response to me was . . . well, first of all, his voice is a very fading one. He's obviously pretty old now. I really thought he was older than eighty-one. He looked at least eighty-six. But anyway, I didn't really hear him very well. His voice kind of faded. So I didn't want to just be such an obvious spawn. So I waited until he left the room.

When he left the room, I left the back door and went outside of the Old Supreme Court room. I approached him and I said, "Mr. Calvert, I was not able to hear all of your statistics as it related to your employees. I would like to know what number do you have that are black?" He said, "Oh, I've got a few." I said, "Well, how many." He said, "Four or five." I said, "You're telling me you have four or five out of 1,100 and some?" I said, "I don't understand." I said, "Well, could you tell me this?" I said, "What positions do they hold?" So he said, "Well, I've got a girl, I've got a darkie girl who is a secretary."

Marcello: A darkie girl?

Johnson: Yes, a darkie girl. I said, "Oh, well now who else do you have working?" He said, "Oh, I've got three boys." I said, "And I bet they clean up." He said, "Yes, they do." I said, "Well, I tell you what." I said, "I'm not interested in how many darkie boys and girls that you have. But I'm very concerned about how many black men and women you have on your staff." He said, "Well, I don't know where you get them from." I said, "Well, I can assure you that I can help you find some." So

he said to me, "Do you know a Mr. Anderson? He's the one who got the girl for me." I said, "Obviously he can find you girls." I said, "But I'm interested in you getting some men and women, and that's what I can help you find." I said, "If you have any difficulty, I can assure you that I will assist you in it, and I will do it very freely."

So he said, "I've got a joke I want to tell you." I said, "Well, just a minute before you tell me because I don't want you to make a mistake." I said, "Is it going to be one of these colored folks jokes?" He said, "Well, I hadn't planned on talking about niggers today." So at that point I said, "I had not planned on talking about niggers today either." So I had my hands just the way they are now (gesture). So he said, "Well, I don't want you to give me any trouble girl," and he sort of did me like this in the stomach (gesture). I caught him by the tie.

Marcello: He actually kind of struck you in the stomach?

Johnson: Yes, he struck me in the stomach like this (gesture), and at that point . . .

Marcello: With a back hand.

Johnson: Yes. At that point there was about four or five people there and about three black officials. We didn't even

know each other that well, but they started approaching him. He looked up and saw these people kind of coming toward him. But in the meantime I hadn't seen them until one of them . . . see, I caught him in the collar because I was really angry with him. I said, "Look, as long as you live . . ." By that time, well, Anthony Hall from Houston came up and he said, "That's not necessary." He said, "Cool it. We'll take care of him." So at this point, he turned around and he says, "Wait, I think all of you got me down wrong." He looked at me and he said, "Come by and talk with me some time." So I said, "Fine, I will." So after that time, I talked with him again about hiring, and he was very sarcastic.

Marcello: You probably met him on his home grounds, probably at his office?

Johnson: Yes. So I didn't tarry. Then during the appropriations hearings, when we had the ad hoc committee, he came. I didn't get a chance to stay down the whole time because I was in a committee meeting. He came and at that time, he was really pretty sarcastic and just said nobody's going to force him to hire anybody he didn't want to hire, and if he had said niggers in the past, that it had to be accepted because that was the term he used, and he

wasn't about to try to let these kids change him and this sort of thing.

Marcello: Now he said this before the Appropriations Committee?

Johnson: No, this was an ad hoc committee of sort of really liberal House members that consisted, too, of the people who were going to carry these amendments. That's what prompted the amendments, see.

Marcello: I see.

Johnson: There were more people in the ad hoc committee, but that was one of the things that prompted us to carry these amendments.

Marcello: Now these were the amendments that would have cut the appropriations for those agencies that were guilty of discriminatory hiring?

Johnson: Yes. Well, he was not the only one. We had, oh, we just had many, many, many. It went on for three or four days because we had so many. I don't really know how many we did have, but I would say that we had more than a majority of the agency heads to come before this ad hoc committee. So it was after that time . . . I really was concerned, and I really didn't know exactly what I could do about it at that point.

So I had an ally who was in the justice department, and I consulted him and talked with him about it.

I said, "I'm really very distressed about the agencies." I had no particular bone with Mr. Calvert at that time, except that he was just one of many. I was telling him about the experience that I had with him. I said, "I'm not sure that we would not meet with the same thing because Dr. LeMaistre had said to us that I will come with no promises." He's the chancellor of the University of Texas system. He was very cocky about not changing any policies, and fine, if you wanted to cut the appropriations, the school really could exist without any money, if necessary. He was really pretty sarcastic. But we felt that that was going to be a long, hard battle to fight.

So I pondered over it several weeks, as you can very well tell from the time lapse, from the time I filed the suit . . . the complaint. So finally, I decided that that would probably be one of the more likely spots to make some ground in order to make an example of an agency. So that is one of the reasons why we started it there because we felt that it was so obvious and so blatant, that if we started at this office, this agency, perhaps other ones would take note

and would begin to make some changes without us doing it. But we were prepared to just go ahead and just follow through. So that is the reason why.

Now I purposely filed in behalf of women because he identified me as wanting to have blacks and browns because this is what we'd been talking about all along. But when I looked at the situation, I realized really that they were not going to fire to hire. But they had enough women there that had qualifications, really, that were better than some of the men. I felt that if I could file in behalf of women and get something in my favor--because I did have women giving me input, too, about situations they had experienced--then if I could insist upon promoting some of the women, then we would leave slots open, then we could insist upon those slots being filled by blacks or browns. So that is the real reason that I went for women. I felt that we could easily get a ruling for browns, blacks, and women. But a more likely place to start to really get some real changes, as I saw it, was with women. I did it because I was a woman, and I wanted to win. I really wanted to make a

real example of this agency. That's why I went with women. Paul, of course, then went with blacks, and Ben Reyes went with browns. We all had a case. But it would be harder to implement with blacks and browns because it would mean waiting until slots occurred. With mine, we could create slots, supposedly. At least, that's what I had in mind.

Marcello: On the basis of promotions, in other words.

Johnson: Yes.

Marcello: Well, pick up the story from there.

Johnson: Well, of course, when we did get the ruling back . . . well, frankly, EEOC considered it pretty much of a hot potato.

Marcello: Equal Employment Opportunities Commission?

Johnson: Yes, in San Antonio, and they were really pretty draggy about going ahead with doing the study to come up with the results. I stayed on them, and they just kept giving me kind of ambiguous answers like, "Well, it should be finished by next week." Then in two or three weeks, I'd remember that I hadn't heard from them and this sort of thing. So then I got a clue that by this being federal someone on the U. S. level could probably just pick up

the telephone and nudge them a bit and they'd do it. So I knew Allan Steelman well enough that I picked up the phone and called Allan and talked with Allan about it. Then I followed up with a letter, and Allan wrote them. They immediately replied to Allan, saying that they had gotten results and wrote him a letter. But he sent me a copy of his letter, and it was still a month later that they sent me the results. As a matter of fact, I had contacted them two or three other times and let them know that they had responded . . . as a matter of fact, I wrote Allan and told him that I had heard nothing, even though I'd received his. I sent them a copy to let them know, so that at that point, they then sent the results on in. When my office just simply released the results of the complaint, then that's when Mr. Calvert made his remark. See, I never really said anything to Mr. Calvert. I still have not been in conversation with him.

Marcello: What is the remark to which you're referring?

Johnson: Well, when he was contacted by the media to get a response to it, at that point he said he was not about to have a woman go to Houston and go into nigger and Mexican

neighborhoods or something to that effect. So that was the first thing. So then they made sort of a . . . they printed that, which really incensed the women. Then when they called me and asked me for my response, I simply said, "I'm interested in him following the law, and I don't feel that he can make decisions for women. I think that he's forgotten that maybe he can find some nigger and Mexican women to go into those neighborhoods." I said, "On the other hand, there are many positions that women have where they do go into black and brown neighborhoods and don't seem to have any problems." I said, "But he's deciding for these women. If women refuse these positions, fine. We'll accept it. But for him to determine that he's not going to let them have it because he doesn't feel they should have it is something different and is clearly in defiance of law." They said, "Well, how do you feel about him saying nigger?" I said, "That's his problem to deal with."

So then the next day is when he came out and said, "That nigger woman doesn't know what she's talking about." I had planned to completely ignore him as far as the

media was concerned and continue to pressure about him following the law. But I got so many calls and so many requests that I felt that the pressure had gotten so great it was necessary for me to have a press conference. So at that point . . . I had gotten much more publicity in Austin and Houston than Dallas. Still it's been much more. It's been much more almost around the country than what it's been in Dallas. But nonetheless, I decided that I would go to Austin and call a press conference, rather than just issue a statement. That's what I did, and that's the first press conference I ever called.

Marcello: What took place at the press conference?

Johnson: Well, I simply read my statement and answered questions. He had staff members there. Some of the reporters tell me it was the largest-attended press conference in the history of the capitol. Now I don't know if that's true or not. But there were an awful lot of people. We had it set up in the speaker's committee room, and we had to move it into the House floor because there was simply not enough space. It was extremely well-attended, and it was all anti-Calvert.

Marcello: Did you say that he did send some of his staff members to rebutt some of the statements that you made?

Johnson: No, they didn't make any statements.

Marcello: They were just there as observers?

Johnson: They were there to . . . they taped the complete thing. I saw them with tape recorders. They taped the session, but they made no remarks at all. One of the staff members came up to my administrative assistant and indicated that he was extremely embarrassed but that he had to have some loyalties to his boss. I don't even know his name. But he would assure us that he would be making no more statements and that he hoped that everything would work out. He was just really extremely embarrassed. But it seemed really almost as if he was taken to hurt. I don't know what Mr. Calvert's response was. He seemed to have been pretty well comfortable with what he had said and all. But the staff members seemed pretty distressed because I think they really kind of felt like, at that point, at least what was on the scene--I'm sure he had many sympathizers--but what was on the scene was really all pretty anti-Calvert. I would think that I'd probably feel pretty much the same way if I would have been in a whole midst of anti-Calvert people and I was in favor of

somebody. Not in favor of perhaps what he had said, but in favor of the person as such.

Marcello: What was your step from that point then?

Johnson: At that point, my next step was my appointment with Mr. Barbash. He's our conciliation officer from EEOC. I met with him and two other people from the office at eight o'clock last Monday morning. We set out some provisions to ask Mr. Calvert to agree upon. One of the provisions that Mr. Calvert had asked is that no more press until . . . please, no more publicity until he could come up with something. So I asked him, "Now when is this coming up? When is something going to be?" He said, "You've set thirty days, and I think that's fair enough." I said, "Okay, I will promise no press and no statement on what's going on until October 24th."

Marcello: When did you threaten impeachment proceedings?

Johnson: In thirty days, if he does not comply or resign, then I would then ask for a special session for impeachment.

Marcello: What sort of compliance are you wanting? In other words, do you have a certain percentage in mind so far as employees are concerned?

Johnson: We're working on percentages. What we're doing now is studying the positions that are now being held . . . see, mine is strictly right now with women . . . that are now being held by women and positions where they're like under-employed, to see where we can ask for upgrading, and then ask for back pay. In addition to that, then in any slot where a vacancy would occur, that slot would then be filled by a minority, be it female, depending on ratios and this sort of thing. I think we have to be pretty rational when it comes to sex, but it has to be a member of a minority. Then some more defined things is that there must be an active, affirmative recruitment action program for that office. Then I'm going to look around that office and specifically ask that bulletin boards be placed in certain areas where they will publish what's open, position openings. Then I would like to set up guidelines very similar to those with Civil Service as to how they're chosen.

Evidently he's agreeing because I got a call today from a Mr. Monk with the Civil Service Commission here, who has gotten into contract with Mr. Calvert's office to move in his team to work in compliance with Civil Service

guidelines. It just so happens that it's a black male and a white female that have been assigned to bring the office into a Civil Service kind of a thing. He's dealing directly with . . . two agencies, federal agencies. He's dealing directly with Mr. Barbash with my plan. He indicated that they would be working together and he's also working with Mr. Tom Greene, who is the attorney for Mr. Calvert. He's the attorney for Mr. Calvert's office and has shown quite a positive attitude at this point to attempt to really come to some agreement and really seems to be showing that they really want to comply. Now the end result will determine whether they really do or whether it's a good front. But I do have the assurance from the Civil Service man that if at any time that there's any rebuttal to any of the standard Civil Service procedures which they had contracted for by the people that are there, then he would immediately pull them out, and he'd be on his own. So he does seem to be making some movement. and that's what's important.

Marcello: What sort of response did you get to the impeachment threat? When I say response, I mean on the part of fellow legislators and anybody else in the community.

Johnson: On the impeachment thing, I really didn't expect any kind of support. I felt that that would be the point in which I would probably lose some support. But fortunately and surprisingly, I received much more support on the impeachment than asking him to comply. I just had numerous letters and telegrams and telephone calls saying, "Get him out of there. Get him out of there. It's time for him to get out of there." I was really shocked, and many of them were from Anglos, whites. I received two negative calls out of many more than a thousand calls and letters and telegrams and all that, and I received a lot of calls from the Dallas delegation and representatives from all over the state. I received many letters.

Marcello: Did you ever receive any hate mail?

Johnson: Yes, that's what I was about to say. I received one hate letter that just said general delivery from Dallas. It didn't say anything about the affair. It simply had a little pamphlet in there that said, "We have waited long enough to give the blacks what they deserve. Look inside and see." There was a white face on the front, and inside the little pamphlet it had a rope around the neck

of a black person. In small print, it was some kind of a Nazi Party thing, friends of something like that, Nazi. But I'm sure it was as a result of that because, it came last Wednesday, I think, in my mail in Austin. It just said general delivery Dallas, so I don't know really who it was from. I received one telephone call that was on my answering service that said . . . it was a long-distance call from Austin. It was a young-sounding male, Anglo voice that said, "Mrs. Johnson, please don't be upset because you're called a nigger because you are a nigger, and a nigger's a nigger" and then hung up. But those are the only two that I received.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago also that Governor Briscoe was kind of shook up when you threatened impeachment proceedings.

Johnson: Yes, he didn't want that special session. He kept saying, "We will force him to comply. Stay on that complying. He must comply. But I think that if you ask for a special session, we'll split the party. If you ask for impeachment we'll split the party. You know we're having such a hard time pulling the party together, and we've got to have the party together." So it was all on the

party. He never defended him. But in the paper I noticed he didn't want to detract from his long years of service and what have you in his statement. But he just kept saying, "What he has done is terrible. What he has said is terrible, and I really cannot support that. We just must make him comply. But we must think in terms of not splitting the party." I really wanted to say to him at that point, "The heck with the party. The party hasn't done anything for me." But I said, "Well, hopefully it won't come to that." That was my reply to him on that.