

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Volume 1

Oral History Interview

with

MERVYN M. DYMALLY

United States Congressman, 1981-1992
Lieutenant Governor, 1975-1979
California State Senator, 1967-1975
California State Assemblyman, 1963-1967

December 21, 1996, January 4, February 8, March 3,
April 5, 12, 26, June 7, 14, 21, 24,
July 2, 7, 17, 23, August 8, 11, 1997
Los Angeles, California

By Elston L. Carr
Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None.

LITERARY RIGHTS AND QUOTATION

This manuscript is hereby made available for research purposes only. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the California State Archivist or the Head, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to:

California State Archives
1020 O Street, Room 130
Sacramento, CA 94814

or

Department of Special Collections
Charles E. Young Research Library
P.O. Box 951575
UCLA
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1575

The request should include identification of the specific passages and identification of the user.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Mervyn M. Dymally, Oral History Interview, Conducted 1996 and 1997 by Elston L. Carr, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.



Bill Jones
Secretary of State

California State Archives
1020 O Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Information (916)653-7715
Administrative Fax (916)653-7134
Reference (916)653-2246

PREFACE

On September 25, 1985, Governor George Deukmejian signed into law A.B. 2104 (Chapter 965 of the Statutes of 1985). This legislation established, under the administration of the California State Archives, a State Government Oral History Program "to provide through the use of oral history a continuing documentation of state policy development as reflected in California's legislative and executive history."

The following interview is one of a series of oral histories undertaken for inclusion in the state program. These interviews offer insights into the actual workings of both the legislative and executive processes and policy mechanisms. They also offer an increased understanding of the men and women who create legislation and implement state policy. Further, they provide an overview of issue development in California state government and of how both the legislative and executive branches of government deal with issues and problems facing the state.

Interviewees are chosen primarily on the basis of their contributions to and influence on the policy process of the state of California. They include members of the legislative and executive branches of the state government as well as legislative staff, advocates, members of the media, and other people who played significant roles in specific issue areas of major and continuing importance to California.

By authorizing the California State Archives to work cooperatively with oral history units at California colleges and universities to conduct interviews, this program is structured to take advantage of the resources and expertise in oral history available through California's several institutionally based programs.

Participating as cooperation institutions in the State Government Oral History Program are:

Oral History Program
History Department
California State University, Fullerton

Oral History Program
Center for California Studies
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Program
Claremont Graduate School

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

The establishment of the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program marks one of the most significant commitments made by any state toward the preservation and documentation of its governmental history. It supplements the often fragmentary historical written record by adding an organized primary source, enriching the historical information available on given topics and allowing for more thorough historical analysis. As such, the program, through the preservation and publication of interviews such as the one which follows, will be of lasting value to current and future generations of scholars, citizens, and leaders.

John F. Burns
State Archivist

July 27, 1988

This interview is printed on acid-free paper.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME 1

INTERVIEW HISTORY i

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY iv

SESSION 1, December 21, 1996

[Tape 1, Side A] 1

Family's religious background--Helps fund building of mosque in Bonasse, Trinidad--Family background--Childhood in Trinidad--Early education--Works for Oilfields Workers Trade Union newspaper, the Vanguard--Applies to Lincoln University in Missouri in 1946--Race and class issues in Trinidad--Reasons Dymally decided to immigrate to the United States--The impact of the oil workers union upon the political structure in Trinidad--Siblings--Teachers who influenced Dymally--More on class and race in Trinidad--Trinidadians' perception of blacks in the United States--More on applying to Lincoln University--Works at various jobs and attends chiropractic school--Moves to Illinois and works for Reynolds Aluminum Company--More on reasons Dymally decided to immigrate to the United States.

[Tape 1, Side B] 31

Limited opportunities for work and social advancement in Trinidad--Reads a biography of Booker T. Washington--Working at Cannon Electric--Traveling from Trinidad to Lincoln, Missouri--Decision to move to California and attend Chapman College--Develops a philosophy regarding work and success--Attends California State University, Los Angeles--Joins the fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi--Thomas Bradley--Kappa Alpha Psi provides black students the opportunity to socialize--Decides to

pursue a teaching career--Organizes a Young Democrats club--Becomes treasurer of the Young Democrats--Meets Jesse M. Unruh--Campaigns for John F. Kennedy--Works as a substitute teacher in addition to working at Cannon Electric--Joins the American Federation of Teachers.

[Tape 2, Side A] 64

Decision to run for Augustus F. Hawkins's seat in the California State Assembly--Opponents back Hawkins's brother, Edward A. Hawkins--Campaigning for the Fifty-third Assembly District seat--Marriage to first wife, Amentha Dymally--The developing West Indian community in southern California in the fifties.

SESSION 2, January 4, 1997

[Tape 3, Side A] 74

Reasons for becoming politically active--More on working as a substitute teacher in addition to working at Cannon Electric--Lack of opportunities for blacks to become politically active--More on organizing a Young Democrats club--Congress of Racial Equality's political involvement--Divisions within the Young Democrats--More on becoming treasurer of the Young Democrats--Blacks' unwillingness to support John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign--Willard Murray--Adam Clayton Powell Jr.--Circulating the restrictive covenant that Vice President Richard M. Nixon had signed--Augustus Hawkins--More on joining the American Federation of Teachers--Gaining black support for Kennedy--Meeting politicians while working for the California Disaster Office--More on Dymally's decision to run for Hawkins's seat in the assembly--Campaigning for office--Conflict between Dymally's support for Jesse Unruh and his support of the California Democratic Council (CDC)--The CDC's stand on civil rights issues.

[Tape 3, Side B] 108

The Committee for Fair Representation--Gaining support in the 1962 campaign for the Fifty-third Assembly District--Using the sample ballot as a campaign tool--Unruh provides financial support for Dymally's campaign--Strategies for gaining campaign supporters--George Putnam publicly announces that Dymally is a Black Muslim--The United Civil Rights Committee--Raising and distributing campaign funds for Democratic candidates during the sixties--More on Unruh's financial support of Dymally's campaign--Candidates for the Democratic nomination for the Fifty-third Assembly District--Wins 1962 election to the assembly--Roots of the black-Jewish coalition--Black Muslims--Dymally's enthusiasm for politics--Dymally is criticized for collecting per diem--Newspapers target black politicians for criticism--Dymally is criticized for being outspoken--Dymally's early political naïveté--Allies during the time Dymally was in the assembly--Relationship with Unruh.

SESSION 3, February 8, 1997

[Tape 4, Side A] 144

Dymally's zeal to overcome discrimination in the sixties--Contrast between Dymally and other black politicians in the early sixties--Frustration over not being asked to participate on the California Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots (McCone Commission)--Dymally's service on committees during his early years in the assembly--Carries collective bargaining legislation--Introduces legislation to help disabled children and to teach black history in the public schools--Discrimination against black teachers during the sixties--Impact of the John F. Kennedy assassination upon the Democratic party and the black community--Struggle between the CDC and the California Democratic State Central Committee--Question of whether Jesse

Unruh and Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Sr. agreed that Brown would not run for a third term--The Kennedys' response to Richard M. Nixon's 1962 campaign--The Democrats lose the assembly in California--Changes in reimbursement and staffing for assembly members in the early sixties--Role of the field office--Dymally's 1964 campaign--His goals upon arriving in the assembly in 1963--Attempts to combat police brutality through legislation and Stop Terrorizing Our People (STOP)--Los Angeles Mayor Samuel W. Yorty--The Watts riots--Media coverage of blacks during the sixties.

[Tape 4, Side B] 175

Black newspapers--Efforts to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963--More on the Watts riots--The aftermath of the Watts riots--The welfare rights movement--Deindustrialization of Dymally's district--J. Alfred Cannon--Maulana Karenga--Interest in University without Walls Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities--Legislation to create the California Commission on the Status of Women--Mauri Goldman--Authors the Community Property Act of 1974--Runs for the Twenty-ninth Senate District seat in 1966--Interacting with white legislators in the senate--Successes in carrying legislation while in the senate--Supports vocational education and training programs--The Horizon Summer Training Program.

SESSION 4, March 3, 1997

[Tape 5, Side A] 203

More on legislation to teach black history in the public schools--Interest in black studies programs at the college level--Proposes resolution for divestiture to the Board of Regents of the University of California in 1975--The Urban Affairs Institute--Richard Alatorre--Art Torres--Attempts to build a black-Chicano

political coalition in southern California--
Black-Jewish political relations--Jewish support
of Chicano issues--Carries legislation on issues
facing farmworkers.

[Tape 5, Side B] 224

The Early Childhood Education Act--The declining
support for public education--Impact of the 1968
Child Care Construction Act--More on the
deindustrialization of Dymally's district--More
on the Watts riots--The California Fair Plan--
Dymally's involvement in prison reform--The
impact of Robert F. Kennedy's assassination on
the Democratic party and the 1968 presidential
election--Unruh's support of Robert F. Kennedy.

SESSION 5, April 5, 1997

[Tape 6, Side A] 246

The 1965 reapportionment of districts due to one
man, one vote decision--Dymally's opponents in
the 1966 election--The 1966 campaign--William
Burke--Dymally's involvement in the running of
his campaigns--His relationship to lobbyists--
Differences between serving in the assembly and
serving in the state senate--Nate Holden--The
importance of the sample ballot as a campaign
tool--The 1970 Jesse Unruh-Ronald W. Reagan
gubernatorial race--The Los Angeles Times attacks
Dymally for his involvement with the Batik Wine
and Spirits Company--Carries legislation to
permit the private sector to own clinics--More on
the Los Angeles Times attack on Dymally--How
Dymally became involved with Batik Wine--Use of
advertising in the 1970 gubernatorial campaign--
Unruh's political career after losing the 1970
governor's race--Dymally supports Unruh rather
than Tom Bradley in 1973 Los Angeles mayoral
race--Unruh's qualifications to be mayor--The
1959 Unruh Civil Rights Act--More on Dymally's
support of Unruh.

[Tape 6, Side B] 276

Bradley supporters pressure Dymally to back
Bradley--Yvonne Brathwaite Burke--Edmund G.
"Jerry" Brown Jr.--Loses 1978 campaign for second
term as lieutenant governor--More on the
assassination of Robert F. Kennedy--Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr.--The Vietnam War--Dymally is
targeted by the Internal Revenue Service--
Dymally's stance on the death penalty--School
desegregation and busing--Gilbert W. Lindsay--
Kenneth Hahn--Creating the Martin Luther King
Jr./Charles R. Drew Medical Center.

SESSION 6, April 12, 1997

[Tape 7, Side A] 304

Ethical standards in the black community and in
the white community--More on Governor Ronald
Reagan--More on Dymally's involvement with Batik
Wine--Los Angeles Times writer Robert Fairbanks--
Media coverage of blacks--Medical clinics in the
black community--Dr. Edward H. Ruben--Bassett
Brown--Dymally supports friends despite
controversy--More on ethical standards--Bill
Greene defends Dymally's involvement with Batik
Wine--Ted Watkins's opposition to Dymally--More
on the L.A. Times attack on Dymally--Advocates a
state lottery in the late 1960s--Mauri Goldman
influences Dymally's support of women's rights
legislation.

[Tape 7, Side B] 332

March Fong Eu--Dymally opposes nuclear power
plant construction in the early seventies--
Dymally's office conducts a study which defines
California as a "third-world state"--Equal
funding for women's collegiate athletics--Wilson
C. Riles votes against resolution urging the
Board of Regents of the University of California
to divest their holdings in South Africa--
Reagan's record as governor--Obtaining federal

funding for job training programs--The state budget surplus in the mid-seventies--Impact of the budget surplus on the tax revolt movement--Cosponsors bill to require the state government to hire bilingual employees--More on the 1965 reapportionment of districts due to one man, one vote decision.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer:

Elston L. Carr
Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program
B.A., Wesleyan University [English Literature]
M.A., UCLA [Afro-American Studies]

Interview Time and Place:

December 21, 1996
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-half hours

January 4, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and three-quarter hours

February 8, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-quarter hours

March 3, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-half hours

April 5, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-quarter hours

April 12, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one hour

April 26, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-half hours

June 7, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one hour

June 14, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-quarter hours

June 21, 1997
Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-half hours

June 24, 1997

Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of three hours

July 2, 1997

Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-half hours

July 7, 1997

Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-quarter hours

July 17, 1997

Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-half hours

July 23, 1997

Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one hour

August 8, 1997

Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of two and one-quarter hours

August 11, 1997

Dymally's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-quarter hours

Editing

Philipp Gollner, editorial assistant, UCLA Oral History Program, edited tapes 1-14 and Susan Douglass Yates, senior writer, edited tapes 15-20. They checked the verbatim manuscript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spellings, and with the interviewer verified proper names. Insertions by the editors are bracketed. Yates prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, and interview history.

Dymally reviewed the edited transcript and returned it with a number of corrections. Upon completing his review, Dymally requested that he be allowed to add additional thoughts to conclude his oral history. It was agreed that he would speak these thoughts into a tape recorder. This information was then transcribed and appears in the appendix.

Papers

Dymally's papers are deposited at Government Information and Special Collections, John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, California State University, Los Angeles, and are catalogued as the Mervyn M. Dymally Collection. The collection covers approximately 1966 to 1992.

Tapes and Interview Records

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives at UCLA along with the records relating to the interview. Master tapes are preserved at the California State Archives.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Mervyn M. Dymally was born in Cedros, Trinidad, on May 12, 1926. After completing elementary school, he moved to San Fernando, where he attended Naparima Secondary and St. Benedict College. In 1946, Dymally immigrated to the United States. He attended school in Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois before graduating from California State University, Los Angeles, in 1954 with a B.A. in education. He continued his education during his legislative career, completing an M.A. in government in 1969 from California State University, Sacramento and a Ph.D. in human behavior in 1978 from United States International University, San Diego.

After completing his B.A., Dymally taught from 1955 to 1961. In 1961, he became coordinator for the California State Disaster Office in Sacramento, a post he left in 1962 in order to run for the California State Assembly.

From 1963 to 1967, Dymally represented the Fifty-third District in the California State Assembly. He then became a member of the state senate, winning the Twenty-ninth District seat in 1966. During his tenure in the state legislature, Dymally chaired a number of committees, including the assembly Committee on Industrial Relations and, in the senate, the Committee on Elections and Reapportionment, the Committee on Social Welfare, the Joint Committee on Legal Equality, and the Select Committee on Children and Youth. While in the senate, he also carried the Dymally-Sieroty Child Care Center Construction Act of 1968, the Community Property Act of 1974, and legislation to fund the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School. He left the senate in 1975 to become lieutenant governor.

Dymally lost the reelection bid for the lieutenant governor's office in 1978, but returned to public office in 1980, when he was elected to the United States House of Representatives as a representative of the Thirty-first District. During his tenure, he chaired the International Operations and Africa Subcommittees of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Census and Population Subcommittee of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, and the Judiciary and Education Subcommittee of the Committee on the District of Columbia. In addition, he served as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Caribbean American Research Institute, and the Congressional Caucus for Science and Technology.

Since retiring from Congress in 1992, Dymally has served as president of Dymally International Group. He is married to Alice Gueno Dymally.

[Session 1, December 21, 1996]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

DYMALLY: My name is Mervyn Malcolm Dymally. I was born in the village of Bonasse, in the parish of Cedros, in the county of St. Patrick, Trinidad, British West Indies at the time. I was born on May 12, 1926, of an East Indian father who was Muslim and an Afro-Creole mother who was Catholic. The result of that intermingling of religions gave me a very eclectic view of religion. Today I consider myself a very tolerant person about religion.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: The fact is, my family on both sides competed for our membership in both the mosque and the Catholic church. The Anglican canon was brought in to mediate the dispute, and he christened us all in the Anglican church.

CARR: So the Anglican church was the compromise.

DYMALLY: Compromise. My brothers and sisters, subsequently, under the influence of my

grandparents, went back to the Catholic church. But I stayed with the Anglicans, but developed a very close and curious interest about Islam. One day I was telling my father about my discovery of Jesus Christ, and he said, "Oh, yes. We consider him one of the great prophets. Not the only prophet, because there's another prophet that we worship. That prophet's name is Mohammed."

And if I may skip to about seventy years later. . . .

CARR: Sure.

DYMALLY: Last April I went to my village and cut the ribbon for the opening of a mosque for which I had raised the money. One day in 1991, I received a letter from a young man who said that the imam there had discovered that the land on which the present mosque is built was donated by my grandfather to the community. And the mosque was built by him, but the mosque was in disrepair. So I called him and I asked him how much did he need, and he said he needed about \$12,000 TT [Trinidad and Tobago]--which is about \$3,000 U.S. by that time. So I said, "Well, how much do you really need?" And he said, "I need about \$58,000 to finish the job." So I wrote my

friend in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi embassy sent an emissary down there to the village and left a check for \$25,000 U.S. When they went to deposit the money in the bank, there was another transfer for the original amount of \$58,000.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: So what do they do? They tore down the old mosque and built a [new] mosque. What I'm proud about is the fact that it was built by local help--a beautiful mosque. So I said that to show you my very eclectic background in religion and very tolerant view of Islam and Christianity, but I skipped many, many years.

We lived in a small village. My grandparents--my father's father, my grandfather--came from India as indentured servants . . .

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: . . . at a time when India and Pakistan were one. They came to relieve the freed slaves to work in the sugarcane and coconut estates, coffee and cocoa. My grandmother's people came from Haiti. There was a time when the French dominated most of the coconut estates, and they brought African freed slaves from Haiti. Up to her death she spoke patois.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: Yeah. She used to say to me, "Vous es un mauvais garçon"--"You're a bad boy"--[Laughter] when I did anything naughty. And so this combination . . .

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: Now, I say that because Trinidad's a very integrated society--I just came back from Trinidad--where Hindus and Muslims celebrate Christmas with the same amount of joy as do Christians. So my father. . . . His people were the merchants. He had the privilege of going to college--what they call college we call secondary school--and came back to the village and taught my mother. And out of that union became a family. I grew up . . .

CARR: What were your parents' names?

DYMALLY: My father's name was Hamid [A. Dymally], and my mother's name was Andreid [R. Dymally]--sort of an old patois name.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: I grew up in this village with a very, very happy boyhood. I was always active in sports. Never excelled in any one sport, but always the organizer of different village teams. Had my own

little kitchen garden where I grew okras and tomatoes and eggplant and cassava. So I always had a strong sense of work ethic about me. After I finished elementary school I went to San Fernando. By then my . . .

CARR: Now, San Fernando is the next town over?

DYMALLY: It's the number two city in Trinidad. By then my father and mother had separated.

CARR: How old were you when your parents separated?

DYMALLY: That's a good question. You know, one of the things about the islands in those days, time and age and statistics were not important phenomena with us.

CARR: Yes, OK, I see.

DYMALLY: You just went along. But anyhow, it's safe to say around the end of elementary school, about twelve.

CARR: Do you recall your reaction to that? Did that affect your . . .

DYMALLY: I don't recall that it happened for the simple reason that children did not get involved in parental matters.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: They just took whatever came for granted. Now, children in the United States suffer from all

kinds of psychosomatic and psychological ailments . . .

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: . . . and they talk about their failure as the result of the divorce of their parents. We just roughed it. We just took it for granted. You know, this is the way of life. We never bothered. I consumed myself with a lot of sports, and . . .

CARR: What sports did you play?

DYMALLY: Soccer, cricket, swimming, fishing, chasing, picking mangoes and hunting rabbits, going on the beach for hikes. I was just there recalling to my nephews the long walks I took to go and get a little spending change from my godfather, who was a bookkeeper on an estate, and then went on to my uncle, and picked up provisions--salted fish--and brought it back home, all walking. They were amazed. Now people wouldn't even think about using a bicycle. It's all taxis and private autos now. But I had a very happy boyhood time, as I recall. When I go back home I see some of my old schoolmates.

And then I came to San Fernando to live with my father and stepmother. I had a most

exceptional stepmother. We did not know her as a stepmother because she treated all of us equally. I went to St. Benedict College, which is now Presentation Secondary School. I didn't do too well--I wasn't a very good student--and left to go into Naparima [Secondary]. No, first I went to Naparima and then went to St. Benedict. At that time you had to take the Senior Cambridge School Certificate exam. I failed that. By then I had transformed from short pants--a boy--to long pants--a man. I would have had to go back to school for a year to take the exam all over.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: I was beginning to get the taste of the good life--drinking rum, going to calypso dances, chasing young beauties--and so I chose not to go back to school. I used to go and heckle the leader of a new federation party, the West Indian National party--the WIN party--whose leader was a young Grenadian by the name of David [T.] Pitt, M.D.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: David Pitt subsequently became the second black lord in London. He and I became very good friends. I hosted his presence here at the

DYMALLY: Congressional Black Caucus dinner in [Washington] D.C., and arranged a tour for him to visit the four black medical schools--Howard [University], Meharry [Medical College], Morehouse [School of Medicine], and [Charles R.] Drew [Postgraduate Medical School]--because he was not just a lord, he was not just a doctor, he was head of the prestigious British Medical Association. Quite an honor indeed for a poor boy from Grenada who grew up in a poor environment--who, as a professional, landed in Trinidad. A few years back we visited each other. He took me to the House of Lords and the House of Commons. As I said, I hosted his presence here.

So the union--the oil workers trade union [Oilfields Workers Trade Union] movement--heard about me. By the way, I was very unpopular at the college because it was very middle-class and Father Boniface, the principal, was outraged that I would be identified with the workers unions. They hired me as a sort of gofer for a small weekly newspaper called the Vanguard. It is still being published. I recall it with fond memories. I went and collected the advertising revenues from Coca Cola [Company], etc., and

wrote a column called "The Scarlet Pimpernel." In the movie he said, "You see me here, you see me there, you see me everywhere." It had little gossip columns to attract young people about various affairs and various parties. In the course of so doing--and this is very important, this was the first major change in my life--one of my responsibilities was to read junk mail, so to speak, what we called junk mail, and what was then very important to us. Now, this is during the war. We used to receive the Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender, which your parents and my parents and I relied on for news from the . . .

CARR: United States.

DYMALLY: And the black community. In them I began seeing these homecoming events and the names of all these schools, and I began writing these schools. Of the many schools I wrote. . . . I remember I wrote the University of Georgia in the days when segregation was high in most of the southern universities, and got a response from them. Of course, they didn't know who I was or where I was coming from. But of all the schools, Lincoln University in Missouri attracted me because it

was a no-tuition school and only had a registration fee of fifty dollars.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So I got admitted. After I got admitted, Lincoln discovered--and they didn't even know that the thing had existed--there's such a thing called the "attorney general's list of approved schools." It had nothing to do with accreditation; it has to do with the communist scare. You had to be on the attorney general's list to admit foreign students. It took them over a year, and when they finally got that, I got my visa. Now, my father and I go to the American consulate--at the time Trinidad was a colony, so it did not have an embassy--and the officer, a woman, said to me in the interview, "What is your race?" And for the first time in my teenage [years]--I'm nineteen years old--I discovered the question of race.

CARR: So when is this, about 1944, 1945?

DYMALLY: 'Forty-five.

CARR: 'Forty-five.

DYMALLY: End of '45. "Race?" I turned to my father and said, "What should I say?" I never was ever conscious about race. I grew up with East

Indians. I grew up with. . . . At the time we used to call them Creole, now they call themselves Africans. Race was not a conscious phenomenon. [I] played ball with Indian boys. Sometimes the doctors'--the district medical officers'--children were white. And the Chinese shopkeepers.

She said to my father, who's obviously East Indian, "There are some immigration laws that prevent Indians from becoming citizens in the United States. You'd better say, 'Negro.'" And for the first time I had a sense of racial consciousness, not being totally aware of the segregated pattern of U.S. life. So I came here . . .

CARR: But for a moment, just before we go on, could you talk about the issues of race and class within Trinidad?

DYMALLY: Well, at that time. . . . Now, you have to talk about race and class in chronological stages.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: At this stage, it was a colony. Trinidadians are loath to admit to this, but there was a mini-apartheid system in Trinidad. The whites in the oil fields were in what they called the senior

staff, and locals were in the junior staff.

Locals could not go to the Queens Park Hotel. So there was a pattern of segregation and discrimination in Trinidad at that time. But it didn't affect people like myself.

CARR: Why is that?

DYMALLY: Because we didn't have this class structure in the village.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: The village was without class structure. The East Indian weddings were big celebrations. And we went to the Hindu weddings. Right now in my village an East Indian is the Catholic priest. That ought to tell you something.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: But there was a sense of class consciousness. In order to succeed, most West Indians--99 percent of all West Indians--went to England to study, and they became either lawyers or doctors. There were no other positions through which you could elevate yourself into the class structure there. In fact, one of the guys who broke the barrier was a very black man by the name of C.T.W.E. Worell, who became attorney general. Well, he was in the upper class because he was attorney

general. So there was a very rigid class structure at the time. And there was some color too, because in the banks you'd have to be white or very light.

Now, in Trinidad, as in most colonies, light-skinned people had an option. You did not have to be with the blacks. You could go in with the whites because the deciding factor there was class, and the fact that you were a bank clerk permitted you to get into this upper social structure. There was this class system.

[Interruption]

CARR: We were discussing issues of class and . . .

DYMALLY: Yes. So the issue was class, but there was some race, because light-skinned people without the education got into the class structure. Black-skinned people also were able to get in on two conditions: that they were rich or educated.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: Now, Indians found themselves in a class by themselves. What they did--very wisely--they were very thrifty and they stuck to the rural areas, and were in part self-supporting. The father and the mother went out to the estate and did a task, for which they got one shilling

DYMALLY: apiece. On their way home they went and cleaned up some forest land and set up a garden. When they got home she began cooking, and he went and fished. So they got free fish, they had garden supplies, they made oil from the coconut. So all they really bought was flour for the roti and rice and split peas for the dal. The first boy probably. . . . They saved up enough money through a system called sousou--each person contributes a certain amount a week and one person gets a lump sum--and then they bought for him a fishing boat or a taxi. The second boy went on to college, i.e. secondary school. Then he went on to England and he became a doctor. Then they built a house on stilts and they converted the downstairs into a second house--it was a "two-for-one." The first girl probably got married. The second girl went to high school. She became a nurse or teacher. So you saw the evolution--a professional and economic evolution--of the Indian community to the point today that they dominate the professions and the economy. I would say 99 percent of all the small shops and supply stores in Trinidad now are owned by East Indians.

CARR: When you said your grandfather and your father had been merchants, what exactly did they do? Did they have shops?

DYMALLY: Yeah, they had the filling station in the village--I remember in those days you used to pump it with your hand--and they had a shop, a dry goods store.

CARR: One question I have is, unlike many West Indians, particularly people from Trinidad who went on to England, you looked to the United States. Why was that?

DYMALLY: Well [Laughter], two reasons. One, I failed the Senior Cambridge exam, and you couldn't go to England . . .

CARR: There are people who may not understand the significance of that. Speak to me. Marry the significance of not passing those exams.

DYMALLY: The Senior Cambridge exam was life or death. It is like a lawyer going to school and failing the bar. You can't practice law. In those days, the Senior Cambridge exam was the passage to a white-collar job, or to teaching, or a profession. If you failed it, there was nothing for you to do. You may be a clerk in a store selling hardware or something like that, with a tie on so you look

DYMALLY: kind of professional, but there was no way that you could go to England to study at a university because you had to have the Senior Cambridge exam. Having failed that, I had no choice but to look for other options. But the other option that I looked for was the one that was really ideologically and philosophically very compelling. Winston Churchill was a great hero all over the world--especially in the United States and of course England--but he wasn't much of a hero in the colonies because Winston Churchill was a colonialist who did not believe in independence for the colonies. Indeed, the thing that struck me and made me fall in love with America was at the historic Atlantic conference. . . . Churchill said that the Atlantic conference, which had a charter for the postwar era, was not designed for colonial peoples. Roosevelt said that the Atlantic Charter was designed for the emancipation of colonials. That was what attracted me to the United States--this deep commitment to freedom and independence for the colonies. So Churchill never wanted to free the colonies. Indeed, he despised Mahatma Gandhi--loathed him--and had

very little respect for Africans, and West Indians were a nonentity as far as he was concerned.

CARR: So even at--we're talking you were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen--you were well aware of these broader kinds of political [Inaudible].

DYMALLY: Well, because don't forget, I'm in newspapers. I'm reading these newspapers. These guys were advocates of labor and they were sort of British socialists--the London School of Economics type.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: There was a guy there, an East Indian guy, who went and was educated in Ireland and was involved in the independence movement there of the Irish. He changed his name to Adrian Cola Rienzi. This East Indian was head of this union which was predominantly Afro.

CARR: How did the oil workers union or the formation of the oil workers union have to. . . . How did that fit in with your . . .

DYMALLY: It changed the whole face of Trinidad. There was a strike in 1937 in which a police officer was burned. And a guy by the name of [Tubal] Uriah "Buzz" Butler--I think Uriah "Buzz" Butler--a Grenadian again. . . . By the way, the Grenadians

are producing scholars; the singer, Sparrow; Dr. David Pitt. Uriah "Buzz" Butler led the oil strike, and Officer [] Kelly got burned in the strike. That was the beginning of the transformation of subservience in the oil workers to the foreign master to some sense of independence. Out of that movement came the Oilfields Workers Trade Union.

Now, I should mention that Butler had to go into hiding, because under the British detention laws, anyone who was deemed to be a threat to the security of the country could have been detained without habeas corpus as we know it in the United States.

CARR: So this is a very broad kind of power.

DYMALLY: Yes. And some of the former colonial states kept that broad power, unfortunately.

CARR: What was your involvement with the unions?

DYMALLY: Well, I just worked for the . . .

CARR: Newspaper.

DYMALLY: . . . newspaper and went to meetings, you know. The newspaper was the organ of the workers union. So it instilled in me a great, great deal of commitment to the labor movement as a young man in his teens.

CARR: One question: You don't talk much about your siblings. Did you have any siblings?

DYMALLY: Yes. Yes. From my father, my mother had Marjorie, Mervyn, Rudolf, and Romer.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: Romer died recently here of Alzheimer's disease. He was an aerospace engineer. My sister Marjorie [Dymally James] came here on her own--with my help--and founded the Crenshaw Beauty College across the street from the Broadway [department store] on Crenshaw [Boulevard] and Santa Barbara [Avenue], now MLK [Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard]. She has since retired, and it's closed. My other part of the family--you know, they're half brothers and sisters. . . . Courtney [Dymally Shirley] went to England and studied nursing at the Prince of Wales Hospital. She's a health administrator now. My sister Hazel [Dymally Hardine] went to law school at night at the University of West Los Angeles and became a lawyer, although she doesn't practice law, doesn't like law. I had a half brother [Claudius Garcia Dymally] in Venezuela who recently died.

That's an interesting story. He left, as did a lot of Trinidadians, when jobs were difficult

to get, and migrated as an illegal to Venezuela.

CARR: Is this after the war?

DYMALLY: Yes. Immediately after the war, in '46. In fact, he had met--working in the customs--some Venezuelans and became friends with them. They told him to go to an island--there are several islands off the coast of Trinidad--and he met them there, and they went on and took him. When he arrived at this small village, the first thing that he ran into was a Trinidad family. They introduced him to the chief of police, and he immediately became a Venezuelan citizen. He passed away recently. Then I had another brother [Roderick Dymally] here who died of a heart attack, and a sister [Joyce Dymally Williams] who was a teacher. So there were quite a few of us here.

CARR: So most of your family ended up migrating to the U.S.?

DYMALLY: All except one brother. He still stays in Cedros. He has never sought to come here permanently and we've never encouraged it . . .

CARR: That is Rudolph?

DYMALLY: Yes. Because he keeps the family house. We have a family house in the village, and he's sort of

the guardian of the house. It's there for the family to use at any time. That too was built on stilts, so we converted the downstairs into a duplication of upstairs. He lives downstairs and the upstairs is kept open for visiting family.

CARR: Tell me, during your school years, were there any particular people, teachers in your early school years who had any strong influences on you?

DYMALLY: Yeah. I remember some of them. At Naparima College there was Mr. Clarence Huber. Then there was Feroze Khan in geography. Then there was Mr. Bissessa in math. There was Winston Mahabir, who is now an M.D. in Canada. At St. Benedict--I spent more time at Naparima than St. Benedict--was Mr. McDavid. These people are the people who were very inspiring. I wasn't a good student. I don't know, I went to school because it was expected of me.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: It was something that you have to do. You don't question that. You don't say, "Oh, I don't want to go to high school." You just went. So I wasn't inclined. But now my mother saw that I wasn't going anyplace. These were in the war years, and there was as much fun as there was

tragedy in the war years--a lot of entertainment. We had American troops there.

To tell you about class, let me divert to give you this story. In the summer months, of course, you don't do anything. I decided to go to the naval base and get a job. And so we lined up. In front of me was a young man. He was from Queen's Royal College--that was the elitist school of the time, QRC. And I'm behind from Naparima, St. Benedict, and the jobs being offered to us were busboys and dishwashers. There was a guy in that room all dressed up in a suit and tie who was QRC, who just berated us, just scolded us for bringing disrepute to these prestigious institutions by taking jobs as dishwashers. You know something? We didn't take the job. We left. That's how class conscious educated people were. In the United States you'd think nothing about busing dishes.

CARR: Yeah, right.

DYMALLY: So I never did get the job, never did take the job. What was it? I missed the question.

CARR: You mentioned some of the people, teachers who had very strong influences on you. Do you recall what particularly did they do?

DYMALLY: They were good scholars. They knew their subjects. For instance, I was very offended when a girl from the National Journal--when I became chairman of the [United States House of Representatives] Africa Subcommittee--said I knew nothing about Africa. My God. Going through the Senior Cambridge system, you damn near have to memorize the name of the aide de camp to the governor of the various colonies. You learned the British Empire. That was part of the history. I knew everything about Africa and India, but not much about Asia, because the Brits didn't have much of a presence there except Burma. So I knew Africa, and I was very offended, and I wrote a long letter telling her I've been into Africa as a teenager, through books.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: There was a Trinidadian who was a guru to [Kwame] Nkrumah. He was George Padmore. So we got his publication and his writings.

CARR: Wow. During this time, looking from the outside in, how did you perceive the United States before you came?

DYMALLY: We had no television, little radio in the house--

BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation]. Every Friday night we'd have a little family concert, and my brother [Frank] Frankie [Dymally]--who came here and passed away--had a beautiful voice and he was head of the Ink Spots. My brothers and sisters were members of the Ink Spots--we became the Ink Spots--and I was a cowboy trying to talk Yankee from Texas. So that's one side. But what was very damaging about our perception of America is that we saw Stepin Fetchit. That's what we saw--blacks. The view of blacks was totally distorted. We got these shuffling type of movies. It created a very deep lack of respect for African Americans--blacks were colored people in those days--because of this type of shuffling that we saw. That was the image one got of blacks in America. In fact, sometimes they used to be called darkies. So they were seen as. . . .

CARR: Now, would this have been on the radio?

DYMALLY: Oh, no, no, movies.

CARR: In movies.

DYMALLY: A lot of movies--no radio at all from the United States. We got BBC and the local station. So the image of America was a country that you

wanted to go to, segregation notwithstanding, because . . .

CARR: How aware were you of segregation and Jim Crow, and so on and so forth?

DYMALLY: You didn't keep up much with it. Your whole orientation was the British Empire and the UK. I mean, the United States was an accident. Indeed, we were told that during the course of the war of revolution [the American Revolution], the Brits thought that this was a waste of time to maintain these colonies, and gave it up. That was our history.

CARR: King George's point of view.

DYMALLY: Yes. But a lot of West Indians began migrating to New York, some jumping ship. And in New York they became known as the black Jews because they bought slum property and rehabilitated it. They had bakeries and barbershops and etc., little stores and lots of bakeries. At one time they even had significant influence with the New York Amsterdam News--I think one of the founders was West Indian. But there developed a clash between the West Indians in New York and the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] elites because of Marcus Garvey.

Indeed, it is said, and it is chronicled by one of your colleagues at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles], that a delegation of NAACP members went to the president and asked him to deport Marcus Garvey. That's how he was indicted.

CARR: Yes. You're talking about Professor . . .

DYMALLY: Hill.

CARR: Yes. Robert Hill. So by the time you were prepared to come along to Lincoln University you were nineteen years old?

DYMALLY: Yes, 1946.

CARR: Why did you choose journalism?

DYMALLY: I thought it was easy to get into the school of journalism--which was a result of the Sweatt [v. Painter] decision--because of my background with the newspaper and not having the Senior Cambridge.

Now, it's interesting--after they accepted me, based on this letter I wrote them, they asked me to send a copy of my transcript. Well, I'd never heard the word before because we didn't have transcripts in the secondary schools. You go to school and you either pass or fail, and, indeed, there might not be any record of your

presence in that school. So I went and asked the principal there--Father Boniface--and he gave me a little note, "This is to certify that Mervyn Dymally attended St. Benedict College." I don't know if the registrar at Lincoln University--since they weren't too familiar with foreign students--knew that college was really a secondary school. But they asked me for a copy of my transcript. I had never heard the word before. I had to go to the dictionary and find out. And I made up my own transcript. But it was very impressive, if I may say so, because you had algebra and geometry and trig[onometry], and you have Greek and history and geography and English lit[erature]. It was just very impressive. So 1981, when I was elected to Congress, I was invited back to Lincoln to give the commencement speech. And I said, "Mr. President, before I speak I have a confession to make. That transcript you have in my record I made up myself." [Laughter] But there was no such thing as a transcript.

CARR: Was it a financial hardship on your family for you to go from Trinidad to Lincoln?

DYMALLY: Ah, a very good story. Well, my father was

business and middle-class marginal. He had all these obligations, and he was always into some business that failed. He felt that the United States provided so many opportunities that all he needed to do was to get a ticket for me. I came to Lincoln in February. By the end of the semester, I just had enough money to take the bus to New York. I lived there with some people who had known my family in Trinidad. They had just lost their son, so I was a sort of replacement. He was shot in Harlem. I lived with them, but I had tremendous difficulty adjusting to this new status. I found busing dishes and pushing the garment carts in New York difficult. You remember back at the U.S. Navy base where the QRC guy scolded me for taking a job . . .

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: . . . to wash dishes? That false sense of pride stuck with me. Here is a boy from an emerging middle class in Trinidad now busing dishes. Gee, I must have quit eleven jobs in about eight months. I stayed in New York from summer of June to about February. Then I read in Ebony magazine there was a school of chiropractic in Ohio-- Reaver School of Chiropractic. And I said, "If I

have to go home, you know you have to go home as a doctor. You can't go home as anything else." So I went to the Reaver School and discovered that chiropractic was not even recognized in Ohio and not very many states but California and Florida.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So I finished that course. Then I went and took a course in physical therapy, recognizing that you can't practice without a license. Now, as a student I had no status. I went to Illinois and ended up working for Reynolds Aluminum [Company]. Finally someone told me to. . . . I was dating a girl and she said, "You're always cold." I said, "Yeah. I'm from Trinidad, it's very warm there." She said, "You ought to go to California." I said, "Why?" She said, "It's warm out there." And California, here I come.

CARR: [Laughter] That was the only reason, basically?

DYMALLY: [Laughter] Yeah, and I went to Chapman College. But I want to go back to Trinidad because I want to explore all those possibilities.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: I was growing up in the war years. The war years were, as I said, full of job opportunities. I

never was able to get into that American job scheme because, having failed the Senior Cambridge exam, I couldn't get into the clerical part. I would have had to get into the laboring part, even though lots of people got good jobs and made good money.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: So this job at the Vanguard newspaper gave me an opportunity to have a little status. I was wandering around searching for myself, and it was my mother's encouragement that I should get out of town. That's what also inspired me to come here.

CARR: Why was your mother particularly. . . . Because I read that, somewhere. . . . It really seemed to be her idea that Trinidad wasn't the place for you, that you should go elsewhere.

DYMALLY: Yeah. She also felt that Cedros was not the place for my sister. She sent her to secondary school in Port of Spain because there was nothing in Cedros to do. The only industries in Cedros were fishing and coconut. I wasn't exactly in the society class in San Fernando. You must remember, my father left Cedros and went to San Fernando. He was the manager of a bus company.

We never penetrated middle-class society, so I was floating around there. When what appeared to be not so bright a future economically, it seemed to me the only way out of this dilemma was to come to the United States. Because going overseas in itself was a major accomplishment in Trinidad. It was worthy of a story in the newspapers.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

DYMALLY: As I recall, there were two of us who left the village. [One was] Aubrey Persaud, whose mother was Afro and whose father was Indian. He went to St. Benedict. He had an accident--his eye was punctured--and he came back home. And myself. So there were some high expectations of me in the village where I went back to with some frequency, and still go back. There was really no future in Trinidad for me. As I said, a lot of the white-- or what we called Trinidad white, the light-skinned people--were able to get jobs in the oil fields because of connections. Their father or their uncle or somebody who worked in the oil fields. That's the way you got a job--through nepotism. I didn't have that. My father was in

this bus company and that was it, you know. I had to get out.

CARR: What did your mother do to support the family?

DYMALLY: My mother ran a little parlor--what you call a restaurant or we call a parlor--in which she cooked for the oil field workers. They were just beginning to discover small supplies of oil, and in those days small supplies were significant. You didn't have these big gushing fields as one finds in Saudi Arabia, etc. So that's how she kept us, because when my father left her--when they separated--there was very little support coming from my father economically. One of the really bad things about Trinidad families: fathers abandon first families for second families, and the first family has to depend on the extended family. So we really grew up with the extended family--my grandmother, my uncle, my mother.

But there was always an abundance of food because the soil was so rich and because the neighbors were so generous and because the extended family was so strong. There was always a lot of food. My uncle was a butcher. We could just go down on the seashore and help the

fishermen and get all the fish we wanted. My neighbors were gardeners, and my aunt had a little estate with a lot of fruits and vegetables. So there was a lot of food available. There was not fancy food but, yes, to Trinidad, it was fancy food. They made do with whatever they had. There was a lot of fish and beef and, you know, food was not a problem--no. Shoes were a problem. Clothes were a problem, because that actually cost money out of your pocket.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: Whereas food stuff. . . . You made your own oil out of the coconut oil, right? You had wood fires. You had to buy flour to make the bread. You had to buy rice. All the other ingredients you could derive from the products there. So there was always plenty of food.

CARR: You mention this one young man, Persaud . . .

DYMALLY: Aubrey Persaud.

CARR: That's the one you went to school [with]. Did you have any other close friends that . . .

DYMALLY: He was my closest friend. Up until his death, whenever I went to Trinidad, you can be assured that we always spent time. We spent a lot of

time together traveling and eating and drinking.

My other friend, who came from another village, Icacos--Nicholas Simonett--was a distant relative. But Aubrey was my closest friend, yeah. We all played together and swam together--we lived right on the seashore. Fished together.

CARR: I've read that during that time on the newspaper--in addition to getting all of this junk mail that you call it, or whatever, reading black newspapers--you also learned a little bit about black history.

DYMALLY: Ah! Boy, how could I have forgotten that? One of the people I read about was Booker T. Washington. I went to the library and got a book on Booker T. Washington, and I read Booker T. Washington. Now, at the time I didn't know about the controversy between he and [W.E.B.] Du Bois . . .

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: . . . so that was not an issue. That is very important. So all I was reading was this man who walked all the way from Hampton [Virginia] to Tuskegee [Alabama]. So I wasn't into the right-hand or the left-hand philosophy. I mean, I was inspired by this man who, during the emancipation

period, was able, with nothing, to start up this school [Tuskegee Institute]. And I said to myself, if he could endure this period and this struggle and become something, surely in the postwar era, if I go to the United States, I could make something of myself. But I must tell you that from 1946 to about. . . . I came here in 1946. I came to L.A. in 1949. Those periods were waiting for that gold apple tree that I'd read about in the movies--I had read a lot of detective stories and movie magazines. And I couldn't find that gold tree, and I was searching for that. But I always worked, always found some kind of job. It's a matter of survival.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: I finally got a job at the defense plant.

CARR: What defense plant was that?

DYMALLY: Cannon Electric. During the Korean War. I was in line there and . . .

CARR: What did you build?

DYMALLY: I was in the interview line and this guy from Russia got this job--he said he was from Russia. When the woman asked me where I was from, I said, "Trinidad." And she said, "Colorado?" And I didn't answer, and she hired me. So every day at

DYMALLY: four, four-thirty [P.M], I looked for a red tag on my time card. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] would find me working--immigration officer--without permission. October 15, 1951, was my day of emancipation--one of these days I'm going to throw a big party. The foreman came to me and said, "Dymally, do you know baseball?" I said, "Know a little bit. I played cricket." He said, "No, no, no. I'm talking about baseball. See, in baseball, there are three strikes and you're out. You have two strikes, one more strike and you're gone." Now, I didn't have a choice. I had to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to school to maintain my status. I had to go to work to stay alive. And that day I came to the realization--which has been my guiding light over the years--that in America, there is no substitute for hard work and education. Ever since then, I've been going to school and working. This is probably the first period in my life that I'm not in school and working hard. Always had two jobs, doing two things. One time I had three jobs. On weekends I'd clean up markets. On Sundays, markets; on Saturdays, theaters.

CARR: Let's narrate a little bit back from your first arrival at Lincoln [University] to that period where you traveled around until you came to California. It's a little bit unclear and vague to me.

DYMALLY: I arrived on February 6, 1946, in Miami, Florida, on the Pan American Clipper, which was a sea plane. You boarded, it landed in the sea. On our way here we stopped in Havana--[Fulgencio] Batista's Cuba. I landed here in Miami, and I was so nervous that in signing the cashier's check, the man at the counter would not accept [it]. The signature didn't match. I was overwhelmed. I bought a coat in Miami, but much too thin for the weather in Missouri. I met a woman on the train and she befriended me. It was a segregated train from Miami to St. Louis, Missouri. When we got to St. Louis, it was desegregated, and I took the train further on to Lincoln, Missouri . . .

[Interruption]

. . . I got to Missouri totally bewildered. New environment, new system--a nineteen-year-old kid. Not much money--enough money to buy a meal ticket. Roomed with Alexander Cotay of Sierra

Leone, who became the first high commissioner in London for Sierra Leone after independence.

Cotay and I roomed together because we were the only two foreign students at Lincoln. He was in journalism and so was I. I spent one semester down there, but the adjustment was hard--ran out of money. I had no guidance. Goddamnit. . . . I mean, I look at these young people now with all of the parental guidance they have and all of the facilities and schooling. I had no one to guide me. No one to tell me where to go, what to do, and how to [do it]. That was my major weakness. I had no family roots. During the holidays, everybody would take off for St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago. I had no place to go.

CARR: What did you do?

DYMALLY: Well, I stayed on campus and froze my butt. One time I went to Chicago with some friends. One time I went to Kansas City with some friends. But I was a sort of oddity, you know? I was the guy from Trinidad on campus. I would tip my hat to the ladies and stuff like that. They thought I was very British, you know.

CARR: Now, how did you interact with your black . . .

DYMALLY: Very good. They liked me. I became very popular

with them. It was a good semester. I enjoyed it. I dated a girl there. She took me to Kansas City to meet her family. I dated another one from Illinois. She took me to Chicago. Well, I was kind of a rare bird there, you know, the new kid on the block from Trinidad.

CARR: What fascinates me is, during this first encounter, you essentially took a train through the South.

DYMALLY: Yes. I was befriended by this woman who was headed for San Francisco. Or else I wouldn't have known what the hell to do.

CARR: This was a black woman?

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: OK. So basically she guided you through where to sit and how to deal with things . . .

DYMALLY: Yes, and when to get off the train in St. Louis, told me what to do. God, but what an experience. As a grown-up man I go to a new country, and you land at the airport and you don't have anyone to meet you there, and you panic about not having correct currency and etc., etc. I mean, it's amazing what protection ignorance provides for you [Laughter] at times, you know? I just went through that. We landed on campus. The dean

there, Dean Dawson, liked me. Then another couple, Dr. and Mrs. Lorenzo Green--she was an accomplished pianist and he was an historian--they entertained me. So it was a very good experience. Now, in New York . . .

CARR: You were at Lincoln for a semester?

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: Why did you leave after that semester?

DYMALLY: Well, I had no place to go. It was summer.

CARR: Summer, OK. Did you go back to Lincoln after that first semester?

DYMALLY: No. I didn't have any money. I tried to get into school in New York, but the absence of a high school transcript and the absence of a university transcript. . . . Because I owed them some money, I couldn't get a transcript. I just wasn't there. I was still searching for me. So I read about this school and I just took the bus and went to Dayton, Ohio. The thing that saved me there--as I said, I always worked--I ended up working at General Motors [Corporation]. In fact, I was such a good employee that I won a contest of why I liked working for General Motors. [Laughter] I got a stove. In order to install the stove at the house, they would have

had to rewire the whole house [Laughter], so I sold the stove.

CARR: And you lived by yourself there during that period?

DYMALLY: No. I lived in a house with some other students from Ohio.

CARR: And then from Ohio, you went on to Illinois?

DYMALLY: No. I went to Indiana to the school of therapy there--the American Institute of Therapy.

CARR: Where in Indiana?

DYMALLY: Anderson. And then from there I went to Chicago, Illinois. But [there was] something about me that propelled me to go to work. I was never one to sit down. I went and I got a job in McCook, Illinois, where Reynolds Aluminum had its plant.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: Cold! I used to have to take the streetcar to State Street and stop at the corner, waiting for a bus without a heater. McCook, Illinois.

So a crane fell on my foot, and while I recuperated my friend talked about California. She had a friend whose church was part of the congregation that built Chapman College. So through that introduction, I was able to get admitted to Chapman. Now, Chapman had its

strengths, but there was also a weakness. It had what they called a single-subject study system. You took one subject at a time. Let's say you take history for five weeks. And so you have three courses, so you get your fifteen or sixteen hours. The difficulty with that, however, was you had to come to school the next morning prepared with your work. It was every day, four days a week, and I had to work at night, so I never had time to study. So I had to wing it most of the time. Then when I accomplished about sixty units I went across the street and enrolled in Los Angeles State College [now California State University, Los Angeles], which was being housed at the city college, and barely made it. I had . . .

CARR: This is Los Angeles City College at that time.

Dymally: Right. Los Angeles State College was using city college, their facilities. I needed sixty units-- I had sixty-one--and a C average. After that October 15 experience with my foreman, my grades jumped from C to B to A.

CARR: Why October 15?

DYMALLY: That's the day when he told me I had three strikes. I had two strikes and one more strike,

I'm gone. I realized then that I can't fool around looking for that apple tree anymore. I had to settle down.

CARR: When you talk about this apple tree . . .

DYMALLY: You got this image from Trinidad that the opportunities were just there, you know, in America. All you have to do is go in and it'll fall on the ground and you just pick it up. But nobody ever told me--or told anyone, and still don't tell them--that you only succeed in America with hard work. Michael Jordan works hard at his profession. Whitney Houston works hard. I mean, they may be glamorous people, but they work hard, and that is the measure of your success in this country. I thought that somehow it'd just fall in place. You didn't have to go work hard at it, it would just come to you.

CARR: Right. Now, you've talked as well in the past about the idea of an American dream. What was your vision of what your life would be? What was your notion of the American dream?

DYMALLY: Well, I never discussed it because it was unpopular, but I was really inspired by Booker T. Washington. To come here and find out that he was a man of much controversy. . . . But now,

DYMALLY: historians are being very revisionist in their thinking about him. They're saying, "Hey, he had one approach and. . . ." For a slave who was uneducated, that was the only place to go. Everybody couldn't aspire to go to college--as it is now. Du Bois's position was very elitist. But I was inspired by him and knew of the opportunities in America. That much I did know, even though we did not study American history.

But don't forget now, I'm reading the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburgh Courier. And I tell you, one of the columnists in the Chicago Defender was a guy named [Samuel] S.I. Hayakawa, who was at the time at the University of Chicago and wrote this column. One time I saw him and needled him. I said, "Senator, I knew you when you were a columnist for a black newspaper." So you knew the opportunities were here.

Then you heard about every Trinidadian who came here and became a doctor or a dentist. That was big news back home, you know. The school that they went to--not very many at the time--was the City College of New York, which was tuition free, and Howard Medical School, where, at the time, the tuition was zero. The others went to

England and they came back as big shots--lawyers or doctors. But that was not an option for me.

CARR: So you finished. You get to Cal State L.A. because basically . . .

DYMALLY: I couldn't afford the tuition either.

CARR: Couldn't afford the tuition at Chapman?

DYMALLY: At Chapman. It was very expensive, and I couldn't keep up with the single-subject study system.

CARR: What happened at Cal State L.A. that really kind of propelled you on to finish the degree?

DYMALLY: First, that's the October 15 admonition. Second, I was taking a course in child growth and development with Dr. Pringle. The Canadians are very good in child psychology, they tell me. There was a Canadian film, and in that film I saw myself caught in these two conflicting societies. This chauvinist society in which I grew up--torn between a father and mother who were separated, but not conscious of it--and this society in which I now live. That gave me some insight into myself--the first course in child growth and development and that film.

CARR: What insight did it give you into yourself?

DYMALLY: Well, that I was a victim of my environment and

my culture, and that I needed to change it. It's not going to change by the apple tree. You have to go out there and make it happen, you know. I decided to just buckle down. My grades changed, my work performance improved. I got promoted from punch press operator with two strikes to expediter who had a vehicle to go to the airport every night to deliver goods, and stop home and have dinner with the family.

CARR: When did you get married?

DYMALLY: I think it was 19. . . . I got finished at. . . . I think about 1956, I think.

CARR: Nineteen fifty-six. When did you meet your wife to be?

DYMALLY: Well, when I came from Chicago, my girlfriend there told me to meet her former boyfriend. I came and was staying with him and another guy. At the time, I didn't know anything about homosexuality. What I learned much later on--much later on--is that they both were gay. He and I are still friends to this day. He introduced me to the fraternity. He was quite prominent in the fraternity.

CARR: You're a Kappa, is that correct?

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: Kappa Alpha Psi?

DYMALLY: Kappa Alpha Psi. At the time, by now, I'm working at the defense plant, a friend of mine-- Bob Moore--and I rented a house on Twenty-third Street right up the street from where the family now has a house.

CARR: Twenty-third and what?

DYMALLY: Twenty-third Street and Arlington [Avenue].

CARR: Arlington, OK.

DYMALLY: The house belonged to Charles Brown, the singer-- "Merry Christmas, baby. You sure look good to me. . . ."

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: He had two houses, and we rented that one, and then two female teachers joined us. At the time, the Kappas didn't have the [fraternity] house, and so my house became the place to have the after parties. In those days you bought vodka for about three dollars a fifth--at Thrifty [Drugs]. Vodka was just becoming the drink, and you got Brew 102 very cheap. . . . So all the parties were held there and guys began seeing me in a different light because they're wondering, with my sponsorship by this guy, you know, "What the hell's going on with Dymally?" But those

were. . . .

CARR: Now, when did you join Kappa?

DYMALLY: As soon as I went to Chapman, in 1950.

CARR: Why did you decide to join a fraternity?

DYMALLY: I don't know. It just seemed to me the thing to do. In those days, that was the center of social life--and the basketball game tournament--that was it. I mean, that was as significant as the Congressional Black Caucus weekend in Washington.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: That was the social life there, you know. We went to the games and the rivalry was very, very strong, the social activity very, very prolific. Then, you know, you have an after party at somebody's house and my house was full--two single men and two single women. It was there. So I became very popular.

CARR: What was the initiation process . . .

DYMALLY: I met a guy named [Thomas] Tom Bradley.

CARR: Right. Well, Tom Bradley was . . .

DYMALLY: Was the alumni polemarch--alumni president. The initiation was rigorous. [Laughter] You look upon it now. . . . I mean, you got hazed and you got paddled.

CARR: Right. What was Bradley like back then?

DYMALLY: Oh, still the same soft-spoken gentleman. I recall. . . . You know, the Los Angeles Times tried to make out that Bradley and I were political enemies, but they did not know that we were fraternity brothers. During the course of my going to school I needed--they had raised the tuition now--some money, and I went to Bradley to co-sign a note for me at Security Bank on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Washington Boulevard. And he signed it for me, and I had the money to pay the tuition. A \$200 loan in those days, you know, was a lot of money. The tuition at state college I think, with everything else, was about \$26, and went up to \$46. So Bradley and I had this fraternal relationship which they didn't know about. We disagreed on candidates but never disagreed on issues.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: But the fraternity. . . . Do they still have the fraternity games? I don't know.

CARR: To the same degree that I've read--very strongly back then. I mean, there is one game I recall that Jackie Robinson, who was a member of an opposing fraternity, the . . .

DYMALLY: The Alphas.

CARR: . . . Alphas, would come. I think they used to be held at the Patriotic Hall way back when.

DYMALLY: At one time it used to be Loyola High School.

CARR: Loyola. And they were quite big games.

DYMALLY: Yeah. It was the center of social life. When they had the Kappa black and white, [it] was the big event of the year.

CARR: That was held at the Hollywood Palladium?

DYMALLY: That's correct, that is correct, yes. That was the big event.

CARR: What was that like?

DYMALLY: Oh, I mean it was the event in black Los Angeles-- the Kappa black and white. That was it, yeah. Quite something.

CARR: So it seems like all of a sudden from being in Missouri and feeling very isolated, in a sense, you're here now and you're finding a community.

DYMALLY: I'm into it, you know. The fraternity was important on the campus in those days. And it certainly, even though we didn't have campus chapters in the sense that. . . . Or as in the South, the dormitories and so on. But I was also influenced by the activities of the fraternities at Lincoln. They were big social items. Except I couldn't join--I was a freshman.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: You had to have at least one freshman class behind you--one semester. So from there, then I finished state college. This was such a daze. I mean, it was such. . . . I mean, I was dizzy.

CARR: So you finished state college in '51?

DYMALLY: Yeah. I was dizzy. Here I am at the Greek [Theater] stadium graduating? My God. The first boy from the village graduating?

CARR: Was this still with a degree in journalism?

DYMALLY: No. I switched to education because I figured. . . . I couldn't cut it as a doctor. I didn't have the ability, didn't have the money, didn't have the grades. What if I had to go home? What would I do? I couldn't go back with a law degree--they didn't recognize American law degrees. So why don't I become a teacher?

So I'm a teacher now, no job. A friend of mine suggested. . . . I'm talking to him--"What can I do to stay in school?" He said, "Well, there's a new program being opened up now in California. It's the mandate of teaching the mentally retarded." So I went ahead and got a credential in that. My inspiration there was a guy named Dr. [] Lord. But my most inspiring

figure in college was a professor by the name of Burton Henry.

CARR: How did he . . .

DYMALLY: Because he's the only professor who stood up against McCarthyism, I recall, in those years.

CARR: Within the university system itself?

DYMALLY: Yes. And spoke strongly against it. He was clean, because if he had any relationship with any so-called communist groups he would have been gone. He was a source of great inspiration to me and I still think of him. So I finished. California had a requirement that you could not teach in a class for the mentally retarded for more than five days. You could not teach without a credential as a substitute.

CARR: Oh, I see, yes.

DYMALLY: But there were not a lot of teachers in that category. So when they needed a substitute teacher with the credentials. . . . I substituted for about two or three years--I only missed one day. So I'd go and teach from eight thirty to three thirty, jump in my car and go to Cannon Electric and work from four thirty to midnight. So I kept these two jobs for several years until I got tired. I met a guy on the job from

Pasadena. We became friends. After I left, I got kind of restless, and he suggested that I join the Altadena-Pasadena Young Democrats. I'm driving . . .

CARR: What was his name?

DYMALLY: I forgot. I forgot. But the one person whose name I recall is Richard Nevins, who was subsequently elected as a member of the [California State] Board of Equalization. He was a member of the club. I'm driving on the freeway with my old Dodge, my Plymouth--with loud mufflers--and I heard this news about the students sitting in in Greensboro, North Carolina. And I said to myself, "What am I doing in Pasadena with all these white folks when there is a whole revolution taking place in the South? What can I do?" I examined my options. The NAACP in Los Angeles was very bourgeoisie, very middle-class. The Congress of Racial Equality was a bunch of white radical kids who were going to jail with some frequency. So I said, "There are no young blacks in the Democratic party."

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: I went up to the headquarters and I met a guy smoking a cigar named Joe Cerrell. He and I are

still friends today. He has Cerrell Associates. I told him I wanted to organize a club. He said, "You mean join a club." I said, "No. I want to organize a club." So with the help of some friends--one of whom was Henry Hodge, the national president of the Congress of Racial Equality--we organized the Young Democrats. That was a fun period, because we were looked at as sort of the radicals in the Democratic party, protesting the all-white executive committee [the California Democratic Council].

CARR: From that moment when you joined the Young Democrats, what were some of the campaigns you took part in?

DYMALLY: Very interesting. I joined at the time when there was a . . .

CARR: This was about 1952, '53?

DYMALLY: No, no, no, no. Those years I spent with the [International Union] United Auto[mobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement] Workers [of America], and was a member of the political action committee, so I had some kind of idea what was going on. No, we are into 1960 now.

CARR: How did you get involved with the United Auto Workers? I seem to have missed that step.

DYMALLY: At the job at Cannon Electric, I was a member of the union and became active in the political action committee, which was headed by a guy named Spencer Wiley, who has since passed away.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: I am invited to this meeting where I'm the only black in the Young Democrats of any prominence-- president of the Westside Young Democrats. That attracted a lot of young people--first experience of its kind. The white boys are there deciding, cuttin' up the pie, and I just naively said, "Who's running for treasurer?" because that part was left open. The candidate for president was a southerner, from Georgia--Berrien Moore--and he instinctively said, "You are." So I became the candidate for the treasurer for the Young Democrats and, on a slate, won. Through that I went to a meeting with Leon Ralph, who subsequently became an assemblyman. He and I were the only two blacks in the meeting, and [Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy came up to me and said, "Why aren't there more blacks in this meeting?" I said, "Because your brother is not popular in the black community."

Now, let me go back a bit. The NAACP was

pushing a measure to change the structure of the jury system because of the all-white jury in the South. [John F.] Kennedy was advised by Harvard [University] lawyers that if you tinker with the jury system in the South, you leave yourself wide open for a lot of problems in the North. What you need to do is to change the racist system in the South, not the jury system, they said. So he didn't support the measure.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: So there was a big demonstration--about five thousand people--led by Adam Clayton Powell [Jr.]. [They] marched from the Shrine [Auditorium] to the [Los Angeles] Sports Arena. At that march, Hank Hodge and I--he, the chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality and a member of the Westside Young Democrats; Dymally, president of the Westside Young Democrats--met a guy named Willard Murray, who subsequently became an assemblyman.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So our friendship goes all the way back to '60. I met him on the line. At the time he was a Republican. So we start organizing, start attending the Citizens for Kennedy movement.

There were three movements. There was the [Assemblyman] Jesse [M.] Unruh official Kennedy operation. There was [Thomas] Tom Braden, who was on Crossfire--who started Crossfire--who headed the Citizens Committee, and he was with the [Edmund G.] "Pat" Brown [Sr.] faction. And there was a . . .

CARR: Now, the Unruh committee was CDC basically, right?

DYMALLY: No, no, no, no. Oh, God, that was the point. You just took it away from my . . .

CARR: I'm sorry.

DYMALLY: CDC--California Democratic Council--had their own operation. They hated Jesse Unruh.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So I became Jesse Unruh's ally, so to speak, and the liberals didn't care much for me because I teamed up with Jesse Unruh.

CARR: Because at this point, I think, [Tom] Bradley is teaming up with CDC, Unruh has his own . . .

DYMALLY: Own operation. Now, I joined the club of which Bradley was a member, the Crenshaw Democratic Club.

CARR: Now, had the Leimert Park CDC come about yet?

DYMALLY: It's around that time that Bradley--I had joined

that also--that Bradley became president. Now I'm with the Unruh faction in the Young Democrats, but with the CDC clubs, I'm with the anti-Unruh faction. I mean, I didn't know the machinations of all of this stuff. So he [Unruh] said to a friend, "Who is this guy who's attacking me at the West Vernon Democratic Club?" Then a guy by the name of [Steven E.] Steve Smith--who then was vice-chairman of the California Young Democratic Club--took me to meet Jesse Unruh. He wants to see who is this guy raising all this hell. And he and I became instant friends, and so I was identified as an Unruh man.

CARR: How was that? What was it like meeting him for the first time?

DYMALLY: Oh, shit, I was in awe. I mean, here it is, I'm meeting a big-shot politician--me, little boy from Cedros? Come on. [Laughter] I mean, I was just fascinated as all hell, and he was a very charming guy, you know. Most rough politicians have a very soft spot. When you get to meet them, they're like marshmallow.

So I'm identifying with the Unruh faction, and then they're looking now to set up a black

DYMALLY: Kennedy drive. In the meantime, as a Young Democrat, I had gone about knocking on doors. I went to Assemblyman Augustus [F. "Gus"] Hawkins, who was somewhat stunned to see somebody come and knock on his door, and said, "I am organizing a Young Democratic club. I need your help." And he and I became instant friends. So they were looking for somebody to run the Community Groups for Kennedy, which at the time [was] comprised of Judge Vaino [H.] Spencer, Les Shaw--the first black postmaster in Los Angeles, and that was big news in those days--Spencer Wiley of United Auto Workers, Judge Xenophoan [F.] Lang, etc., etc. They interviewed two persons, one of whom was working for Douglas [Aircraft Company], and he could not get a leave. They interviewed me, and I took a leave from school. I go into the school district headquarters for a leave, and who do I run into, the principal where I did my internship, where I did my student teaching--and she's now head of personnel. She said, "What? You're taking a leave from school to go into politics? Mr. Dymally, are you crazy?" They thought I was insane to leave this good job. So I worked for the Kennedy [campaign], I got to

know Jesse Unruh. And after the campaign--you know, we lost California but the Kennedys were strong--between Jesse and Gus, I got appointed by Governor Pat Brown to a position in Sacramento--the California Disaster Office. That gave me exposure to a lot of people in Sacramento.

CARR: How long were you at the Disaster Office? You weren't there very long, were you?

DYMALLY: No. I got there in '61 and then I got transferred to the Pasadena office. Then I resigned in '62 to run for the [California State] Assembly. I was there about a year.

CARR: Before we go on to your campaign for the first assembly seat, I'd like to go back to a few things. What was your teaching experience like?

DYMALLY: Oh, God. What an important part of my life. Now, I was a substitute teacher, and substitute teachers were looked down on. Everybody wanted to know, why are you substituting? Why don't you take the exam? They immediately assume that you failed the exam--that's why you're substituting. And that's why most people substituted, because they failed the exam. But I had passed the exam. But I was bringing the family over here now, buying a house on Twenty-third Street, raising a

family. The money at Cannon was good. The job was easy: I was an expediter. I had the vehicle at my disposal to leave work, go to the airport, stop by the house at night. That's why I was substitute teaching. But what I was really doing was bringing the family over, helping build this extended family. My house was a house of refuge for everybody from Trinidad, you know. They came there and they stayed there.

CARR: Who did you help to bring over?

DYMALLY: Who didn't I help? Everybody. My sisters, Courtney, Marge--Marge's children--Hazel, Romer, Roddy . . .

CARR: Were you here, by that time, legally?

DYMALLY: Yes. By then, two things happened. During the Korean War you could become a citizen expeditiously if you were in certain job categories that were very scarce. One was engineering for aerospace, one was nursing, and one was teaching. So now I'm married to Amentha Wilkes. I have a teaching job. I can't keep the job unless I become a citizen. I can't become a citizen unless I get the job, so I had to mix those two. Taking the exam as an alien wasn't a problem. So I passed the exam. I had an option

for a full-time teaching job. Many of the teachers wondered why I continued to substitute, but this was a two-job thing. Another thing that I did that enhanced my political future without knowing it was I joined the American Federation of Teachers because of its labor background, rather than CTA [California Teachers Association]. People who joined the AFT in those days, rather than the CTA, were looked down upon like a bunch of commies, you know.

CARR: So after joining the American Federation of Teachers you weren't viewed as a communist?

DYMALLY: Well, I was viewed as some kind of leftist. Why would you join the AFT instead of the CTA, which is number one. They consider themselves the professionals; they look at us as the workers. But I became an organizer for them, organizing teachers on a volunteer basis. So I developed some credibility with the labor sector without even knowing that I was going to run someday for the assembly.

Now, I've got to tell you this, this assembly running was purely accidental. I joined the Young Democrats, and we were having a lot of fun because these conventions were a lot of fun--

DYMALLY: organizing and getting involved in the factions
and the intrigue, organizing the clubs, and etc.,
etc.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Session 1, December 21, 1996]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

CARR: . . . coordinator, you were saying?

DYMALLY: . . . of the California Disaster Office, and part of my work was to be in contact with community groups and labor unions, etc. There was this conference in Hot Springs, California, by the United Auto Workers. Gus Hawkins, whom I had met, of course--and who had helped me to get this job in Sacramento--was driven down by a staff member from Sacramento to Hot Springs. He was looking for a ride from Hot Springs to Los Angeles. So I was flattered to have this man of twenty-eight years in the assembly in my car. So we were chatting, and I said, "Assemblyman, I understand you're going to run for Congress." He said, "Yeah, I think so." I said, "Well, who's going to succeed you?"--very naive. He said, "I don't know. I don't have anybody." It occurred to me, "Hey, this is strange. This guy has been in office all this long, and he doesn't have a

successor?" So I came home and I called Willard Murray and offered myself. "Oh, no, no. You can never make that."

I had a friend by the name of [William] Bill Hagen who was very active in the South Gate Democratic Club, which was part of the new congressional district. We were organized by congressional district councils. I called Bill, and I said, "I'm out of the district. I want to move into the district." He got a mortgage for me on my house. I took the mortgage money and bought a house in the district, but did not sell that house on the west side, on Twenty-third Street. I bought a house on [East] Fifty-ninth Place and Avalon [Boulevard], became a full-time resident of the district, and began organizing clubs. There were thirteen clubs in the congressional district, and I organized eleven.

CARR: Now, you're doing all of this with your eye on the seat that Gus Hawkins is vacating?

DYMALLY: He hasn't blessed anybody.

CARR: Why do you think that was? That's very strange.

DYMALLY: Well, the job only paid \$300. Nobody in their right mind, at the time, unless you had another gig, and Gus Hawkins had real estate. . . .

Now, there was a guy who was the darling of the club movement and the civil rights movement, [Donald J.] Don Derricks, who decided to run. At the time, a guy by the name of [S.] Wendell Green, the editor of the Los Angeles Sentinel, had organized a two-by-four plan. He was advocating two congressional districts and four assembly districts. In those days, we didn't have many senate districts in L.A.--just one. I had a choice of going with the popular group. Everybody--it was one of the more active political groups in Los Angeles--joined the two-by-four group, the Committee for Fair Representation. I made a decision to go with Gus Hawkins.

CARR: Just to interrupt you for a moment before we go on, the Committee for Fair Representation-- weren't they the same committee that was pushing to get more blacks onto the [Los Angeles] City Council as well?

DYMALLY: No. Mostly the legislature, at that time. Later on the group pushed for Tom Bradley to get in. But from the beginning, they organized around the reapportionment point of view, it was really the legislature. They subsequently supported Bradley

for the city council. But that was not part of the early movement.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: I looked at the realities of the game. I looked at Sacramento. I was in a car one day. . . . I flew on up to Sacramento, and a guy offered me a ride. In the car were some legislators. They started praising Gus Hawkins--you know, unanimous in their praise. So I made the decision to go with Gus during that movement. We were able to get one congressional district, and Gus was that candidate. By then he and Jesse Unruh had made up, and Jesse was supporting him.

CARR: Now, he had split with Jesse Unruh at some point?

DYMALLY: He was a candidate for the speakership in 1961. He had thirty-nine votes, but could not get the forty-first vote. Jesse Unruh and his boys-- [Assemblyman Thomas M.] Tom Rees, [Assemblyman] Tom Bane, [Assemblyman William A.] Munnell-- supported somebody else, [Assemblyman Ralph M.] Brown [Jr.], out of the [Central] Valley. So Gus lost out as speaker.

CARR: They were kind of split until the run for Congress?

DYMALLY: I just thought, before that--reapportionment--

DYMALLY: Jesse saw to it that Gus had a safe district. So I stayed with Gus on that score.

So everything is moving along smoothly. Don Derricks is the candidate of the civil rights movement. At the last minute, some of Gus's supporters--they resented my coming into the fray--put his brother [Edward A. Hawkins] in the race. So that neutralized Gus. I remember the lobbyist, [Halden C.] Hal Broaders, for the Bank of America called Gus and myself for lunch at the Biltmore Hotel to get a feel of where Gus was going. Gus told him what the dilemma was with his brother. Hal Broaders is still around. He's retired now. He and I became friends later on. He always mentioned that experience.

So here I am running--a lot of enthusiasm, young people. I used to take the tabloids--my tabloid--and start on Sixth Street, ride the bus from Central Avenue to Slauson [Avenue], and then make interchanges. My hair was short at the time, and everybody thought I was a Muslim peddling my papers. I walked the streets in the day. In the day, I'd walk all day long, come home, have dinner, take a shower, and go to the campaign headquarters. We attracted a lot of

young people.

I recall election day--I'm jumping [ahead]-- I'm at ABC Market on San Pedro [Street] and Florence. We are still urging people to go vote. Don Derrick's boys are in a truck dancing, and music, and they just booed me. I felt like crying. But as I went to the little old ladies and asked them who did they vote for, they kept saying such things as, "Some guy who's named 'Dymally'--some young guy, you know. I can't remember his name." And I said, "Oh my God. I'm going to win this thing."

But I got into this assembly race without thinking. As I think about it, if I had given it careful thought, I never would have gotten into it. But I was so naive. Totally inexperienced. But a lot of enthusiasm; I worked very hard. Then [Laughter] everyone was surprised that I won. So this was not something that I planned to get into.

CARR: But you did have the blessing of . . .

DYMALLY: Jesse Unruh. Jesse Unruh said, "Look, I don't think you can win. I don't think you could beat Gus Hawkins's brother, Ed Hawkins," who had been on the [Los Angeles] County [Democratic Central]

Committee for about forty years. At one time, he was the only black on the county committee. Gus had been in the legislature for twenty-eight years. The Hawkins name was a household word. There was no way in the world you could beat this guy. But we invented, at the time, the sample ballot.

CARR: What was that?

DYMALLY: We started it. We were the ones who started mailing the sample ballot. It was conceived by Steve Smith, who was running [Assemblyman Charles H.] Charlie Wilson's campaign for the Congress and my [campaign].

CARR: Steve Smith was one of the Westside Democrats, right?

DYMALLY: No, he had another group. He was in the San Fernando Valley. He went to manage Charlie Wilson's campaign--the guy whom I subsequently defeated to go to Congress. We talked about a sample ballot. That's where the sample ballot was born.

CARR: So going into the election, you had a fairly good feel for where things stood?

DYMALLY: No.

CARR: No?

DYMALLY: [Laughter] I was just naive as all hell. I mean, lots of enthusiasm. Lots of vigor and vitality.

CARR: Could we go back a bit to clarify a few things for me? You were married twice?

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: OK. I misunderstood, because you mentioned . . .

DYMALLY: Amentha is the mother of Mark [S. Dymally] and Lynn [V. Dymally]. My wife Alice [Gueno Dymally] and I, we don't have any children.

CARR: OK. Now, you were married to Amentha from when to when?

DYMALLY: I called her and asked her that one day, and she was pissed with me for not knowing. [Laughter] I had to fill out some form. You know, the property. . . . On the trust deed or something like that, you have to put previous marriage and the dates. I asked, and she jumped all over me. I know we divorced in '66. I think from about '56 to. . . . In the fifties--early fifties--to '66.

CARR: And you met in?

DYMALLY: About '55 to '56.

CARR: How did you meet?

DYMALLY: I met her at one of those fraternity parties.

After we left the house. . . . We had to give up the house for some reason. No, I met her at the house, a Kappa party. Yeah. That's where we met.

CARR: Was she a sorority sister?

DYMALLY: No, no. She was just one of those participants. You know, everybody went to that. It was the thing to do, and that's how I met her. But what attracted me is that her father was from Trinidad, so she had a little bit of a West Indian in her. Her father was from Trinidad and she was from New York, so she knew all about West Indian and the West culture.

CARR: Now, at that time, having read some of the old California Eagle and even the paper up in Pasadena, there seemed to be somewhat of a budding West Indian community, though small, in southern California.

DYMALLY: Yeah, very small. I knew them all. That's how small they were. They all congregated at my house during the era of "Day-O, Day-O"--Harry Belafonte. That's when calypso was at its height. Every Saturday night there was a party at my house, and they all assembled there. But they grew so large that I lost touch with them.

It was very small at the time.

CARR: Because I remember, I think there was some point when cricket was even played on the grounds of the [Los Angeles Memorial] Coliseum, or Exposition Park, somewhere around there.

DYMALLY: Yes. Well, when I caught up with the cricket boys, they had moved to Burbank.

CARR: Interesting.

DYMALLY: But the big social event was around calypso, at my house.

CARR: The other question I have is, your mother was Catholic, your father is Muslim, but you're now listed as Episcopalian?

DYMALLY: Yes. Anglican. I told you about this dispute in the village, and then the Anglican canon came in to mediate. We ended up in the Anglican church, which you call Episcopalian.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Session 2, January 4, 1997]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

CARR: I have a few follow-up questions to ask you from our previous interview. Then we can get on in earnest regarding your first political campaign for the assembly in 1962. One of the things I'd like you to tell me a little bit about is your transition from teaching to getting very politically involved. What really made you want to get involved in politics?

DYMALLY: You can't divorce my experience in Trinidad with the oil workers union. They were very political, the underdog. . . . As you know, leadership in West Indian politics is grown out of the Oxford [University] and Cambridge [University] educated elite who come back as doctors and lawyers.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: In the case of the oil workers, with one exception, they all were home-grown leaders, grassroots-type leaders. Coming from the country as I did, I had a natural affinity for them. The

one scholar was Adrian Cola Rienzi, who was educated in Ireland. The rest were local people. So I had that bit of politics in me. As an immigrant, I recognized I couldn't get too involved in local politics.

CARR: Why not?

DYMALLY: Because immigrants are very fearful that they will offend the law and get deported. That is why you have a very unresponsive Third World population with regards to politics, because they don't want to offend the law. So during the green card status, they hardly participate. They wait until they become citizens. By then I was a citizen.

CARR: Now, you became a citizen in 1957?

DYMALLY: 'Fifty-seven, yeah.

CARR: When did you decide to become a citizen?

DYMALLY: Well, two things happened. After I graduated from school with a bachelor's, I went back home, very proud. After all these years I struggled, I had a bachelor's degree. I went in the local rum shop, and this old man said, "Sonny, where have you been?" I said, "I've been in the United States." "What have you been doing?" "I was going to school." "What did you graduate in?" I

said I had a bachelor's in education. He said to me, "You mean to say you went all the way to the United States just to get a bachelor's in education? You could have done that here." So to him, that was not a major accomplishment.

CARR: How did you feel about that?

DYMALLY: Oh, I damn near fell through the floor. I knew very well what he was saying. I was not offended, because the aspiration of that village and the country as a whole was that, when you went overseas, you came back either as a doctor or a lawyer--not as some teacher. Now, Dr. Eric Williams changed that, because he was the first non-medical doctor--Ph.D.--to be recognized as a leader . . .

CARR: Now, who is this?

DYMALLY: Dr. Eric Williams, the father of the constitution of Trinidad.

CARR: OK, right.

DYMALLY: So I realized I had to do a little more than that. All of my options. . . . Going to medical school? Zilch. I had no aptitude for medicine, didn't have the money. So I began looking at some other options.

CARR: What was your family's reaction to your . . .

DYMALLY: Oh, they were very proud that I had finished college. But to the public in general, a bachelor's in education was nothing. I was a teacher. A plain old teacher. As far as they were concerned, I could have stayed in Trinidad and have become a teacher. "Why do you have to go all the way to the United States to become a teacher?" That was the cynical response that I got.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: I came back. I was working two jobs, teaching as a substitute. After I graduated, I had the option of going back home to teach with a bachelor's degree. No dice. What do I do? A friend said to me that California had just passed legislation to mandate the teaching of the mentally retarded. There were no teachers, and there were lots of opportunities. So going on to graduate division--it wasn't graduate school, it was a division--permitted me to maintain my student status while looking around for a job. Now, I had a case of the chicken and egg. To get a job, you had to become a citizen. To become a citizen, you had to have a job. I was able to mesh those two. I passed the exam at the Los

Angeles city school system, so I was offered a job. I had a job. Then I got married. So these two things . . .

CARR: Now, was your wife a citizen?

DYMALLY: Yes. These two things meshed. In those days, during the Korean conflict, if you were a teacher, doctor, nurse, or engineer, you were on a priority list. So I had no problems there. So now I am teaching in the day as a substitute. Because of my unique credential, I was called [frequently], because California law stated you could not teach in a mentally retarded class for more than five days without a credential. So if a substitute teacher came in with a general elementary credential, at the end of five days, he or she had to leave. I could have stayed on. In some instances, I stayed on for quite some time. I worked at night on the swing shift at Cannon Electric.

CARR: Now, Cannon Electric, what kind of company was that?

DYMALLY: They made electrical plugs like these here, but for the army.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: These big cable attachments.

CARR: All right. And what union were you affiliated with when you were there?

DYMALLY: United Auto Workers. I was an expediter. I took the urgent packages to the air freight, to the airport at night. So I was able to stop home and have dinner with the family. I was bringing my family to the United States at the time, so the money was welcome--buying a house, raising a family. I got kind of tired with these two jobs, and I quit and started to teach permanently at the Seventy-ninth Street Elementary School.

CARR: Before we go on, just for a moment, did you have a brief stint at the San Fernando Valley [State] College [now California State University, Northridge].

DYMALLY: No. I just attended a class there.

CARR: Oh, you attended a class there. Because I've seen that listed somewhere.

DYMALLY: Yeah, I attended a class. I decided to start doing graduate school, so I began going to San Fernando Valley. Then this friend with whom I worked suggested I join the Young Democrats in Pasadena. That's how I got into politics.

CARR: Why did he or she suggest that?

DYMALLY: We were friends and he was a member of the club.

He said, "Why don't you come and join." I went and joined the Altadena-Pasadena Young Democrats. The day when the Greensboro [North Carolina] sit-in started--the first one, 1960--that night we had a meeting, and I was on my way home on the Pasadena Freeway when I heard the news. I asked myself, "What am I doing in Pasadena with some white kids in the Young Democrats? I need to be more active in the movement, doing something." I looked around. The NAACP was very middle-class in those days. Very elitist. Kind of a closed shop, in my judgment.

CARR: Could you elaborate on that? I mean, much has been said about the NAACP's reticence to get involved in political activism.

DYMALLY: They wouldn't admit to that and would probably criticize me for it. It was basically lawyers and businessmen and doctors, you know--middle-class leadership--and stayed away from politics as such. The NAACP, apolitical. Here's the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE], with a bunch of radical white kids. I didn't think I could fit in there. But again, they were apolitical.

CARR: But you did become a member of CORE, right?

DYMALLY: Absolutely.

CARR: When did you join CORE?

DYMALLY: Well, I had to join something. [Laughter] CORE seems to be the best part of the last two, because it was young, radical, and open. NAACP wasn't closed, but it wasn't open. It was a chance for me to recruit some people, I thought. So I looked around at all of the civil rights groups who were apolitical--none having any influence on the Democratic party in the workings.

CARR: Did you take a look at, say, the Urban League, for instance?

DYMALLY: The Urban League is not a membership organization as such. It's really sort of a business and community-type thing. That's a closed political shop.

But it seemed to me that there was a void in the Democratic party. There were no young people in the Democratic party. I had never heard of any. So I went up to the headquarters . . .

CARR: Do you mean young blacks? Because there were . . .

DYMALLY: Yes. There were no young black Democrats in those days.

CARR: Period?

DYMALLY: Period.

CARR: There was not a Young Democratic club . . .

DYMALLY: No. Not in southern California. There was an active Young Democratic club in San Francisco by the Burton brothers--[Assemblyman Phillip] Phil [Burton] and John [L. Burton] and his other brother, three Burton brothers--of which Willie [L.] Brown [Jr.] was a member. But there was not a black Young Democratic club in the [California] Federation [of Young Democrats]. So I said to Joe Cerrell, who now runs Cerrell Associates. . . . I saw him there, smoking a cigar. I said, "I want to organize a Democratic club."

CARR: How did you get to know Joe Cerrell?

DYMALLY: I just walked up to him cold turkey in the headquarters.

CARR: So you walked in, you saw Joe Cerrell, and you . . .

DYMALLY: I saw a guy there. I saw a guy there.

CARR: You had no idea who he was?

DYMALLY: [Laughter] I said, "I want to organize a Democratic club." He said, "You mean join one." I said, "No, organize." He told me what were the requirements. So I went and got some people out of CORE.

CARR: Who were those people?

DYMALLY: Two I remember very well. One was Henry Hodge, who just happened to be the national president of CORE. That was a very prestigious one. The other one was a young woman who finally ended up working for the Burtons, Doris Ward, I think. She ended up in San Francisco. She was a graduate of Howard University, so she was very political too. And we recruited other people, and we organized the Young Democrats. Soon we were the hot stuff within the Young Democratic Federation of California [California Federation of Young Democrats].

CARR: Now, would you say there were--even within CORE--various camps in the sense that, was there a camp that very much dealt with political activism, like some of the sit-ins that took place here in southern California?

DYMALLY: They were not party activists.

CARR: Exactly.

DYMALLY: All of them were non-party people. That was the problem. I thought to myself . . .

CARR: Who headed up that camp of people, do you recall?

DYMALLY: The anti-political group was by the whites.

CARR: There were no blacks involved in that group?

DYMALLY: Yeah, of course, of course. I remember [Robert]

Bob Hall, who took me to the Watts riots. He called me and said, "You need to be out here," and came and picked me up. But I coalesced with both sides. The apolitical side was led by a girl named Mauri Goldman, who was British, and she and I took a liking to each other because of our British background. She subsequently ended up working for me.

CARR: In the assembly or senate?

DYMALLY: In the senate. She was instrumental for the Dymally Community Property Act.¹ Now in California, husband and wife share equally in property at the time of divorce.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: She got jilted by her husband, and spent three years working with Maureen [E.] Reagan--which is a story I'll tell you later on when we get to the senate--and got that bill passed. I kept saying to Mauri, "No British husband is going to tolerate his wife going to jail so often," and eventually he divorced her, and she and I became good friends.

1. S.B. 570, 1974 Reg. Sess., ch. 11.

But anyhow, I got into the Young Democrats. Now, I go to this meeting and they're cutting up the pie. There were two caucuses. There was the CDC caucus headed by the Waxman and Berman group . . .

CARR: OK. Do you know who headed it up at the time?

DYMALLY: Henry [A.] Waxman and Howard [L.] Berman.

CARR: Right, but was there any. . . . It was Waxman and Berman who actually headed up that faction?

DYMALLY: They headed up that faction with Alan Cranston's support.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: Then there was the other faction--Steve Smith, Joe Cerrell, and Berrien Moore--who were supported by Jesse Unruh. Now, I was looked at with scorn, because they said here was a young black with a conservative group of the Young Democrats. With the Young Democrats, conservatism was relative.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: The thing that divided them, one from the other, [was that] the Waxman group wanted to recognize quote, unquote, "Red China," and the Unruh group was opposed to [Laughter] recognizing Red China. That was the separation between the liberals and

the conservatives.

CARR: Right. I mean, I've heard it described in some places as you guys were moderate Democrats. Was too much made of that?

DYMALLY: [Laughter] Oh yeah. Yes, yes. A lot was made of that division. Oh God, it was just total warfare at the meetings.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: Oh, but exciting.

CARR: What were the meetings like?

DYMALLY: Oh, my God! Excited warfare. I mean, guys would go crazy with their walkie-talkies and [Laughter] running back and forth and all. What great fun.

CARR: Where were those meetings held?

DYMALLY: In various part of the state. I remember one we had in Pismo Beach, one in Bakersfield, one in San Diego, one in Fresno, one in San Francisco. The one in San Francisco the Reverend F. Douglas Ferrell, who was in the assembly, put [Laughter] a bus tour of choir members [together]--he took them up there, and we almost won. [Laughter] We ran Bill Greene for president of the Young Democrats, and we almost won. We were beaten by the Burton brothers, with [Josiah H.] Joe Beeman as president, who now is ambassador to New

Zealand. So here I was with this faction. Now, I went to this meeting where the Unruh faction was cutting up the pie, and they never mentioned anyone for treasurer. I was just curious. I had no idea that I could ever aspire to any office. I was just curious. I said, "I noticed you didn't name anyone for treasurer."

CARR: Who did you say this to?

DYMALLY: To the chairman, who was Berrien Moore--from Georgia. He impulsively responded, "You are." Why did he do that? Coming from Georgia, a liberal from Georgia in the 1960s, I mean, it was unusual.

CARR: He was a very rare cat.

DYMALLY: A rare cat. So he figured, with a black on his slate, he couldn't be all that bad. And sure enough, we won. Nobody opposed me, because that wasn't a popular thing to do in those days--to go about opposing a black. So I became state treasurer, and our faction won.

CARR: Now, see, what I find interesting about this recounting of this story: you say you're naive, but at the same time you're clearly aware that Moore was using you for his purposes . . .

DYMALLY: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Because don't

forget, I had a lot of experience.

CARR: Exploiting, willing to make, even at this young time . . .

DYMALLY: Because I had had experience as a member of the political action committee of the United Auto Workers. So I still maintained my political affiliation, my addiction, but in a non-party sense, in a worker's sense. I was a member of the union, very active. So I find, gee, I'm just amazed: All of a sudden, I am treasurer of the Young Democrats. I'm being called to . . .

CARR: Statewide.

DYMALLY: Statewide. I'm being called to all of these meetings, one of which was a meeting to put together the campaign for Kennedy. I took a friend of mine, Leon Ralph, who subsequently became assemblyman.

CARR: And how did you and Ralph meet?

DYMALLY: We met, I believe, through an African American lawyer on Western Avenue. I forgot his name. Tom Bane represented the Valley. I think he told me, "There's a young man there I want you to meet." That was another introduction. I didn't know Leon had any ambitions at all for public life. But anyway, Leon came in. Leon and I went

to the meeting. Bobby Kennedy came to me and said, "Why aren't there more blacks in this meeting?" I said, "Your brother is not popular in the black community. He said to me, "You make him popular." Why wasn't his brother popular? The NAACP was sponsoring a measure in the [United States] Senate to change the jury selection. Harvard lawyers advised Kennedy against it, saying that if you tamper with the jury system in the South, it could be tampered with in the North. What you had to do is to change the whole legal and social structure in the South rather than tamper with the jury system. So the NAACP was not happy. In fact, five thousand people marched from the Shrine Auditorium to the [Los Angeles Memorial] Sports Arena protesting Kennedy's election, headed by Adam Clayton Powell [Jr.]. In that line was Hank Hodge, national chairman of CORE, and that's where I was introduced to Willard Murray, who was then a Republican.

CARR: Now, how did that transition occur--from Willard Murray the Republican to Willard Murray the Democrat?

DYMALLY: He became very enthralled, enamored about all of

the machinations that went on--the Young Democrats, meeting Jesse Unruh. I mean, it was just an exciting time, you know. I didn't know about his affiliation until much later. He was an aerospace engineer at the time.

CARR: Did he ever talk to you about his philosophical reasons for being a Republican [Inaudible]?

DYMALLY: Well, I remember this one incident. Adam Clayton Powell. . . . I don't know who designated me. Maybe I'm a little ahead of myself, but let me go ahead with this anyway. I picked up Adam Clayton Powell at the airport. I remember specifically he requested some hard boards under his mattress because of a back pain. I said to him that night, "Mr. Powell, what advice do you have for a young man to get into politics?" He said to me, "Go get yourself a Baptist church." [Laughter]

CARR: [Laughter] It's a good joke, but it's also true.

DYMALLY: Oh yes. What impressed me about Powell is that, at the airport, everybody knew him. All the porters went up, shaking his hand. He was a big star in those days. When he gave his speech, as he got the people on their feet, he stopped. Taking him back to the hotel I said, "Why did you stop so suddenly?" He said, "When you're ahead,

you quit." [Laughter] But he brought with him the restrictive covenant which [Vice President Richard M.] Nixon had signed. I organized a paper tiger, the Independent Voters League--it had an address, I think, on Broadway and Manchester [Avenue]--and printed maybe a hundred thousand of these. Willard was livid. He thought it was low-down. Can you imagine Willard Murray thinking that was dirty politics?

[Laughter]

CARR: Right, yeah.

DYMALLY: He called up Jesse Unruh to protest that I . . .

CARR: This was the restrictive covenant that Nixon . . .

DYMALLY: Had just signed.

CARR: . . . had signed, which essentially was. . . .

DYMALLY: Outlawed by the [United States] Supreme Court.

CARR: Was outlawed, but he had signed it anyway.

DYMALLY: Before, I think. And Loren Miller . . .

CARR: Was the one who fought the legal battles.

DYMALLY: That's right. He was big in the NAACP. So that will tell you how highbrow the NAACP was here. Willard was livid that I was indulging in dirty politics. So we distributed this restrictive covenant. In fact, we began having requests from back East for copies of it.

CARR: Wonderful. You were digging out Nixon's skeletons.

DYMALLY: Yeah, yeah. You were asking about Willard, and how the transition [occurred]. But anyhow, I'm ahead of myself.

So I'm very active in the Young Democrats. There was the Citizens for Kennedy headed by Braden, who started CNN [Cable News Network] Crossfire. Tom Braden had the Citizens for Kennedy. The CDC had their headquarters, and Jesse Unruh had the official Kennedy campaign.

CARR: OK. Now, at this point, wasn't there a lot of animosity because certain people felt that, essentially, Unruh was taking over the campaign?

DYMALLY: Absolutely. I'm coming to that. But he and Gus Hawkins. . . . He opposed Gus Hawkins's bid for Speaker [of the Assembly], and Gus Hawkins got thirty-nine votes. He could not get the forty-one votes. But during the course of 1960, with the census coming in and a new black congressional district on the horizon, he and Jesse made up. He became chairman of the Rules Committee. He, now, with his position there, and [as] the most senior black politician--the only one of two in California, the other one being

[Assemblyman William B.] Rumford--he became head of the Community Groups for Kennedy, which included a very active member who's on the bench now: Vaino Spencer, she's an appeals court judge; Judge Lang; Les Shaw, who became the first black postmaster in Los Angeles; Spencer Wiley of the United Auto Workers; Judge Sherman [W.] Smith, and a number of people. The cream of the crop, so to speak. And they were looking for someone. Well, word was around about this young teacher who was very active in the Young Democrats. Now, what I did--I don't know where the hell I learned this from--but I just went and started knocking on doors. One of the doors I knocked on was Gus Hawkins's.

CARR: In the neighborhood?

DYMALLY: No, just key people. And he was just amazed to see this young, brash guy come in and say, "Mr. Hawkins, my name is Mervyn Dymally. I'm a member of the Auto Workers. Spencer Wiley is my friend, and I'm organizing a Young Democratic club, and I wanted to let you know about it."

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: I mean, he was impressed like all hell about that, I'm told. So here I was. I went to

Spencer Wiley, of course. I'm in his union-- United Auto Workers. He's very active, because the Auto Workers used to pour a lot of money into the Democratic party. So even though he was not an educated person, he was a very visible and active person, and respected. So he's pushing me, because he wants an Auto Worker on. . . . In the meantime, I had left the Auto Workers. I'm in teaching now, and what I do, instead of joining, quote, unquote, the "professional" CTA-- California Teachers Association--I joined the AFT.

CARR: That's the more radical . . .

DYMALLY: Everybody was looking down at me: "God," you know, "he's a communist." So I joined the teachers union, and began organizing for the teachers. So I had labor support.

CARR: At that time, what kind of foothold did the teacher unions have in collective bargaining in the state?

DYMALLY: Very little. Zilch. They were looked down on.

CARR: Now, as we go along, one of the things I seem to track in your political career is, it seems a lot of the legislation you were involved with helped to really expand the power of bargaining for

teachers.

DYMALLY: I introduced the first bill on collective bargaining. The CTA opposed it. But it was an AFT-sponsored bill. So I started that process.

CARR: Because you sat on the Education Committee. . . .

DYMALLY: Yes. But more significantly, I was a member of AFT, which wanted collective bargaining, because they believed [that] in collective bargaining, they could beat CTA.

CARR: You already had a relationship with them by the time you got to the assembly?

DYMALLY: Because I was a member of the AFT, and was an organizer for them. There was another man who was very popular and well-known in the black community, and very close to Gus Hawkins and Congressman [James] Jimmy Roosevelt--Frank Terry. But Frank was working for Douglas Aircraft, and he could not get a leave of absence. I was willing to take a leave from school, and I became coordinator of the Community Groups for Kennedy on Jefferson [Boulevard] and Vermont [Avenue]. As you know, Kennedy lost California. But they were impressed with Jesse Unruh and Gus Hawkins. By then, Jesse Unruh and Gus Hawkins and Pat Brown had made up. All of the people who had

worked hard and deserved some recognition were appointed to what was then almost the house of refuge for discarded politicians, the California Disaster Office. It was Dr. Ralph Poblano, Charlie Manfred--who was my boss down here--and myself.

CARR: Before we go on to the Disaster Office chapter, how did you go about selling Kennedy to a black community that was not necessarily enamored with him to begin with?

DYMALLY: Ah. In fact, the Baptist ministers refused to come to see him. They insisted that he come to see them. [Franklin D.] Frank Reeve, who became a consultant in Kennedy's White House--an attorney from Washington [D.C.]--said, no group of ministers could dictate to the next president where he ought to go. So we went on to have the meeting at the Elks Lodge on Central Avenue.

CARR: Did the ministers show or no?

DYMALLY: No. It was very successful.

CARR: Who went?

DYMALLY: Your question is very important. Your question is historic. By then, I think. . . . It was about the time when Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] was arrested for a traffic ticket. Mrs.

[Coretta Scott] King was pregnant. Louis [E.] Martin, the black deputy of the Democratic National Committee and former editor of the Chicago Defender, urged Kennedy to call Mrs. King. I understood from reading somewhere recently--from Taylor Branch's book--that Bob [Kennedy] was livid. He thought that they had blown the campaign by associating with Dr. King because the South was so opposed to Dr. King. Don't forget, the Democratic party in the South was all white in those days. When Kennedy did that, Daddy [Martin Luther] King [Sr.], who was a Republican, switched.

CARR: He would have been a Roosevelt. . . .

DYMALLY: No, he was a Republican. This old Lincoln Republican--that's what you meant--not Roosevelt. He switched. That switch hit the black community like a prairie fire, it spread across the country like a prairie fire--underground, political underground. So Kennedy then started changing. I mean, that was the change that took place. But there's another one. In the debate, Kennedy became the first presidential candidate to focus attention on the black child--in the debate with Nixon. We had an active campaign across the

country. You know, the Kennedys understood the significance of the black community, so I suspect there were several types of organizations. We chose the Community Groups for Kennedy here. And then there was the Viva Kennedy movement in East Los Angeles. That was how they were able to capture it. It was the King incident that changed Kennedy's image and his debate.

CARR: Wow. Clearly Daddy King and son, being Baptists themselves, that translated into . . .

DYMALLY: Then Kennedy went down to Houston and met the white Baptists there, and talked about a Catholic being president. He faced the music because the Baptists were very, very concerned about a Catholic becoming president.

CARR: So you go on with the help of Jesse Unruh, I assume, to get the office of . . .

DYMALLY: And Gus Hawkins. I got appointed by Governor Pat Brown to the California Disaster Office.

CARR: OK. Who did you meet there, and how important was it for your later political career?

DYMALLY: I roomed with Steven Smith, who's now a lawyer, and who became my chief of staff in the lieutenant governor's office and my campaign manager. Steve was executive secretary to the

Rules Committee, and close to Jesse Unruh. So I'm in a night class of politics. In the evening I'm at the cocktail parties, at night I was with Steve, getting all the inside dope. Then I got a transfer when it became clear that I might be needed in the South for the '62 campaign. . . . Don't forget, now . . .

CARR: 'Sixty-two--Nixon and Brown.

DYMALLY: Because that was the beginning of Nixon's campaign to run against Kennedy in '64. The Kennedys were concerned about defeating Nixon in '62. So I got transferred down here to do whatever Disaster Office people do when you're a "political," quote, unquote. . . .

CARR: Right. I assume not many disasters were occurring around this time, at least not of the natural [kind].

DYMALLY: [Laughter] Not yet, no, no. In fact, I learned to write formal letters. I was working for a colonel in Sacramento. All the letters began like this, "This is to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated January 4, 1956." [Laughter] All the letters started that way. Anyway, my head now is Charlie Manfred.

CARR: And he is?

DYMALLY: He was a former assembly candidate. I told you it was a dumping ground for aspiring or defeated politicians.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: My job was community liaison. One day there is a conference in Hot Springs--Fresno, California--by the United Auto Workers. And there's an old UAW man whom they were very proud of, who's moving up in state politics. They invited me. That was the change in my life. Gus Hawkins was in Sacramento and was invited to the conference, and one of his staff members drove him down to Fresno and went back. And he knew, among the several people there, there would be someone who would give him a ride to Los Angeles. I was there. Of course, I had worked for him and been in touch with him.

Just as an aside, I got into Sacramento one day and I was trying to get a ride. Assemblyman [Charles H.] Charlie Wilson offered me a ride, and the car was loaded with about five people, lobbyists and legislators. The praise they heaped on Gus Hawkins really impressed the hell out of me. I'll tell you about that later on.

So I pick up Gus Hawkins, and we are

chatting, and I said very naively, "Mr. Hawkins, I understand you're going to run for Congress." We are into about '61 now. 'Sixty was the campaign. Yeah, we were into '61. Reapportionment is taking place. And he said, "Yes, I'm thinking about it." You know, Gus is never committal. I said, "Well, who's going to succeed you?" He said, "I don't know." And I found that rather strange. Here's a guy who's been in public life for twenty-eight years, and he doesn't have a successor.

CARR: Now, the reapportionment was the creation of the senate seats?

DYMALLY: No, not yet. That followed. That was the creation of the first black congressional seat. The senate seat followed. That happened in 1965. Now, I thought it was rather strange. But don't forget, the job was only paying \$300 a month at the time, and Gus Hawkins made his money as a real estate broker. In those days, you could have accepted cash for campaigns, part of which wasn't reportable. But I thought it was rather strange. So it occurred to me, "Gee. Maybe that's an opportunity for me to run." So I went to Willard Murray, and he said, "No. They will

never elect a foreigner with the name of Mervyn."

[Laughter] Willard was the one who called me Merv. I hated the goddamned name, you know. He was the one who said, "Listen, you've got to change that to Merv. Blacks will never go for a guy with the name of Mervyn." So I talked with another lawyer. In the meantime, quite unselfishly . . .

CARR: Who was the other lawyer you spoke to?

DYMALLY: Bill Hagen of South Gate, who was active in the Democratic party. South Gate was in the Twenty-first Congressional District, of which Hawkins was going to be elected. I was organizing clubs. All the clubs belonged to a congressional district council, which was sponsored by the California Democratic Council. Bill said, "Yes." I said, "But, Bill, I need some money to move into the district." He got a mortgage for me for the house on Twenty-third Street and Arlington [Avenue], which we still have, and I took that second mortgage--don't forget, in those days you could buy a piece of property for about \$10,000--and bought a house at Fifty-ninth Place and Avalon [Boulevard], and decided to run. So that's how it happened. Now, I'm running. All

my CORE friends, the Young Democratic friends--it was a big party.

CARR: Now, the thing that fascinates me, let's talk about the money issue. I mean, the money issue was a lot different back then than it has become.

DYMALLY: We spent so little money. I don't even know. In those days . . .

CARR: How much do you think you spent on your first campaign?

DYMALLY: Oh, shit. You know, I would really like to go back and go into the archives and really figure that out. Now, that was not a big thing in those days . . .

CARR: What did you spend most of your money on?

DYMALLY: I'm coming to that. We could figure it out, knowing that stamps were, what, maybe thirteen cents in those days?

CARR: Yeah, maybe less.

DYMALLY: Less, probably. The California Democratic Council had endorsing conventions in every congressional district. If you won that endorsement, you got a free mailing.

CARR: For the whole campaign?

DYMALLY: Out of the fourteen clubs in the district, I had organized about eleven. So I got the

endorsement, and Gus Hawkins got the endorsement. It was held at the United Auto Workers Hall at 8501 South San Pedro [Street]. So here was a free mailing, OK? Then Steve Smith--who was running Charlie Wilson's campaign for this district, this congressional district here in Inglewood--and I were roommates. Don't forget that. Besides, we were in the same faction.

CARR: And he's tight with Jesse Unruh.

DYMALLY: He was the guy who took me to Jesse Unruh, because Jesse wanted to know, "Who is this little squirt attacking me in the club movement?"

CARR: Well, yeah, because at the time you were both a member of the CDC as well as the Unruh faction.

DYMALLY: Yeah. I was physically with the Unruh faction, but ideologically with the CDC--if you can figure that one out. It was kind of schizophrenic. It was schizophrenic, yes.

CARR: Historically, that's very, very significant.

DYMALLY: Yes. If you look at Life magazine, where there was a story about Big Daddy--he was big in those days--you see him shaking his finger at a black staffer, and that black was Bill Greene. He was scolding Bill Greene about my voting with Phil Burton on the CDC on the primary endorsement--

Democratic primary endorsement. That's what brought me to the assembly, in part. So how could I vote against something that helped elect me? And he was pissed.

CARR: Now, this was after you were elected or before?

DYMALLY: After I was elected.

CARR: After you were elected.

DYMALLY: Before I was elected, I liked the liberal policies of CDC, but my friends were with Unruh. I had no friends because the CDC group didn't care for me too much. They looked at me as some kind of traitor, you know, because I was with Jesse.

CARR: Uncle Tom, you mean?

DYMALLY: I don't know if they were that harsh. I'm with the conservative faction, the Unruh faction. I'm with the so-called bad guys. Speaker [Robert] Moretti was with our group, also.

CARR: This is very significant stuff, because you're sitting here telling me this. But contrary to everything I've read and the way you're painted during that time, it's a very different picture.

DYMALLY: Absolutely.

CARR: It's a very, very different picture.

DYMALLY: I have no reason to lie to you because I'm

retired. I'm going to tell you the truth about what really happened.

CARR: No, I know. I think for the sake of setting the historical record straight, elaborate on your philosophy of . . .

DYMALLY: It was pragmatic politics.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: First, pragmatic politics--a sense of loyalty, a deep sense of gratitude. Don't forget, the Unruh guys were the guys who got me elected in the Young Democrats. The Unruh people are the ones who got me, with Hawkins, the job with the Community Groups for Kennedy. Jesse Unruh, with Gus Hawkins, got me the Disaster [Office] job. OK? Come on. I mean, there's a lot of enemies saying things. Now, every time you support a candidate you end up with two people who hate you: the winner, who becomes an ingrate, and the loser, who hates you for defeating him.

CARR: There's no winning.

DYMALLY: No winning. So here I am now. But ideologically, I'm with the liberals. I'm for "Red China" and the whole bit. I'm for the Fair Employment Practices Commission, and all the liberal stuff, I'm for. I didn't like Jesse

Unruh's anti-communist thing, but he was deeply anti-communist, passionately pro-civil rights.

CARR: Why do you think that was? Do you think it was a generational thing?

DYMALLY: Yeah, it was fashionable in those days to be anti-communist.

CARR: More than anything else?

DYMALLY: Yeah, it was motherhood. It was like being pro-civil rights in the civil rights sixties. It was fashionable to be anti-communist.

CARR: Let's talk about some of the shortcomings of the liberals. I mean, did the liberals at that time give a lot more lip service to certain things?

DYMALLY: Yes, right. You took the words out of my mouth. In the fight I had with the liberals and the CDC, they were saying, in effect, "Look, we are pure. We are for civil rights. We are for Dr. King. We are for fair employment practices. We are for fair housing," etc., etc. "We are for all the liberal issues. Why do we necessarily have to have a black in the executive council to prove that we are liberal?" That was the fight that brought Carlton B. Goodlett, publisher of the Sun[-Reporter], and I picketing the California Democratic Council, because there were no blacks

on the executive council of CDC in those days. So that was a shortcoming. Now, the Unruh people were more pragmatic. Now, don't forget, Unruh represented the black community, and Unruh began helping black candidates: City Councilman Billy Mills, Assemblyman Leon Ralph, Mervyn Dymally, Bill Greene, etc., etc., Frank Holoman. He is putting his money where his mouth is. So that was the problem and the conflict, and that's why the liberals grew to dislike me. Now, the other thing was this: during the reapportionment there was a group called the two-by-four plan, headed by Wendell Green, editor of the L.A. Sentinel.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

DYMALLY: The two-by-four was the Committee for Fair Representation: two congressional districts and four assembly districts. In those days we only had one state senator for Los Angeles County so nobody attacked that, and the guy there, Richard Richards, was as flaming a liberal as any you could find. So nobody messed with that territory. Now, the praise of Gus Hawkins in that car . . .

CARR: This was when you were up in Sacramento?

DYMALLY: Yes. Gus's incumbency, the high regard in which he was held in Sacramento. . . . This was my choice: going with the crowd or staying with the incumbent. So Willard and I and the rest of our group decided to stay with Gus. And we stayed with Gus. So when time came around, it was them versus us. Now, Gus was going to support me for the assembly, but at the last minute some old-timers said, "Who is this guy coming in from nowhere?" and they put Gus Hawkins's brother [Edward A. Hawkins] into the mix.

CARR: Since we're at that. . . . Let's just stop and look at the people who ran with you and against you.

DYMALLY: You have that down?

CARR: Oh yes.

DYMALLY: That's interesting. The civil rights star then was Don Derricks.

CARR: Yes. This is the primary, June 15, 1962.

DYMALLY: Hold on, will you? I forgot: I've got to finish about the mailing. So Steve Smith talked about [putting together] a tabloid. The AFT [American Federation of Teachers] used to publish the tabloid for the Service Employees International [Union (SEIU)]. Here was AFT and Service

International. Again, when I was in the Disaster Office I joined Local 411 rather than the California State Employees Association. So I did not get the labor endorsement, but I got . . .

CARR: Why didn't you get the labor endorsement?

DYMALLY: Because the Hawkins thing was too strong-- Hawkins's brother, Ed Hawkins.

CARR: Right, so I mean, they would go with Hawkins over you any day.

DYMALLY: Yes, right. But the service employees union went with me. So I have them, and I have the AFT. The AFT put together the contents of the tabloid. The SEIU--it was a different name then at the time--published the tabloid. So I have the CDC mailing, I've got the tabloid, and then Steve and I invented the sample ballot.

CARR: Right. Now, where was your campaign office?

DYMALLY: On Santa Barbara [Avenue] and . . .

CARR: Now known as [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] Boulevard. Santa Barbara and. . .

DYMALLY: Yes. A little west of San Pedro [Street], around Towne Avenue. It was near Wall Street, a little east of Broadway. So I had the sample ballot. Well, now, we hit them with the sample ballot. They screamed bloody murder and went to the

district attorney.

CARR: What did they have to say about it?

DYMALLY: That it was a forgery of the real ballot. But, you know, we had a disclaimer. That sample ballot killed them.

CARR: Where did you get the idea to . . .

DYMALLY: From Steve Smith.

CARR: Steve Smith.

DYMALLY: Yeah. He and I are still friends today.

CARR: And where did he get the idea?

DYMALLY: I'll be damned if I know.

CARR: Really? So we're still kind of in the middle of answering a question--the money thing.

DYMALLY: All right. OK. We talked to [Eugene L.] Gene Wyman, husband of [Rosalind W.] Roz Wyman . . .

CARR: Who was to be the first woman on the [Los Angeles] City Council.

DYMALLY: Gene was close to LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson]. He was Democratic national committeeman. Tom Bane said to me, "You can only win if you have matches." So we went and bought and put out matches. [Thomas] Tom Rees, Jesse Unruh . . .

CARR: Matching funds, you mean?

DYMALLY: Matches. Giving away matches.

CARR: Oh, OK.

DYMALLY: One thing about a match: Tom Bane's theory is that nobody throws away a match.

CARR: You mean a matchbook?

DYMALLY: A matchbook. It stays around for a long time.

CARR: So that was a popular thing to do back then?

DYMALLY: Back then they gave out matches. So we went and talked to everybody again: Carmen Warschaw, who was the queen of the Democratic party, Jesse Unruh, Tom Rees, who was state senator by then, Tom Bane, who was Jesse Unruh's lieutenant. Then we got the CDC mailings. Jesse Unruh didn't think I could win, but he helped me.

CARR: How did he help you?

DYMALLY: Financially.

CARR: At this point, a lot has been made--and was about to be made further on in the sixties--about exactly how Jesse Unruh handled money.

DYMALLY: Lots of money. The Brink's [Inc. Armored Car] truck used to come down in the district and bring the money for us. We used to pay workers to do GOTV [Get-Out-The-Vote program]. They'd bring the cash in the Brink's trucks, then we'd pay people in cash. In those days, you could use cash.

CARR: Whew! What kind of money are we talking about

here?

DYMALLY: Not much. But in those days you could get by with little.

CARR: Not much, but relatively speaking.

DYMALLY: Stop, stop . . .

[Interruption]

. . . When I was in the Disaster Office, I came up with this idea. . . . As I went to church, a woman on Forty-seventh Street, who became a kind of a second mother to me, took a liking to me. She introduced me to the Baptist church on Fifty-seventh [Street] and Central [Avenue], and I observed there these sisters who are dressed like nurses' aides. I came across the idea. . . . We had a course at the California Disaster Office to train people to be disaster aides, for which they got a certificate. So I went and printed up these certificates and had these classes at the churches. The [American] Red Cross loved it. Kennedy--you know, every president has an idiosyncrasy--was big on disaster aid, civil defense. People were digging tunnels under their house [Laughter], in the basement, in the backyard, all kinds of stuff. So I had these classes at all of these churches. I'd have the

navy, the army, the Red Cross, the disaster people come and lecture.

CARR: This was during the campaign?

DYMALLY: It would be leading up to the campaign. I'm still in the Disaster Office. I haven't taken the leave yet. So I had access to all these churches in South Central with my little certificate, and the little mothers loved it, man.

CARR: So in a sense, you did take Adam Clayton Powell's suggestion?

DYMALLY: [Laughter] Yes. Where I got this knack for organizing. . . . I remember, of course, the auto workers union--on that part of it. Father Boniface, the principal of the St. Benedict College secondary school, oh, was livid when he heard that I was on the promenade heckling Dr. David Pitt--David Pitt became the second black lord of the House of Lords--heckling him in a party, heckling a party which my father was a member. But the union guys loved it! But I noticed Pitt would walk on weekends, door-to-door. He even came to our house, even though my father was a big WIN--West Indian National party--supporter. By the way, Pitt and I became dear

DYMALLY: friends subsequently, because I think he kind of admired my gall. So anyhow, I had the church organized.

Now, Don Derricks stuck with the civil rights movement. Well, the first time Malcolm X came in to talk at the Second Baptist Church after the shooting on Slauson [Avenue] and Broadway, Don Derricks was the emcee. His campaign manager [Wendell Green] was a guest speaker--just the opposite to the way things should work. So you picked up the papers the next day, and Wendell Green got all the publicity. I'm in the rain with a raincoat passing out my literature, and people are looking at it and smiling and saying, "Oh, this is kind of impressive." In their mind, this young guy's ready. They were inside the church. Don was working the same crowd, maximizing the same people that were supporting him. He wasn't gaining anything new. I had nothing to lose. I was gaining a couple of them by being out there in the rain. So I went to the Muslims and I said, "How could you guys have this man up there at a meeting and ignore me when I'm from a Muslim background? My father is Muslim." They said, "Oh." So the next meeting was in a

theater, I think, on Central Avenue. I went in there and opened up, "Salaam Alykum." They went wild. They went wild. They stood up and cheered. Well, I knew "Salaam Alykum" before I came here, you know? I knew about Islam as a boy, you know, and I related a story of my father taking me to the mosque as a boy.

There was a broadcaster who used to wave the flag here--I've forgotten his name now--Putman. Putnam. [George] Putnam. Oh, he blasted me. I heard that the INS [United States Immigration and Naturalization Service] gave him my immigration number.

CARR: On what grounds?

DYMALLY: That I was a Black Muslim, and I wasn't a citizen. He broadcast my immigration number on the air--that I was not a citizen, I was a Black Muslim.

CARR: So even at that point, being identified or being aligned with the Black Muslims in any way was seen as a political liability?

DYMALLY: With the whites. But there was a lot of sympathy for them in the black community, not because they were Muslim but because of police brutality. As an aside, I filed a complaint saying that I did

not say I was a Black Muslim; I was a Muslim, [by] background. I finally won the case with the FCC [Federal Communications Commission], and I was invited to come on Putnam's program to get equal time. Everybody advised me against it. They said, "Man, he will kill you."

CARR: Yeah. Where was his program? Was it a radio or a TV program?

DYMALLY: TV. I think it was either [channel] five or eleven, I can't remember which. But all my white friends in the know said, "Look, you go there and he will just eat you alive. That exposure would destroy you." So I didn't go.

You had asked the question about money, but I had that little vignette I wanted to share with you about that church. That was a coup. Now, Don Derricks was the star of the civil rights movement.

CARR: Now, Derricks was very close. . . . Wasn't he friends with Tom Bradley?

DYMALLY: That crowd. . . . I don't know. Tom was at that time with the LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department]. Don was part of the two-by-four, part of the anti-police brutality movement, [with] Wendell Green. There was a whole big

movement of all the civil rights groups, including Gus's friends, [who] were in it. So you had this movement for more representation, the police brutality thing--they all meshed. They had something called the UCRC, the United Civil Rights Committee.

CARR: Now, this was a crowded field. You had eight Democrats running for . . .

DYMALLY: At one UCRC meeting--everybody was invited--it was open committee, and somebody said, "Dymally is coming to the meeting," and they closed the door. That's how anti. . . . I talked to you about the closed operation, about the civil rights movement here. But two guys befriended me. One was Reverend Maurice Dawkins, who headed the Independent Church, and one was Floyd Odum of the AME [First African Methodist Episcopal Church], who died of a heart attack in New Jersey, a Methodist minister on Twenty-sixth [Street]--around Hoover [Avenue]. Those two guys stuck with me. But other than that, I had no access to the civil rights movement at all.

CARR: Now, say someone like an [Edward] E.V. Hill, would he have been a lot more . . .

DYMALLY: E.V. and I have since become extremely close,

good friends. He supported me. But in those days, I didn't know E.V. that well. He was just coming into town.

CARR: OK. He was coming from Louisiana or someplace.

DYMALLY: Texas, I think. Now, you asked about the money. Well, the money was mostly cash in those days. You could pay GOTV workers in cash. So the Brink's trucks used to come down South Central with a load of cash.

CARR: Which was coming directly from Jesse [Unruh]?

DYMALLY: Uh-huh. See, Jesse started something that Willie Brown mastered. The lobbyists were encouraged to give the money to the speaker, not to the candidate. Then the speaker distributed the money.

CARR: Exactly.

DYMALLY: Willie Brown extended that to have all key committee chairs raise a certain amount of money for the Democratic Caucus, rather than themselves, to be distributed.

CARR: So this concentrated power in the hands of the person who had the money?

DYMALLY: Yes, the speaker.

CARR: Now, when Jesse was criticized, say, like about the mid-sixties for this method, basically, of

getting money, then redistributing it how he saw fit, do you think that was just simply people criticizing Jesse for the sake of criticizing him?

DYMALLY: But that wasn't a big public issue, as it is now.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: No. That was not a big part. We brushed aside that. It was only Jesse's critics. It was not a public, ethical scrutiny in those days, as it is now. The public wasn't into it, just the CDC [California Democratic Council] people.

CARR: So looking at that issue, it's more of an issue in hindsight, rather than . . .

DYMALLY: Yeah, it was CDC versus Unruh issue.

CARR: So the CDC just raised this bogey of, "Ah, he must be doing something with all of that money."

DYMALLY: Well, let me tell you another story. [Laughter] We Young Democrats had some of that money, and we used to go and sign up people on campuses. Carmen Warschaw's niece was attending Cal[ifornia] Poly[technic State University], San Luis Obispo. She brought down a whole busload of people. And in San Diego, the CDC crowd went to them and said, "Do you know who brought you down here?" "Yes," I forgot her name now--"Mary"--

let's call her Mary. "Do you know whose money paid for that?" "No." They said, "Unruh's money paid for that," and the whole delegation booed, and so we lost the election. [Laughter] He lost the election. [Phillip] Phil Isenberg-- subsequently an assemblyman who just got term-limited--beat us. He was on the Sacramento City Council, and became one of Willie's top guys. So the money thing backfired on that particular occasion.

CARR: Yeah. But for the most part you had your bases covered, and you had money coming in. Now, at this point, were you employed at all? Or were you simply collecting money . . .

DYMALLY: Boy, that's another story. I had to take a leave, and the union which my wife worked for, the Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, fired her because they were supporting Ed Hawkins.

CARR: Yeah, Edward A. Hawkins.

DYMALLY: Yeah. I don't know why they would fire her. By the time the campaign ended up, my house was in foreclosure.

CARR: Wow. Now, tell me the story again about how you went to Unruh for help on this issue.

DYMALLY: Here I had just won the nomination. I went to

Jesse Unruh and I said, "Jesse, my house is in foreclosure." He set up a program. I ended up doing the registration drive to be legitimately paid. So I was running the registration drive, and Jesse funded the effort in South Central. That brought me out of foreclosure. Now, a little side issue: I went downtown, and Louis Martin, who was deputy director of DNC [Democratic National Committee]--this is '62 now-- he was very concerned about California. So money wasn't a problem. I'm sitting out in the office waiting room, and he said, "You're Dymally? What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I came here to pick up the check for the registration drive." He said, "You're a Democratic nominee?" "Yes." He said, "You're sitting down here waiting for a check? We've got to stop that nonsense. We can't have you coming down here, sitting down here waiting for checks." So he changed that. We started being treated in a more respectable manner.

CARR: So money would be sent to you directly?

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: Now, hadn't you told me the story at one point of Unruh actually giving you cash money in your hand

when you had to get your house out of foreclosure?

DYMALLY: Yes, yes. I went to Jesse at his house, and I told him the difficulty I was in, and he gave me some money.

CARR: Those were very different times.

DYMALLY: You can't do that now. Well, I suspect I could give a candidate some money, but he'd have to declare it, even as a gift. In those days, you didn't have to do that. It was a personal gift.

CARR: Let's look back at this field. To me, it's an amazing field of people. In fact, here's the list right there. That's your primary. A list of people.

DYMALLY: I knew Sadie Brewer. She had the Broadway Democratic Club. Her candidacy was a surprise, because we were very active in the Democratic Club. Don Derricks . . .

CARR: Whom you've talked about already.

DYMALLY: Chuck [L.] Fielding was one of Hawkins's supporters. He was one of the people who they urged to run. He was a lawyer. He was unhappy with my coming in from nowhere and running. [Joseph] Joe White was an activist Democrat. Of course Edward Hawkins was the brother of Gus.

But my God, I didn't know I did that well--7,000 votes!

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: Whoo. I doubled the best guy, scattering. . . .

CARR: It's an amazing thing. Now, in retrospect, one could say, if the Hawkins camp had been smarter, they would have narrowed the field.

DYMALLY: Well, Gus was very upset with the guys who put his brother in the race.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: Let me tell you about that. There was a guy named Judge Hal Broaders. Judge Broaders was a lobbyist for the Bank of America. He and I are still friends. He came down here and called Gus and I together at the Biltmore Hotel. Gus told him how he regretted that these guys had put Ed in, and that it was none of his doing, but there was nothing he could do about it. Don't forget now, we hung onto Gus's coattails during the campaign. We didn't back away from Gus Hawkins. We made out like Gus Hawkins was supporting us. Oh yeah. You were talking about the money--I got some money from the lobbyists, yes.

CARR: Which lobbyists?

DYMALLY: Bank of America. Then there was another--

Superior Oil [Company]. I got some money from Superior Oil. In those days you got cash, too, you know.

CARR: Yeah. People just gave you cash. So there you are. You win the election very handily--24,250 votes.

DYMALLY: But that's in the general though.

CARR: Yes, I'm talking about the general election now.

DYMALLY: That's a natural, because it was an all-Democratic district.

CARR: Right, pretty much. So you won that very naturally. The backdrop of this is the [Edmund G. "Pat"] Brown [Sr.]-Nixon campaign.

DYMALLY: Lots of Kennedy money came into the state, because the whole idea was to defeat Nixon, and anybody who was on that bandwagon got helped. Gus was on that bandwagon, Unruh was on that bandwagon. I joined them, rather than worrying about any opposition plan, or whatever. I stuck with the pros.

CARR: Yeah. Now, at this time, just to backtrack a little . . .

DYMALLY: It wasn't popular, though.

CARR: Yeah, it wasn't popular. And part of this was the beginning of what is now called this black-

Jewish coalition.

DYMALLY: That started. . . . That was a CDC coalition. Coming out of that, [Assemblyman Henry A.] Waxman and [Assemblyman Howard L.] Berman mastered the art of raising money and helping candidates. [Assemblyman] Julian [C.] Dixon was one of those candidates. Up to this day, Julian and Howard are probably the closest friends. Howard went to jail with him on anti-apartheid picketing in Washington, D.C. In 1980, when I decided to run, they supported me also.

CARR: Wow. So I mean, again, you still covered all of your bases.

DYMALLY: I wasn't part of their group, but they helped. Don't forget now, I had a chance to perform in the assembly and the senate as a liberal. Waxman and I had conflicts because he chaired the assembly Reapportionment Committee, and I chaired the senate Reapportionment Committee. My push was to get a second congressional district, which was Yvonne [Brathwaite Burke]'s district, and a Latino senate district. We reapportioned a white incumbent, [Lawrence E.] Larry Walsh, out of his district and created a Latino senate district, and Larry got pissed with me.

CARR: Who won that Latino senate district?

DYMALLY: Garcia. I almost forgot Garcia's first name.
[Alex] He was an aide to [Congressman Edward R.]
Ed Roybal.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: Larry got so mad with me he ran against me for
lieutenant governor. But Waxman and his friends
began now supporting candidates, raising lots of
money.

CARR: Where was their money. . . . If Unruh's money was
coming from all of these sources, where was their
money coming from?

DYMALLY: Unruh's money was Sacramento lobbyists. Their
money was Westside nouveau riche Jews, the
Hollywood crowd, the contractors--there was a big
boom in building.

CARR: So then at the time Jews were still politically
marginalized in L.A., correct?

DYMALLY: There wasn't a single one on the city council
that I knew of. None on the school board. In
the legislature, I can't think of any, when I
went up there. Yes. The chairman of Ways and
Means [Robert W.] Bob Crown, and [Anthony C.]
Tony Beilenson.

CARR: So now. . . . This is a delicate question, but

it's one that has to be asked. This issue of you being aligned with the Black Muslims has come up before. Then you have already aligned yourself away from the CDC and more with the Unruh people by '62.

DYMALLY: Well, the Black Muslim thing was overexaggerated.

CARR: Oh, OK.

DYMALLY: Because, on television, George Putnam made up as if I were a Black Muslim. That never was the case. I was just anti police brutality. And I developed a group called STOP: Stop Terrorizing Our People.

CARR: Exactly.

DYMALLY: And [Los Angeles Police Chief William H.] Parker hated me. In fact, he recommended that I be deported.

CARR: You developed STOP after there was a shooting involving Black Muslims and the LAPD, right?

DYMALLY: That's it. That's in, what, '62? Right on Slauson [Avenue] and Broadway.

CARR: What exactly happened there? Do you recall?

DYMALLY: Well, the Muslims were very unpopular with the police because they were well-disciplined, and they presented a threat to the public order, the police thought. They raided the mosque. There

was some incident which happened outside, some traffic incident, and the Muslim ran upstairs. The police ran up there, and a shooting resulted. So I took sides with the Muslims, as did most of the blacks, by the way. That was the correct and popular thing to do.

CARR: Yeah. So you never had at that time in your career. . . . You didn't face any charges of anti-Semitism?

DYMALLY: No, no. My problems with the Jews--and we'll talk about that when we get to the Congress--had to do with Israel, not with my politics. I was never accused of being anti-Semitic. Even my alleged affiliation with, my support for, the Black Muslims. Never. My problem was being pro-peace for the Palestinians, not being anti-Semitic. But the public got the impression that I was a Muslim because, as I said, George Putnam was the most popular broadcast show at the time. He had a flag, he broadcast with a flag and a Bible.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: And, you know, he just lambasted me all the time. But he was not speaking to blacks, he was speaking to whites. If anything, the blacks

became very angry. That's when public opinion began changing from indifference and opposition to support for the Black Muslims.

CARR: We've been, for a while, in this extended answer. It just seems to me that you really became enamored, addicted, enthusiastic about politics.

DYMALLY: The word is addicted. If I had a choice between politics and my family, it was politics. Totally, absolutely dedicated to politics. Every penny I got I spent on politics. Traveled all over. Family was second with me, politics was first. Total addiction.

CARR: What did you get from that addiction?

DYMALLY: Satisfaction.

CARR: I mean, was it the interaction? The possibility of changing things?

DYMALLY: Yes. I never aspired to higher office. You know, I just ran for lieutenant governor. It was a lark. We'll talk about that. I never sat down and planned my future. I was just enjoying the hell out of it. I was seen as a sort of a loose cannon, a radical in the assembly. The Congress of Racial Equality There was an anti fair housing initiative . . .

CARR: The Rumford [Act]?

DYMALLY: Yes. The first one, the passage of the Rumford Fair Housing Act.¹

CARR: Then there was Prop[osition] 14,² right?

DYMALLY: Yes, that followed. With the passage of the Rumford, the CORE people began assembling in my office, and the senators hated me for that. That's where they would come and make their phone calls. In fact, one night I went to my house and somebody was sleeping in my bed. Bill Greene and I were "batching" together. I mean, who else was flirting with the CORE people?

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: So the CORE people liked me. I was their little hero. I sat in with them and picketed with them.

CARR: Now, at this point, you're elected.

DYMALLY: The salary changed.

CARR: It became from part-time to full-time?

DYMALLY: No, no. Not yet. Not quite yet. That happened in '66. It changed. . . . There was an initiative on the ballot. Remember, salaries could not be changed without initiative. So it

1. A.B. 1240, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat. 1853.
2. Proposition 14 (November 1964), sales and rentals of residential real property.

changed from \$300 to \$500. But in those days, you made your money by interim hearings. You had hearings in Timbuktu, because you got mileage for distance and per diem. The per diem you never used because the lobbyists who came to that particular hearing would host a luncheon.

CARR: Now, didn't the [Los Angeles] Times, at some point, criticize you for your use of your per diems or something like that?

DYMALLY: Well, they criticized me for being home and collecting per diem in Sacramento.

CARR: Oh really?

DYMALLY: Yeah. But I learned it from some Republicans. They were doing the same damn thing in the cow counties. They would go up north--nobody covered them there--and collect per diems. One of my problems was that I tried to indulge in the same excesses that whites did. Something like Adam Clayton Powell. It was all right for the white boys to do it, but not for me to do it.

CARR: Right. This brings up another important point. What kind of scrutiny were black politicians held under as opposed to white politicians during that time?

DYMALLY: Well, there weren't very many of us. Don't

forget that. There was only Reverend Ferrell and me in Los Angeles County.

CARR: Right. And Rumford.

DYMALLY: And Rumford in Berkeley. Rumford was a sort of moderate. Ferrell was a moderate politically--fire on the pulpit--and I was the firebrand. So all of the attention was focused on me, and the Times hated me. In fact--you're not going to believe this one--but Carl Greenberg, the leading political columnist, complained about the color of my shirts. In those days I used to go to New York, and pastel shirts were all coming out--pink and all these greens and all the nice tones. [Laughter] And he criticized me for that. What happened, the bourgie people. . . . I was never really totally accepted by that Westside crowd I told you about--the bourgie. My critics told the Times that I didn't represent the blacks.

CARR: Now, was this before . . .

DYMALLY: [Inaudible] with any kind of justification.

CARR: Right. That's the underlying animosity here.

DYMALLY: Yes, yes. That I was a foreigner, you know, my accent was so thick. It just beat all the civil rights candidates. Don Derricks was the civil rights star. Chuck Fielding was the bright young

lawyer. I mean, you had a lot of good candidates there, outstanding in the black community, and I came from nowhere.

CARR: So the big thing that was lodged against you was that, well, you must have been an Uncle Tom under Jesse Unruh.

DYMALLY: Yeah, but I didn't even know how to be an Uncle Tom. [Laughter] I mean, it's difficult to get a West Indian Uncle Tom. I don't know of any West Indians to be Uncle Toms. They are too fiery for that. I mean, they are too independent, too arrogant. You can't get an Uncle Tom character out of arrogance. I used arrogance as a defense against racism. I learned that from Adam Clayton Powell. You had to elevate yourself above these other people as a balance of their racism, so I'm better off than they are. Typically British elitism. So that's how I dealt with it. The other thing, what I discovered--and I didn't discover it until after I got defeated for lieutenant governor--is that Americans love immigrants as long as you stay in your place.

CARR: Meaning?

DYMALLY: Don't be a Marcus Garvey, for God's sake. You know? Don't be a George Padmore, a Stokely

DYMALLY: Carmichael, a Malcolm X--all of whom, interestingly, were West Indians. Don't be a [Louis J.] Farrakhan. If you are a [Henry A.] Kissinger, anti-communist, salute the flag, and travel with the Bible, that's fine. But once you start protesting, they'll look at you as an ingrate. "How dare you? We gave you a chance to be in this country, and all of a sudden you're criticizing us as being racist." I will never understand that. So when I went to Congress, I began to understand that it was all right for Jesse Jackson or [Congresswoman] Maxine Waters to be critical of the government, but it wasn't all right for me to do it, as a foreigner. I think I didn't understand that.

The second thing that I was naive about: coming from a society in which the police did not carry guns and in which conspiracy was not part of the legal statute, I didn't know that police officers actually conspired to get innocent people arrested or convicted. I could not believe that in my wildest. . . . I had total trust in the legal system. I didn't know that the legal system would actually go out to get you because of your militancy. I could not conceive

DYMALLY: of that. I was not prepared for that. I was not prepared to deal with that. Neither was I prepared to deal with the media criticism of me because that was part of the culture of West Indian politics--militancy.

All these people I mentioned, they got into trouble with the media, with the law enforcement, they were all Caribbean people. It is difficult to find a Caribbean Uncle Tom. I've never found one. The nature of West Indian character and politics, it's difficult to kowtow. And that was my problem. If I were moderate, if I didn't challenge the system, if I didn't attack racism, I probably could have gone further in politics. I don't know where the hell I would have gone because I never had any ambition, but I probably would not have been defeated. The Times found every bit of fault. Well, we'll talk about that some other time. That's a whole story by itself. So that was the dichotomy that existed with my being with Unruh, and being a militant. I strongly resented the fact that as close as Unruh and I were, his inner working cabinet was still all white. On the other hand, there were only three blacks in the assembly. But political

integration is something I felt strongly about.

CARR: How close would you say you were?

DYMALLY: Somewhat, but not as much as others like [Assemblyman] Bob Crown and [Assemblyman George N.] Zenovich. But I also had my friends in the senate and in the assembly. [Assemblyman William F.] Bill Stanton, who loved me because of my vote and my radicalism. I remember one time I . . .

CARR: Besides Stanton--I'm sorry, not to cut you off--who were your other allies?

DYMALLY: [State Senator Nicholas C.] Nick Petris, in the senate; [State Senator] George [R.] Moscone. You couldn't say a negative thing about me in the senate in the presence of Nick Petris and George Moscone.

I remember one time, I introduced a measure in the assembly against discrimination in education. This commission on discrimination against teachers--something about administrators discriminating against teachers. I gave this fiery speech about how, as a young man going to school, I went on Beverly Boulevard at a Chevron station for a job, and they just plain old told me they don't hire coloreds. I brought it up in the speech, and it embarrassed the shit out of

the Chevron people in Sacramento. I know Rumford found it necessary to get up and make an apology for me, and said that, "Merv comes from a different culture and a foreign culture." He had to apologize for my fieriness.

CARR: Now, what was your reaction to Rumford apologizing for you?

DYMALLY: I was puzzled. I was so angry about racism and discrimination, it really didn't matter. But I remember that so clearly. Well, don't forget, Chevron was a very popular lobbying group in Sacramento. I attacked Chevron, and that was not the kosher thing to do. Indeed, when I was running for lieutenant governor and a Chevron official tried to embarrass me. . . . He said to me in the preface to a question. . . . I came out with some kind of tax on the oil industry at the town hall meeting. He said to me, "Mr. Dymally, I remember you coming to ask Chevron for a station for your brother-in-law." After the meeting I went up and said, "The next time you try to embarrass me I'm going to punch you in the mouth." That's how young and vigorous I was. What happened was this: My brother-in-law's family are the Chevron dealers in Montego Bay,

Jamaica, and he wanted to get a Chevron station, and he asked me to introduce him to the Chevron people. But I wasn't asking them for anything; it was just an introduction. But he tried to embarrass me.

CARR: Would you say that some of these things that happened had a lot to do with your political naïveté? To another degree, kind of a cultural . . .

DYMALLY: Well, the political naïveté came from the fact that we had no such thing as conspiracy in Trinidad. A politician was measured by his eloquence and his fire, to be judged effective. So all West Indian politicians had a measure of fire in them.

CARR: Let's talk about your allies in the assembly when you arrived there.

DYMALLY: Who were my allies? [Assemblyman John] Joe Moreno, who unfortunately turned out to be an alcoholic. He just disappeared. Of all the people in my class, he is the only one we could not find. Could I have the class stuff for a moment . . .

[Interruption]

. . . In those days, accepting entertainment

gifts from lobbyists was the order of the day, so there were a lot of parties.

Bill Stanton and I became close friends. [Assemblyman Alfred H.] Al Song. . . There is one missing here, [Assemblyman Charles] Charlie Warren, Tony Beilenson.

CARR: What about [Assemblyman Edward E.] Elliott? Where was he?

DYMALLY: No, Elliott was before me. He was one of the old-timers.

CARR: But you voted along with him very often.

DYMALLY: Because he was my seatmate. Very liberal in his votes. Very pro-labor. So you couldn't go wrong following Elliott. [Assemblyman John P.] Quimby. That's [Assemblyman George] Deukmejian. . . . Zenovich, [Assemblyman] Joe [A.] Gonsalves. He and I went to Congress. So these are some of the people. There was a lot of socialization after the sessions at the Firehouse [restaurant] and Frank Fat's [restaurant] and the other places. Al and I ended up sitting together in the senate. Of all the people the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] went after when they were supposed to be cleaning house in the senate, we were the only two that they went after.

CARR: Huh. They were cleaning house regarding what?

DYMALLY: There was a big story in the San Francisco Examiner that they were going to be doing an investigation of the members of the legislature. The two of us were singled out.

CARR: For what? What reasons were given?

DYMALLY: None. They defeated Al in the primary in '74, and they defeated me in the primary in '78.

CARR: 'Seventy-eight. That was against Curb. Mike Curb.

DYMALLY: We'll talk about those leaks.

CARR: Yeah, we'll get to that. Deukmejian: What was he like back then?

DYMALLY: He had one bill and one bill only: the death penalty. Every year he introduced a death penalty bill. That was his only bill.

CARR: From then.

DYMALLY: The one bill he introduced.

CARR: Let's talk about your relationship with Unruh. You come from a rural background of poor, humble beginnings. Unruh did, as well--east Texas, if I'm not mistaken. Did you ever talk about coming from similar backgrounds at all?

DYMALLY: Yes. He talked about it. I never talked about mine too much, because I didn't think they were

similar, culturally and racially.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So I never talked about it much. Besides, my father would probably have disowned me if I had confessed to coming from a poor family.

CARR: He didn't see it that way.

DYMALLY: No. His family were the merchants in the village . . .

[Interruption]

. . . We just talked about it. But I was not in part of that. . . . In the context of black politics, I was close to Unruh. But in the context of the leadership--in fact, I complained loudly about that in a magazine article--I wasn't part of Unruh's operation.

CARR: So you weren't part of his inner circle, if you will.

DYMALLY: No, I wasn't part of it. I was part of his outer circle.

CARR: Let's talk about Unruh's famous ego.

DYMALLY: Unruh was a pussycat, if you got to know him. A very generous, very understanding, very helpful person. He had this tough outside. Tough to his opposition, but to his friends, most generous.

CARR: So all these reports of Unruh's giant ego that

often got in his way of making decisions . . .

DYMALLY: Overexaggerated.

CARR: Overexaggerated?

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: So the Big Daddy image . . .

DYMALLY: Yeah. It killed him. But look, Unruh created the best legislative system in the country, the best perks for legislature--he and Gus Hawkins. Gus Hawkins was chairman of the Rules Committee. We got cars and travel and staff.

[End Tape 3, Side B]

[Session 3, February 8, 1997]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

DYMALLY: Well, the assembly was an unanticipated experience. I had no idea what to expect. I was imbued with the radicalism of the sixties. In addition, I had a sense of guilt at not having gone down South, so I felt I had to make up for it.

CARR: Why a sense of guilt?

DYMALLY: Because all of my friends were going down there. I felt a need to go and join in that movement. I couldn't, because I was raising a family and bringing the rest of the family here. I couldn't just go, although I made several visits down there. I was down there for the Selma march, and visited Stokely Carmichael while SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] had their rural registration drive. Then I teamed up with CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality, which at the time was fighting the constitutional amendment against fair housing--the Rumford Fair

DYMALLY: Housing Act. So I thought that I could change the nature of discrimination, at least in the teaching profession, through legislation--not understanding [that] it takes a long time.

There was a sense of impatience with me. I alienated some people. There's something that I hope to articulate one day: that foreigners--not now, but then--were welcome in this country, especially if you were anti-communist. I did a paper at Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea, in November of '96, in which I said that part of the success of the Koreans in the United States had to do with the fact that they were anti-communist and they were pro-Christian. They fit in all the stereotypes of a good citizen.

In my case, I discovered when I went to Congress--I think I've said this to you before; it's worth repeating--that to be an accepted immigrant, one has to conform. I cited the examples of George Padmore, Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, just to name a few West Indians-- Marcus Garvey--who ran into difficulty. In the case of Marcus Garvey, the black bourgeoisie of Harlem went to the president and asked that he be deported. They finally got him on phony charges

of income tax evasion. So I had an adjustment. The one group that I alienated was the media, because I have zero tolerance for racism. The media is very hypocritical about admitting to racism in the media, especially at that time. Here is this young foreigner with this accent accusing the media of racism. Then I went and tried, with the Young Democrats, to change the nature of the Democratic party structure--the California Democratic Council, which was as liberal as they come, pro-recognition of mainland China, etc., etc. But it did not have a single black on the executive committee. We tried to change that, and it alienated a lot of people. So those were interesting times. I think, however, that I responded, in a fashion, to the times.

CARR: What do you mean by that?

DYMALLY: The nature of the times. It was such that they needed this kind of radical leadership that I represented, as opposed to my two other colleagues: Byron Rumford, who was kind of a smooth operator; Doug Ferrell, who was more inclined toward reconciliation. I remember after the Watts riots calling up Pat Brown and chewing

him out about not putting me on the riot commission.

CARR: That's the McCone Commission [California Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots]?

DYMALLY: Yeah. He said, "Who the hell is this guy to call me up and talk to me like that?" Of course, that was kind of audacious for a freshman to call the governor and chew him out. But I felt passionately about that. Doug Ferrell and I should have been on the commission because we represented the areas that were torn.

CARR: Didn't you end up playing a role with the McCone Commission? Weren't you like a special adviser to Pat Brown after that?

DYMALLY: No.

CARR: Or to Warren Christopher?

DYMALLY: No. Just the information I provided as an observer and as a resident and as a member of the assembly representing one of the two districts. Don't forget that the riots, unlike this Rodney [G.] King one, was confined to South Central and Watts. It was a clear case of love/hate, because they destroyed their own properties. I think this time they went out beyond, and said, "Look, if we're going to destroy, we're going to destroy

other people's property."

CARR: Yeah. Now, we will get to the riots in a moment. Let's go over your committee assignments, for instance.

DYMALLY: I was on Industrial Relations and Education and Social Welfare.

CARR: Social Welfare. You also had Military and Veterans Affairs.

DYMALLY: Well, let me tell you a cute little story about Social Welfare. It's written in a book about him. Phil Burton was chairman of the Social Welfare [Committee]. In those days, we had no roll call.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: He would say, "Dymally, aye. Moreno, aye." So we just got mad. Moreno and I decided to strike and we wouldn't go to committee hearings, because he was voting us. Jesse Unruh, the speaker, called me and he said, "I understand you don't go to hearings anymore." I said, "No. The guy votes me." He says, "I think you ought to go back." I said, "Why?" "Because he's still voting you." [Laughter] I told that story on the congressional floor and everybody got a good chuckle out of it. It's in the book about Phil

Burton. But Phil was a really, really great champion. So I went back to the Social Welfare Committee. His votes were right, but he just wouldn't give me a chance to vote. He would say, "It's good for you, Dymally."

CARR: Yeah. "Vote this way." As a freshman I suppose you didn't have much choice, but did you seek to be on any of these particular committees?

DYMALLY: Education and Labor were good for me, because I represented a labor community. And Education. . . . Don't forget, I was a teacher. Military and Veterans Affairs, I didn't seek that. That was just an add-on. Phil Burton sought me out and asked the speaker to put me on Social Welfare.

CARR: How did your experience with the teachers union as well as being a teacher help you on the Education Committee?

DYMALLY: Well, I think we need to talk about the politics of that rather than the education of that assignment. The politics of that assignment had to do with the fact that as a substitute teacher--I did pass the exam, but I had another night job during the Korean War--I joined the American Federation of Teachers, which was a no-no then.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: In those days, the CTA regarded themselves as quote, unquote, "professionals."

CARR: CTA was the California Teachers Association?

DYMALLY: Correct. So when I went up there, I introduced the first collective bargaining bill for teachers.

CARR: This was your first year?

DYMALLY: My first year. The CTA went crazy. "We don't want teachers to be union members."

CARR: I assume it didn't succeed, then?

DYMALLY: No. But the AFT wanted me to be on that. I wanted to be on that. They wanted me to introduce this piece of legislation. It started the educational process toward collective bargaining. The AFT and CTA merged in Los Angeles to give you UTLA [United Teachers of Los Angeles]. The CTA was not instrumental in my being on that committee. Neither did they like my presence there at the time. It was really an AFT assignment. However, when I ran for lieutenant governor, the CTA gave me one of their biggest contributions--\$25,000.

CARR: So once you were there, how do you think you were able to eventually facilitate some of the

legislation you wanted to get through?

DYMALLY: Well, as a teacher of the mentally retarded or the educationally handicapped, it occurred to me that a number of children were in that classroom that didn't belong there, because they had problems with language. They were not mentally retarded. What I observed, since mathematics was a universal language, they could do math. I was saying, "They can't be all that dumb." So when I went to the assembly, I introduced legislation to change the whole nature of that placement.

That's one. That second one: As a secondary education British person, when I went to college there was no such thing as black history taught in the state college. So I wanted to teach it. I was most inadequate about black history. I got this book, Names of Great Americans. In that book, they only had two blacks: Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. My ability to deal with that during Negro History Week was very limited, so I had to seek other information. When I went to the legislature, I introduced legislation for the teaching of Negro history in California schools.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: We became the first state in the Union to adopt such a piece of legislation. I was honored by the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life [now Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History], which was the originator of the Negro History Week. So those were the two significant pieces of legislation. I introduced legislation to bring about penalties against principals who discriminated against teachers. But it didn't go anyplace, of course.

CARR: Yeah, let's go back to that for a moment. You mentioned that a lot of your legislation had to do with dealing with discrimination against teachers. What kind of discrimination did teachers--I'm assuming teachers of color--face at that time?

DYMALLY: They couldn't become administrators easily. There were very few. You could count them. . . . I mean, when a [black] teacher became a principal in Los Angeles, this was history. You knew them all, there were so few. In South Central Los Angeles, there was no such thing as black principals unless it was a black school. There were three black school districts, I think. One in East Palo Alto, one in Sacramento, one in

Enterprise, Los Angeles County. I think Compton wasn't totally black in those days. Becoming an administrator was a difficult position in the Los Angeles city school system.

CARR: Was there any other kind of discrimination you faced, or others you knew of faced, as teachers on a day-to-day basis?

DYMALLY: In the promotion of teachers, yeah.

CARR: Moving just a bit ahead, that first term was the [President John F.] Kennedy assassination.

DYMALLY: What year was that? 'Sixty-five?

CARR: No. 'Sixty-three.

DYMALLY: 'Sixty-three, yeah.

CARR: What was your reaction to that? What effect did that have on the Democratic party in California?

DYMALLY: I recall very well. I was talking to a professor at Cal State Los Angeles. I can't recall what the subject was. He had called me for some information. While talking to him, Doris Berryman, my secretary, ran into the room--I had a back room, she was out front--and said, "Kennedy has just been shot." I said, "Doris, please, let's be serious." She said, "Yeah." I turned the radio on. I said to the professor, "I'll call you back." I don't remember his name,

his number, and there was never any call back. Emotionally, it was very distressing.

CARR: Why?

DYMALLY: Because he inspired young people, especially blacks, to get into politics because the doors were closed. What Kennedy did--and I see a little bit of in [President William J.] Clinton-- is that he created a dialogue, if not a climate, of racial harmony which was not present in those days. And his youth. . . . He was a favorite of the media. All that proves is that if the media likes you, you could be great, and if they don't like you, you could be just dull. The media liked him. They liked his sense of humor. He inspired people. So that was a source of inspiration. Not only that. Coupled with that was the civil rights movement and Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.].

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So you have two compelling forces merging there. One is saying politics is an honorable profession; the other one is saying, "Look, you need to get involved to change the system." For politics to be really honorable, you have to change the modus operandi.

CARR: There were a lot of people in California, such as Jesse Unruh for instance, who probably saw their political stars hitched to . . .

DYMALLY: Kennedy.

CARR: . . . that of Kennedy.

DYMALLY: In fact, Jesse claims that Pat Brown, after two terms, had agreed not to run . . .

CARR: Exactly.

DYMALLY: . . . and that he [Unruh] was going to run. That was not honored, or Pat did not claim that to be the case.

CARR: Pat ended up running for the third term.

DYMALLY: Yes. And that created a break in the party.

CARR: What kind of break was that? Was it just . . .

DYMALLY: Well, there was always the division: the CDC-- the California Democratic Council--with which Pat Brown was aligned, and the Jesse Unruh faction, which was the [California Democratic] State Central Committee. Why the State Central Committee? Because the State Central Committee was appointees of the incumbents over whom Jesse had control. So you had these two forces: the volunteer apparatus versus the legal apparatus. Coming out of that was the California Democratic Council--herein after referred to as CDC--[which]

used to endorse candidates. I got the endorsement of course, because I organized a lot of clubs. Out of that endorsement came a mailing. Jesse Unruh offered legislation to prevent volunteer political groups from making endorsements because CDC was beating him in a number of areas. I voted with CDC because of an image thing. If you look in Life magazine, where they ran the picture of Big Daddy [Unruh]--in those days he was really fat--you see him pointing his finger at Bill Greene, telling Bill Greene what an ingrate I was to not have gone with him on that. I, on the other hand, had Phil Burton tell me, "Merv, you know you just can't do this, because the club movement is the one way that blacks can get into the party. They all cannot get appointed to the state committee."

CARR: Why did you go against him on that?

DYMALLY: Because of an image thing. Because CDC thought I was Jesse Unruh's boy, you know. I wanted to show I was independent. Besides, I thought it was a bad bill.

CARR: Now, that's a really interesting . . .

DYMALLY: [Assemblyman Philip L.] Phil Soto went with him, and he got defeated. I don't think [Assemblyman

John] Moreno went with him. Another guy named [Assemblyman Harvey] Johnson went with him, but he survived.

CARR: So it wasn't necessarily always a good thing to go with Jesse on certain things.

DYMALLY: On that particular one, it was very divisive. That piece of legislation split the party down the line. Don't forget, in '60, you had two Kennedy movements. You had the Citizens for Kennedy, which was run by Thomas Braden, of Crossfire, and the Unruh organization for the Kennedy campaign.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: Braden was a sort of independent publisher in Oceanside. He ran the Citizens for Kennedy. Then you had Kennedy for President, being run by Jesse Unruh.

CARR: OK. Unruh was now. . . .

DYMALLY: And that symbolized the party split.

CARR: As I understand it, Unruh wasn't always very inclusive in terms of who he brought into his group.

DYMALLY: Because that was CDC. They did that. The citizen's group did that. They brought everybody in. Jesse Unruh was running a professional

campaign. Campaigns were beginning to do away with the grassroots operations in those days. You were going computer and television and stuff like that, you know. Not quite as much as it is today.

CARR: I was going to ask you a question about whether Brown and Unruh had cut a deal that Brown would step aside. Do you feel that really was the case?

DYMALLY: I do not know.

CARR: You have no idea?

DYMALLY: No. I have no evidence of it. All I have is Jesse's word.

CARR: Obviously, that race that Brown was supposed to . . .

DYMALLY: Well, you've got to understand how deals are cut. I could come to you and say, "Look, Elston, I want to run for president after you retire." You say, "Oh, OK," but you never really give me a commitment even though you didn't say, "No." That is always a major controversy in politics. When someone acquiesces to a statement by silence, he can always come back and say, "Well, I never told you anything." You can say, "You never said, 'No.!' " That, I think, was part of

the controversy.

CARR: At this time, clearly you have the party being pulled asunder from a lot of different points of view. Was anyone concerned about the rise of [Ronald W.] Reagan and Nixon?

DYMALLY: Oh yes. The Kennedys, in '62, poured money-- mucho dinero--in California to defeat Nixon. At that point, everybody got together. All their differences were forgotten. The important thing was to reelect Pat Brown. That's how I met [Kenneth M.] Ken Orduna. Pat came down to Broadway and Manchester [Boulevard], walking the streets with me and Gus Hawkins. Reagan was not a big player in that campaign.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: Yeah. I mean, it was a real grassroots thing at that time. The Kennedys knew that if Nixon had won in '62, he would have been running in '64 against Jack. So they came in here to defeat him. They poured a lot of money in. In those days, you could use a lot of cash. You could use a lot of in-kind [contributions] without having to report it.

CARR: Now, since we're on the subject of--we can call it the disintegration of the CDC or whatever, or

the Democrats in California in general--what effect did differences of opinion on the Vietnam War have on the party in general, and the CDC in particular?

DYMALLY: Well, we lost the house. We lost the assembly in '64. When [President Lyndon B.] Johnson was beating [Barry M.] Goldwater, we lost the state. That's what happened because of that split. That split had a very significant impact. My friend Bill Stanton, who was on the CDC left, was defeated in San Jose because it was said that Jesse didn't go out to support the CDC candidates. So yeah, that was the effect of it. We lost the house. [Assemblyman Robert T.] Bob Monagan became Speaker [of the Assembly].

CARR: Was this also one of the stronger indications of Unruh's weakening?

DYMALLY: Well, it was a blow to everybody. It was a blow to the party as a whole--while Johnson was wiping out Goldwater all over the country, all over the state, we were losing California. Johnson won California. So it was a total contradiction. I think it had to do with the split between Unruh and the CDC.

CARR: Within CDC there was also a division regarding

the war as well, wasn't there?

DYMALLY: Yes, but the anti-Vietnam people always prevailed. The Unruh camp was totally anti-Vietnam. In fact, Willie Brown, John Burton, and Bill Stanton had issued a statement or a letter opposed to the war. There was talk about impeaching them, because in those days, that was a no-no.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: Oh yeah. The senate was very upset with these three liberals from the north.

CARR: Let's go back to the particulars of your setting up your assembly office. At that time, were there field offices?

DYMALLY: Gus Hawkins, as chairman of the Rules [Committee]. . . . Gus Hawkins and Jesse had a split. When Gus was aspiring to be speaker, he got thirty-nine votes--he couldn't get the forty-first vote. I think he got up to forty. He couldn't get the forty-first vote, so there was a split. By then, 1960, Gus Hawkins was chairman of the Community Groups for Kennedy. He and Jesse began working out their differences, which were not ideological, but organizational. Then reapportionment was coming out--the census in

'60, reapportionment in '61. So Gus became chairman of the Rules Committee, and Jesse and Gus began initiating a number of changes. One, you got a field office with two people. Two, you got a leased car. Three, you got staff and an office in Sacramento with at least two people.

CARR: So by the time you were elected that was already in place?

DYMALLY: Yes, it had just taken place. It had been done in '61 and '62 during the campaign. By the time I got there in '63, we had a whole different setup. There was a constitutional amendment: the pay had changed from \$300 to \$500 . . .

CARR: A week.

DYMALLY: No, a month.

CARR: A month?

DYMALLY: And you got a weekly per diem.

CARR: How could you support a family on that?

DYMALLY: You traveled a lot during the interim and you got mileage, and you got per diem, and the lobbyists picked up all your entertainment tabs. That's how you survived.

CARR: Where was your field office located?

DYMALLY: My first field office was located on Broadway and Manchester. The building has been torn down

now.

CARR: Who were your field officers?

DYMALLY: In Los Angeles I had Louise Ridgle White and Doris Berryman. In Sacramento I had Cordia Wade, and who else? No, I just had a secretary. I don't think I had an AA [administrative assistant] at the time. I don't think you got an AA. Then Bill Greene went on the desk. He became the first black to ever be a desk clerk. His voice, as you know, is very booming. Yeah, I think I got one person in Sacramento and two in the field office.

CARR: Your field office, how did it function? Generally speaking, did people come into your office asking for things?

DYMALLY: Well, this was a new phenomenon. Don't forget that. So we went out. Doris Berryman was very active. In fact, that's how I met her--in child care, trying to save the child care program which was threatened with elimination. So we went out. Then at that time, emerging was the welfare rights mothers with Johnnie Mae Tillmon, who passed recently. I provided the first month's rent for the Welfare Rights Organization to open up their office in Watts. So you went out.

People didn't come to you with any frequency because this was a new phenomenon. They subsequently did later on.

CARR: One of the things that strikes me--and we'll come back to this: in your general election, the first time around in '62, obviously, you're running against, in the primary, eight, nine, ten people--I can't quite remember. By '64 you were unchallenged in the primary.

DYMALLY: Yeah. And in '68 I was going to be unchallenged, and I asked a guy to run to give me some opposition. And he got serious. He was running against me seriously. He went to labor to get the endorsement, and I said, "Dear man, I just thought you were trying to help me, not trying to defeat me." [Laughter]

CARR: Let's start in '64. . . . What is that an indication of, a consolidation of power?

DYMALLY: No, I am not so sure. First, all the leadership, all the aspiring middle-class people had left South Central and gone up to Baldwin Hills--Crenshaw, Baldwin Hills. So there wasn't very much leadership in the district. Not very many people wanted to go work for \$500 a month. I think I was just making close to that as a

teacher, anyway, so it didn't make a lot of difference. So it was not an attractive job, and we didn't have full-time sessions as they do now. I didn't get such a big per diem. Now it's an attractive job. Of course, it's limited to six years. But in those days, you didn't have young lawyers aspiring for that job.

CARR: So basically, you're telling me all the leadership of the people like, say, the Chuck Fieldings and the Edward Hawkins, people like that, really didn't have as much of an interest.

DYMALLY: Well, Gus's brother was put in there by a group of Gus Hawkins's supporters who felt it was somewhat presumptuous of me to come from nowhere and decide to run for public office. Chuck Fielding was just an ambitious lawyer.

CARR: So this second time around, had you made inroads into the black bourgeois community, if you want to call it that?

DYMALLY: Not much. My strength was on the east side. In fact, when we defeated [Kenneth] Kenny Washington with Bill Greene, it was based on our strength on the east side. I was very comfortable with the lower economic groups. Maybe I wasn't challenged, but I loved representing the welfare

rights groups and the poor people. I had this anti-middle-class bias ever since I went to school in Trinidad. I am alleged to have made a very critical remark about the west siders.

CARR: What was that remark?

DYMALLY: Something to the effect that if they want to be the leadership, they need to live in the ghetto as I do. Because I moved and bought a house in the ghetto. The reason why I hired Julian Dixon is because my friend, Ms. Mauri Goldman, told me that there was a myth that I wasn't popular on the west side--the West Adams district. The senate district had an "L" shape. It came down South Central and took an L turn, came into West Adams all the way out to La Brea. So since Julian was a west sider, we hired Julian to help us. But it didn't work out that way. We won very heavily on the west side. So it was just part of the myth that you hear in politics: "Oh, he's not popular," or "He's popular." Both are exaggerated. I understand that some of the bourgeoisie who had communication with the L.A. Times said that I really didn't represent the black community. I was foreign-born. I beat the candidate of the civil rights movement. That was

not the most popular thing to do then. The civil rights people kind of looked at me as an aberration.

CARR: I have two questions that are somewhat interrelated. First, if you were to describe, keeping in mind your affinity with the east siders, what your political goals were when you arrived in the assembly, what would they have been?

DYMALLY: I was a believer under the misapprehension that I could eliminate discrimination through the legislative process. That was my belief, especially in education. And it just wasn't that way. I wanted to give visibility to the young, black leadership in the Democratic party.

CARR: What were the primary problems that segment of your district faced?

DYMALLY: Poverty. But not as stark as it seems now, because the cost of living was down. Goods were cheap. Salaries were low. They sort of equalized each other. Crime was low. The big problem we had was police brutality, not crime. So when you look back at those days, the problems were not quite as acute as they are now. But you were expected to provide leadership. Now, these

black legislators--I don't even read about them. Some of them don't even live in their district. They are not accountable at all. I remember Gus Hawkins telling me one time that Reagan was just giving the Congress a bad time on education. He [Hawkins] didn't even hear from the assembly members in his district. There was no communication on this subject.

CARR: Toward that end, how do you deal with the issue that some of the kinds of infrastructural problems you were dealing with--police brutality, for instance, poverty. . . . You had tried to . . .

DYMALLY: It wasn't poverty as such; it was welfare rights.

CARR: Welfare rights. You had tried to get some legislation passed dealing with police brutality, didn't you?

DYMALLY: Yeah. That was a big joke. [Laughter]

CARR: Well, what exactly was . . .

DYMALLY: I got wiped out because the police lobbyists in Sacramento labeled me a communist and a Muslim at the same time. The two just don't mix. You know, it's not corned beef and cabbage. The police were very strong.

CARR: What exactly did that legislation try to do or

accomplish? Do you recall?

DYMALLY: I remember, one, that a police[man] would be liable if he shot someone running away from him. We had a lot of shootings in the back. My position was if a guy is running away from you, why shoot him? Let him get away. You'll catch him later on. Why kill him? That didn't go anyplace. I had a program called, I told you, STOP--Stop Terrorizing Our People. [Los Angeles Police Chief William H.] Parker hated me. He suggested that I be deported, that I go back home to Trinidad.

CARR: This was while you were in the assembly already?

DYMALLY: Yeah.

CARR: Now, at the same time, how much did the strange relationship between [Los Angeles Mayor Samuel W.] Yorty and Parker help to foment some of this?

DYMALLY: Well, you must remember this: when you talk about this fomentation, Yorty, by his own admission and everybody else's, was elected by the black community when he first ran.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: So he was seen as a traitor when he sided with Parker rather than with the black community. That was the beginning of the strained

relationship with Yorty and the black community.

CARR: Why was Yorty so attractive to the black community initially?

DYMALLY: Because [Los Angeles Mayor Norris] Poulson, the candidate, was establishment.

CARR: Norris Poulson, right?

DYMALLY: He was the L.A. Times candidate. He was a Republican, and he had no connection with the black community. Yorty had represented the black community in the assembly. He was very popular with the black ministers, and so they had no other place to go. Besides, he was a Democrat. There was no other place for them to go. And he was OK then.

CARR: Now, by the early seventies, by about '73 or so, and then later on after he [Yorty] left office, he claimed that he had made significant progress toward hiring blacks into city hall.

DYMALLY: That is correct.

CARR: You say that's true?

DYMALLY: That's correct. There were a lot of black appointees.

CARR: Do you recall anyone?

DYMALLY: Yeah. Mrs. [Leontyne Butler] King, who was on the Library Commission, the mother of Celes King

[III]. Then there was another woman who was on the Police Commission. Willard Murray was hired by him. I think Reverend Hill was on the Planning Commission.

CARR: E.V. Hill?

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: Yeah. So he did make some very good appointments. I think Ed Hawkins was put on the Public Works Commission.

CARR: By then, E.V. Hill was already seen as a religious-political leading force in the community?

DYMALLY: Yeah. In those days he was not seen as identified as much as he is now with the Republicans and with the conservatives.

CARR: Interesting. So we have this wonderful victory in '64. Then pretty much right on the heels of that you are looking at the Watts riots.

DYMALLY: 'Sixty-five. I was attending a legislative conference in Portland, Oregon, with Assemblyman [Jerome R.] Jerry Waldie. I picked up the Portland papers, and there was a little blurb about unrest in the district. I called the office, and they said, "Yes." So I flew down.

DYMALLY: The children were in Trinidad, and their mother was in New York in a play. I came in, and I was just getting in bed--one foot was in bed, the other one on the floor--when the phone rang. [Robert] Bob Hall, who was active in CORE--he's since passed away--said, "You need to be out here." I said, "Boy, not with this Lincoln." You know, I had a Lincoln then. He said, "I'll come and get you." So he came and got me. We went. We were on Imperial [Highway] and Avalon [Boulevard], and a kid said to me, "Where you from, man? You from the west side, huh?" I said, "No, I'm one of the people." He said, "If you're one of the people, here--throw it." This was recorded in Time magazine. He gave me the brick, and Bob Hall took it from me and threw the brick. I was right there in the heat of it. The brick was thrown. The police came and put his gun. . . . I said, "Wait a minute now. We're trying to keep these people calm." He said, "Shut up. You open your mouth once more and I'm going to blow your brains out." I said to him, "Shoot." I mean, that's how one gets in this emotional binge. I mean, the police is all excited, you're all excited. You swing at him or

you cuss him.

CARR: Let's, for a moment, step aside, but I think it's something that's related. Let's talk about media coverage. How did the media treat and deal [with] and represent blacks before the riots?

DYMALLY: No such thing existed. They were identified as "Negroes." There were no human interest stories; mostly crime stories. Early on they did not like Gus Hawkins. The Times did not like Gus Hawkins.

CARR: Why was that?

DYMALLY: They saw him as being on the left. That changed, subsequently. Don't forget that the Times was the pillar of the Republican party in those days. The coverage of blacks was insignificant. Now, when the civil rights movement started, then the movement as such was getting coverage--not individuals' accomplishments, but the movement. The Times reporters. . . . I don't know what happened with me and the Times, but one--Carl Greenberg--complained about the shirts I used to wear. I had gone to New York and bought some shirts. In those days pastel shirts were just coming out, you know. They saw me as kind of a wild, uncontrollable radical.

CARR: The Times obviously was not dealing with the

black community particularly. What about the relevance of, say . . .

DYMALLY: Well, the [Los Angeles] Herald-Examiner had a good sports page. Blacks. . . . [Los Angeles Times Publisher Otis] Chandler told me this himself. He and I were talking. I went to visit with him. His lawyer, [William French] Smith, the subsequent attorney general under Reagan, was on the Board of Regents [of the University of California]. I was complaining about the Times' mistreatment of me, and he arranged for me to see Chandler. Chandler had told me then that the Examiner had more black readers than the Times.

CARR: Now, the thing is, what about the California Eagle and the [Los Angeles] Sentinel? What role did papers like that play for you and other politicians trying to have some kind of a voice?

DYMALLY: Those were the papers that kept you alive, because the coverage was always positive. That was the difference. That's what made the difference with me in particular, and black politicians in general. They always had the black newspapers to paint the positive side of your accomplishments. So we always got good coverage.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

[Begin Tape 4, Side B]

CARR: Now, we were talking about black newspapers. By the sixties, the Eagle was pretty much on its way out, right?

DYMALLY: Yeah. The Eagle was seen as being on the far left. Mrs. . . .

CARR: Charlotta [Spears] Bass.

DYMALLY: . . . Mrs. Bass had passed away. Loren Miller had purchased it. They did not have the kind of advertising revenue that the Sentinel had because they were far to the left. But the readership was changing, too.

CARR: In what way?

DYMALLY: Television had come in. You could get all the news on television. All the civil rights news-- you saw it on television on Monday, Tuesday, so why buy the black newspapers on Thursday? You'd seen it all. That was the beginning of the decline of the black newspapers.

CARR: How about the Wave? What role did the Wave . . .

DYMALLY: The Wave was a white newspaper then. The Wave began the first experience of the throwaway. But the Wave was never considered a big advocate of the black community. They're a sort of

traditional newspaper. You know, they give you the news and the advertisement.

CARR: But wasn't it owned by Chester [L.] Washington? Or was he just backed by the whites?

DYMALLY: Well, that's a very good question. One thought that it was owned by Chester Washington, but it really never was.

CARR: Huh. Really?

DYMALLY: Yeah, really. He had an interest in it, but he never owned the newspaper.

CARR: So it's always been a white-owned paper?

DYMALLY: Yeah. Even today.

CARR: Interesting. Now, how was the Sentinel perceived? Was the Sentinel perceived as kind of a strong, mainline, NAACP paper?

DYMALLY: Yes. You've got to put that in context. [Los Angeles Sentinel founder] Leon [H.] Washington [Jr.] started the campaign, "Do not buy where you cannot work."

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So the Sentinel had a very, very good image, and they were very, very strong in the NAACP. Don't forget in those days that the NAACP was the opinion maker in the black community. So the Sentinel has always been a good advocate and

always friendly toward black politicians. You could always get a good story in there. It's always been a good paper. You know, I have been surprised that the Sentinel doesn't have a larger readership than it does. It stayed at the thirty-five thousand circulation--its number just went up. Every now and then, [A.S.] "Doc" Young--before he died, when he was editor--used to do these special editions. Those were always very popular. The Sacramento Observer does those, and they always sell very well, and they are a good money-maker, too.

CARR: What were in these special issues?

DYMALLY: I can remember, like, black history. They would have a special edition on black history. The Sacramento Observer would have one on education. They'd have one on jobs. People usually respond to that. The Sentinel hasn't done as good a job as the Observer has on these special editions.

CARR: Now, we're going to move back to Watts and try to reconnect not only the media, but also some other things going on politically. The Rumford Fair Housing Act, by that time, was in the process of being repealed, correct?

DYMALLY: That was the battle cry in California, the first

big fight, publicly, between the liberals and the conservatives. Reagan came out for the amendment.

CARR: Proposition 14?

DYMALLY: Fourteen. He, Reagan, changed, subsequently, after he became governor. That was the big battle. [In] the Democratic party, all the warring factions came together. Labor came together. That was the beginning of the conservative initiative ballot campaign, which today has become an institution on the right-- Prop. 14 was the first.

CARR: To what do you attribute this phenomenon, looking back specifically at that moment in California political history?

DYMALLY: A very interesting question. Let me speculate on that from the top of my head. See, conservatives measure their politics by the mood of their constituents. Instead of providing leadership and saying, "No," they put some saliva on their finger and they put it up there and see where the wind is blowing, and they go with the wind, even though the wind is destructive. That's what is damaging about conservative leadership. They think that the people want anarchy. They want us

to close the government down. They do not say to the people, "Closing the government down will do too much damage." So they do polling. They did polling, and recognized. . . . In those days there was this myth and stereotype about fair housing, that property values would go down when blacks move in, etc., etc. So with that in mind, they began the initiative process, and they won. That victory has stayed with them until this day. They recognize, "Ah, we have a tool to bypass a liberal legislature under Jesse Unruh and Pat Brown." And today, that's very much alive.

CARR: What role did the California real estate lobby--
brokers . . .

DYMALLY: Oh, they were behind Prop. 14. They were behind
Prop. 14. They have since changed. They made
a . . .

CARR: But they were behind the repeal?

DYMALLY: No, no, no. The initiative was repealed by the
courts. They were the ones who declared
[Proposition] 14 unconstitutional.

CARR: That's what I mean, the California real estate
lobby.

DYMALLY: And I had a lot of legislation against them, but
it never got anyplace.

CARR: So we have this. How did the community--we're talking about, say, the working-class, working poor segment of the community, some of whom were fighting for welfare rights--react to the kind of message the repeal of Rumford sent?

DYMALLY: That was the beginning of the divide between black and white, between liberals and conservatives. That, in '64, was the beginning of the divide. The [O.J.] Simpson trial was the escalation of the divide. So the divide in the Simpson trial had more publicity to it, because in those days television was not influential. The tabloids were not that influential. But that was the beginning of the racial divide in California--public. I mean it was there, but this was it: "Fellas, we're going public. We don't want you to live next door."

CARR: In a certain sense, a line was being drawn.

DYMALLY: Absolutely, and it set a very, very bad precedent, a very bad climate.

CARR: What I find ironic is, Rumford, for most of his political career, was a middle-of-the-road kind of guy.

DYMALLY: Well, it's very interesting. There were two bills: the FEPC [Fair Employment Practices

Commission], and the fair housing bill. Gus Hawkins would carry it one time, and Rumford would carry it the other time. So it was really a Hawkins bill, and this time it became Rumford's turn to carry the fair housing bill. But by then Pat Brown was in power, the Democrats had a large majority, etc., etc. The fair housing bill was passed in the senate because [President John F.] Kennedy personally called [State] Senator [Luther E.] Gibson, who was chairman of the Government Operations Committee, and offered him a submarine in his district. They used to build submarines in Vallejo. That's how the bill passed. So the real estate people went after it and repealed it. That was the beginning of the divide.

CARR: Now, we have Watts. You have, beyond an escalation, an explosion, literally, within the community.

DYMALLY: But look, forget the experts, OK? Nobody knew it was coming.

CARR: Nobody knew?

DYMALLY: Oh, they will tell you, "I knew it was coming." There was no indication that there was this kind of unexpressed anger.

CARR: You didn't even sense it from your, say,

disenfranchised constituents?

DYMALLY: No. I mean, not to that extent. They were unhappy in a civilized context, but not to explode in that manner. You know, a lot of experts came behind saying, "I knew it was going to happen--boom, boom." One of the things that also occurred [was] the escalation of the love-hate relationship with the media. The civil rights leaders, at the drop of a hat, sought the media. But at the same time, the media wasn't exactly with them, except on the publicity side, not in terms of the penetrating side of exploring discrimination and so on. They were giving publicity to an action, to a riot. So there was a lot of publicity selling the riot as a news item, not as a . . .

CARR: A social phenomenon.

DYMALLY: . . . phenomenon. Not a corrective, you know. . . . So we all rushed to the media. Every time we had a complaint, we rushed to the media, not recognizing that the media was not with us. By the way, my master's thesis was based on that: the press and the civil rights movement, showing the ambivalence that existed. So nobody knew that this was happening. You knew that we were

unhappy with the South, but no one knew that we were unhappy with California.

CARR: Immediately in the aftermath of the riots, how did it affect the day-to-day operations of your field office, and the demands it made on you as [Inaudible]?

DYMALLY: Well, there were lots of meetings. Lots of meetings. There was no absence of meetings, no absence of calling upon you to join. But there was also an elitist approach to this in California. I recall one incident. . . . See, I was never popular with the civil rights bourgeoisie. They were having a rally at Wrigley Field in my district. Sherrill Luke was a black lawyer working for the governor. He sent a telegram, on behalf of the governor to the civil rights movement, to [Robert] Bob Chick in the Valley. And Bob Chick--his wife is on the [Los Angeles] City Council, Laura Chick--brought the telegram to me, and in those days, the telegram came in strips of pieces of tape that are taped on, little thin lines of tape. Bob Chick and I pulled off his name and put my name in there and took it to the civil rights movement, figuring that they would let me read it. They didn't.

When I complained to Sherrill Luke about it, he reminded me that tampering with a Western Union [telegram] was a felony, and that was the end. I just shut up. They didn't let me deliver it. But in those days, the California civil rights movement was glamorized with a lot of movie stars, you know. They would charter planes and go to the civil rights march and protest.

CARR: So now the McCone Commission has formed. What was your reaction to that? You said that you were obviously outraged that you were left off.

DYMALLY: Both Reverend Ferrell and I were outraged that they didn't put us on. But again, it was the west siders and Pat Brown's advisers who put that together, and they didn't see Doug Ferrell and I fitting into that--you know, that kind of a bourgeoisie, elitist west side mentality.

CARR: Now, so Warren Christopher would have fit into that whole thing at that time as well. Right?

DYMALLY: Sure. He was on it.

CARR: He was on the commission?

DYMALLY: Yeah. And Yvonne [Brathwaite] Burke was a staff member.

CARR: Now, in terms of looking at your community's infrastructure, is it an afterthought to say that

the deindustrialization of that area had a great deal of effect not only on the escalation of poverty obviously, but the kind of outburst that led to the riot?

DYMALLY: You had a slump in those days. We were just beginning to build up for the cold war, for the Russian invasion. But those jobs did not reach down to the uneducated, the untrained, and so you still had that large population of unemployed. So there was a lot of trying to repair the damage. To [Lyndon B.] Johnson's credit, he did respond in many ways to it.

CARR: Now, his--that was one of my next questions--his War on Poverty: Some of the things that went into that, did it appease the welfare rights people in your district?

DYMALLY: Yes. Well, I don't know if it appeased them, but it provided some opportunities. I am one of those who believe that the War on Poverty did a lot of good, because I saw a lot of students at Pomona [College] and the Claremont [Colleges], where I was teaching, who normally would not have been there, and who are not there now. The welfare rights [movement] had strong support on the national level. But now we have Reagan

trying to cut into it.

CARR: On the state level.

DYMALLY: State level. They took Reagan to court and they won a big case. They got a settlement of about \$45 million that was withheld from them. So the welfare rights movement was a good example that leadership does not necessarily come from the educated, but it comes from the committed. That was true of the leadership in the South, too. A lot of the people who were leaders were not college men. They were street people. That was especially true in the welfare rights movement. These women had a significant impact on welfare legislation on a national and state level.

CARR: Tell me about some of the women you mention.

DYMALLY: Johnnie Mae Tillmon was the chief architect.

CARR: How did you meet her? What was she like?

DYMALLY: Well, because I represented Watts, and I met her. . . . Oh, I know how I met her. I became very close to a family whose children I taught, and this Caffie Greene was related to Johnnie Mae Tillmon. That's how I met her, yes. Caffie Greene and I continue to be friends to this day. She's on the board of directors of the Drew [Medical] School. And they had a full-time

lobbyist who came to Sacramento and lobbied very well.

CARR: Now, by that time. . . . So you really don't feel that the deindustrialization of that area really had that big an effect?

DYMALLY: Well, plants were beginning to leave. They were beginning to go to the San Fernando Valley because there was more space and cheaper land there. The crime was not the problem that they left, you know. It was cheaper to build a new plant and have new machines than it was to remodel the plant and rebuild those old machines. So you just picked up and went out to a place where there was space. And don't forget, new technology was just coming in at that time.

CARR: You mentioned Wrigley Field in your district just a moment ago. Weren't you also involved in legislation to buy Wrigley Field?

DYMALLY: No. I was not involved in. . . . No. I can't recall that.

[Interruption].

I know what you're talking about: Who bought Wrigley Field, the city? Yeah, the city bought Wrigley Field. Then we negotiated for the city to give the land over to build the center. There

is now [Gilbert W. Lindsay Community Center], which was led by Dr. [J. Alfred] Al Cannon, and yes, I was involved in that. But I don't think it was legislation as [much] as it was negotiation. You are correct.

CARR: Now, bringing up Al Cannon's name is significant as well because. . . . Tell me about Al Cannon. Tell me about his significance in the community. Also, someone he was very close to as well [was] Maulana Karenga, who also emerged as somewhat of a leader during that time.

DYMALLY: Al Cannon was a dreamer, an organizer, which was part of his downfall, academically, because in those days, UCLA was very strict on "publish or perish." Despite the fact that he started the Central City Cultural Center, the Frederick Douglass Child Care Center, the Inner City Mental Health Program. . . . All kinds of institutions, he built in L.A.

CARR: Now, he was in the psychology department at UCLA?

DYMALLY: Psychiatry.

CARR: Psychiatry.

DYMALLY: And he's the one who conceived of the idea of the [Charles R.] Drew [Postgraduate Medical] School. He took it to Dr. Leroy [R.] Weeks [Jr.], who has

since passed. He has never been given adequate credit for his work. But he lost his job at UCLA because he did not publish. He ended up at Drew very frustrated and finally went to Africa, in Zimbabwe, and bought a farm there. He went and studied bush medicine at the university there and became the physician for Mrs. Mugabe, wife of the president of Zimbabwe. He was eating an ice cream cone, rocking on the chair on his porch where I visited with him, and had a massive heart attack and died.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: He started the Mfundu House on 103rd Street. A number of institutions he started. Anti-drug programs, child development programs. . . . Don't forget, in those days it was possible to get funds to do these things.

CARR: Now, he was close to Dr. Karenga as well?

DYMALLY: Yes. I met Maulana Karenga when he was [Ronald M.] Ron Everett. His brother was a brilliant teacher. He used to teach children in the ghetto Shakespearean plays. Ron started the US movement and had some problems with the law enforcement. I helped him. To this day, he's always grateful.

CARR: Because he wrote you when he was in prison. How

were you able to get him out on probation?

DYMALLY: By going in and talking to the probation people. In those days you were brave, and you weren't intimidated by press stories that you were close to a prisoner. Now if you do something like that and got probation for, let's say, someone on drugs, you're automatically linked with the drug community. Ron and I ended up at graduate school together.

CARR: Where?

DYMALLY: United States International University. There is a doctor there who thinks he [Karenga] was the most brilliant student that he has ever had. Something that he has done that has lived is Kwanzaa. He started Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is in the Caribbean now. The old, black Anglo-Saxons are worried if it's going to take over Christmas.

CARR: [Laughter] What was the Stovall Foundation?

DYMALLY: Dr. [Leonard] Stovall, I think, built the first senior citizens home. That was Dr. Stovall--a very prominent dentist of West Indian background.

CARR: This was in your community.

DYMALLY: Yes. I forget where the home is now, but I worked very closely with them.

CARR: Excellent. Also one of the other things you

sponsored, you wanted to create an experimental college within California state colleges. What was that about?

DYMALLY: Yeah. I became very impressed with the University without Walls [Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities]. Leo [J.] Ryan and I traveled around the country--met Jonathan Kozol in Boston, went to Harlem, and looked at alternative schools there. We went to Miami. I went to London and visited the British Open University. We wanted to have an open university in California because New York had one, the Empire State University. Illinois had one, Lincoln State University. I wanted to do one here, but I think I was ahead of my time.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: That's big stuff. Now, the University of Phoenix, which is big. . . . I knew these guys when they got started. They couldn't get accreditation here, and the reason why they went to Arizona is because Arizona is in a different region--it's in the north-central. The Western Association [of Schools and Colleges] was opposed to alternative schools.

CARR: OK. Now, you were also involved in the creation

of the California Arts Commission.

DYMALLY: I don't think I authored that. I think I co-authored that. But I authored the legislation on the California Commission [on the Status of] Women.

CARR: Tell about that. Tell me that story.

DYMALLY: Some women went to Jesse Unruh. I got the bill passed, about sixty-five votes in the house. Some women went to Jesse Unruh and told him it's too important a bill for a black man to carry. Jesse Unruh told me that. And they gave it to [State] Senator [Hugh M.] Burns.

CARR: So what did Jesse Unruh come to you and say?

DYMALLY: Well, I was complaining I couldn't get my bill out in the senate. And they gave the bill to Hugh Burns, who was opposed to the bill. I suspect they told Hugh Burns the same story. Hugh Burns was a conservative. He authored the legislation. It passed the senate and the house. And I never got to be the author. That really made me unhappy toward some of the women. It shows that the women's groups are not without prejudices and racism.

CARR: Even when you moved from the assembly to the senate, I think in the senate, you still

supported some women's rights legislation.

DYMALLY: Oh, all the time. Yeah. Because . . .

CARR: Wasn't there a special committee on women's rights that you sat on?

DYMALLY: Yes, the Joint Committee on Equality for Women. It's a very interesting story. Someone called me and told me that the Congress of Racial Equality was picketing unfair housing in Monterey Park, [that] I need to go there. So I went there with my photographer and a jug of coffee, and this young woman, Mauri Goldman, from England, just jumped all over me for trying to use the movement. I said, "OK, you're right. But I will not bring the photographer." She then. . . . I started coming back. I wouldn't give up. She made a most beautiful tape of that incident before she died. She and I became the best of friends. She said in the tape that she fell in love with me because I didn't give up despite her abuse. I kept coming.

And I said to her during that period, "Mauri, I don't think any white man is going to tolerate his wife going to jail as often as you are with these black people." "Oh, he's not like that. We're from Britain," etc., etc. Sure enough, she

DYMALLY: woke up one morning and her husband. . . . They had separated and divorced. She ended up with nothing. Absolutely nothing. They had a factory that made accordion doors. The husband had everything, took everything. She had nothing.

She came to me for a job and I said, "Mauri, I don't have any budget. I don't have any space. I'll go to the Rules Committee and see what they will do to help me." I went to the Rules Committee and they said, "Well, if you can find some space, go ahead and hire her." So I was coming out of the elevator and I saw a door, and I pulled the door open and there was some space with a desk in it and a telephone. It was some hideaway office. She went in there and subsequently became my top aide, because she was that good.

With that experience of having been divorced and losing everything, she got me to introduce the legislation, which is history in California now, for joint property--50 percent. If you and your wife divorce, all the property now must be divided in equal shares--50 percent. Not [property acquired] prior to your marriage, [such as] if you have an inheritance, but everything

acquired through your marriage.

CARR: You introduced that?

DYMALLY: Yes. It took us three years to get it, and we finally got it with the help of Maureen Reagan, who teamed up with us. Now, Mauri became very active in the women's movement. Maureen Reagan went and got her father to sign the bill after three years of defeat.

CARR: How did Maureen Reagan get involved in it?

DYMALLY: Through Mauri Goldman and the women's movement. Remember, the beginning of the women's movement was bipartisan. It wasn't so polarized as it became later on.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: So that was a landmark. It's still a landmark piece of legislation now.

CARR: Did the legislation have a name?

DYMALLY: No. I didn't tombstone it. I was modest. I should have tombstoned it and called it the Dymally Bill. It's the Community Property Act.

CARR: Also, you were involved in the creation of the California Commission on Manpower, Automation, and Technology. What was that?

DYMALLY: I became chairman of the Committee on Industrial Relations.

CARR: Right. Exactly.

DYMALLY: Yeah. I remember Lieutenant Governor [Robert H.] Finch was chair of that committee, [as was] a guy named Ina Mohn, who was head of the [International Brotherhood of] Teamsters, [Chauffeurs, Warehousemen, and Helpers of America] on the West Coast. It was to look at the whole question of manpower in California. I had, by then, gotten a young, bright consultant who was assigned to me by Jesse Unruh. I didn't have any say about it. Then I had an intern by the name of [Daniel] Dan Visnich, who still is in Sacramento, now retired.

CARR: Who was the [consultant]?

DYMALLY: It was Steven. I've forgotten Steven's last name. A very bright guy. I think he went on to get his Ph.D., eventually. So that came through.

CARR: By this time were you already beginning to look toward running for state senate?

DYMALLY: It just happened. It just fell from heaven. I am told that the senate tried their damndest to gerrymander me. But they couldn't, because don't forget I'm living on Slauson [Avenue] and Avalon [Boulevard] in the heart of the ghetto. How are you going to cut the ghetto? I also sent a

message, "It doesn't matter where you put the district; I'm going to run." So I was in the heart of the district.

CARR: Now, did you have any discussions with Unruh on getting a safe district to run in?

DYMALLY: No. It was just a natural. . . . They had to create a black district. Los Angeles County [went] from one district to thirteen. It was inevitable that they were going to have a black district, and I was the heir apparent.

CARR: One of the things that strikes me is that, although you're very modest about the fact that you don't feel your legislation had a great deal of impact in the assembly, you wrote a great deal of legislation.

DYMALLY: Oh yes. I was a very prolific legislator.

CARR: You wrote a great deal of legislation. But at the same time, you also talk about really not having had a lot of guidance during that time. How did you learn to not only produce this stuff so . . .

DYMALLY: Very good question. I just felt there was a need. I thought that you could change the world through legislation, and so whenever a situation arose, I introduced a bill to correct it. Some

got passed and others didn't. I became a little more careful, a little more concentrated when I went into the senate, and I had a very productive package of legislation.

CARR: Yeah. Your first year in the senate was probably even more productive.

DYMALLY: Well, let me tell you that story. It's a very interesting one. [State Senator] George Miller [Jr.], who was part of the leadership. . . . It was George Miller, Hugh Burns, [Randolph] Randy Collier, and a few others; about five came to me and said--George Miller now is a liberal from the north--"Hey, Mervyn, you don't come to our parties." And I said, "No. I don't like ethnic jokes." He said, "Maybe if you come, they would stop making these ethnic jokes." That's one. The second time around, I wasn't getting anyplace, and I went to him and I said, "Senator, here are my options: I could go into Watts and demagogue my way into reelection by just saying what a racist group the senate is. Or I could go into Watts and say, 'Hey, I'm getting something done. This is a very nice place to be.' Those are my options. I'd like it to be the latter." And there was a bill--my first major bill was the

Dymally-Sieroty Child Care [Center] Construction Act.¹

CARR: To encourage day care centers for children?

DYMALLY: Yes. [Alan G.] Sieroty was carrying it on the assembly side; I was carrying it on the senate side. Now, Gus Hawkins had carried that bill for many years. The state would not provide the funds. I got the bill through. That was a major, major breakthrough.

CARR: What made it possible for you to get it through?

DYMALLY: Well, because George Miller was head of the Finance Committee. I had told him, "I need to go home with something. I don't want to survive by being a demagogue. I want to survive by being productive." Yeah, I got some major legislation into the senate.

CARR: Speaking of which, one of the things that seems apparent to me looking at the assembly side and the senate side, it seems like there were a lot of things that you might have been unsuccessful getting through in the assembly that you just took with you to the senate and tried later on.

1. S.B. 39, 1968 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1373.

DYMALLY: It was easier in the senate. I became, as I said, more practical. George Miller helped. And then I subsequently became part of the leadership.

CARR: In addition to your success with the child care center construction bill, there was also the vocational education and training bill.

DYMALLY: There was the Child Growth and Development Act. There was the Child Abuse Prevention Act. There was the Drew Medical School.

CARR: Let's talk about the importance of the vocational training for your community.

DYMALLY: Well, I came to the conclusion that our high school system was training everybody to go to college, and less than 50 percent went to college. That, coupled with the fact that vocational education was sort of stereotyped, that all blacks were going to vocational education, I came to the conclusion that our high schools had to respond to those, maybe 65 percent, not going to college. The best way was vocational education. Now, I would not use the word "vocational." I would use the word "technical" or "technological." So that was the idea. It was to develop more skills among the

non-college-bound students.

CARR: How successful do you think the program was? How long did it last?

DYMALLY: It was--what were they called?--sunset. . . . It was a limited program. But I got a start. What I did get . . .

CARR: Or was it Horizon?

DYMALLY: Yeah. I got the help of the [California State] Department of Education. [Maxwell L.] Rafferty [Jr.] of all people--very conservative--helped me with the legislation. I had forgotten that, by the way.

CARR: There was also the Horizon Summer Training Program.

DYMALLY: Whoa, whoa, whoa--I had forgotten that. Gee. Again, Rafferty helped me with that.

CARR: What exactly was Horizon?

DYMALLY: I became aware of the fact that the [California] Museum of Science and Industry was in my district, with a lot of resources, scientific and financial. So how could we get black kids into this program? That was designed to develop a program, so we looked into the horizon--of getting kids involved in the summer. Gee, I had

forgotten that.

CARR: Wow. Great.

[End Tape 4, Side B]

[Session 4, March 3, 1997]

[Begin Tape 5, Side A]

CARR: Good afternoon, Congressman Dymally. From our previous interview, I'd like to ask you a question regarding a bill you introduced in the assembly regarding the teaching of black history in public schools. How did that come about?

DYMALLY: As you are aware, I went to secondary school in a British colony--Trinidad. Then I went to a number of schools, finishing at L.A. State, at the time, it was located on the Vermont [Avenue] campus of [Los Angeles] City College. I don't recall ever having been told or ever having attended any classes dealing with Negro history at the time. There were California history [courses], at length; United States history, which was a state requirement for a teaching credential. So when I went into the classroom, I sought some references, and there was only one book, Great Names in American History, and there were only two Negroes in the book. I'm using

"Negro" in a historical context.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. Well, in my current affairs reading-- black newspapers, etc.--I knew there were more historical figures. As a teacher, I did not have adequate material in my classroom to perform this function in what was then Negro History Week. So when I went to the legislature, I introduced that piece of legislation.

CARR: Now, this was back in '62? Or later on?

DYMALLY: I think it must be '64.

CARR: Yeah, '64 or '65.

DYMALLY: Yeah, second term. California became the first state in the Union to introduce and pass such legislation. Of course, it was Governor Pat Brown at the time, so I had no difficulty getting it signed. And for that, I was honored by the Association for Negro Life and History [Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History] as having been the first author in the United States to have introduced such legislation. So that came out of my teaching experience--or lack of it.

CARR: More precisely, why was it important from your

perspective then for black history to be taught in public schools?

DYMALLY: I went into the assembly with a deep passion about the discrimination that existed in education and the inadequacy of teachers on this question of Negro history. I'm saying, "What is a good way of eliminating prejudice? It's through education. It's through knowing about the accomplishments of a people. If teachers don't know it, how can the students know it? Teachers don't have the knowledge to impart to their students." So it was very [hard] for teachers to teach.

CARR: Now, obviously you had to go about getting support for this bill. On one hand, who were your strongest advocates and allies? On the other hand, where did you encounter resistance for such a bill?

DYMALLY: The chair of the Education Committee was [Charles B.] "Gus" Garrigus [II], a pleasant, country-farmer teacher from Fresno County. So in the assembly I had no difficulty. There was Jesse Unruh, who was supportive of the legislation, and I had on my side Reverend F. Douglas Ferrell of Watts and Byron Rumford of the north, both of

whom supported the legislation. So that was important. In the senate, I do not recall if I encountered any difficulty except that they weren't quite as enlightened. Yes, the senate committee was chaired by Senator [Albert S.] Al Rodda, a very progressive liberal from Sacramento County, from Sacramento City College. So that was helpful. Rodda was not viewed as part of the old guard in the senate. He was a very enlightened man and a college professor himself.

CARR: Now, within the context of that period of time, didn't you or didn't anyone who proposed legislation like this run the risk of being labeled radical or cultural nationalist?

DYMALLY: Well [Laughter], there was an assemblyman who went to the senate with me, Lou Cusanovich. One of his Republican colleagues who was a friend of mine, who went to school here at Bethune Junior High--back in the days when it was white--came to me and said he overheard Cusanovich telling Hugh Burns, the president pro tem, that I was a Black Muslim and did not say the Pledge of Allegiance. So I went to Hugh Burns and I said, "Senator, you know, ever since I've come to this senate you have never called upon me to say the Pledge of

Allegiance." He said, "You're on tomorrow." So he called on me to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. But you know, this was such a kind of racist approach to my loyalty because in the classroom, children have to say the Pledge of Allegiance every morning. So it was just ridiculous. Anyhow, I took the offensive at the suggestion of my Republican friend from Orange County, James [E.] Whetmore.

CARR: Now, at the time, how did your early support of this bill evolve into your eventual support of black studies programs on the university level?

DYMALLY: Well, the two were coming down the track very fast.

CARR: Both while you were in your second term of the senate?

DYMALLY: Yes, the elementary school side and the student movement were advocating a black studies program around the campuses. But I must confess to you, the two were not linked.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: No.

CARR: So what brought about your interest and support of black studies programs at the university level? Because I know you were involved in

legislation for that as well.

DYMALLY: It was not connected to this bill, strangely enough. I don't think there was legislation on this subject of black studies. It was a campus issue.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: No. I think the movement arose after this bill passed, and I don't think this bill necessarily had any influence on the movement. I think they were both going on parallel tracks.

CARR: So what brought about your interest, again, in black studies programs? Do you recall?

DYMALLY: Yes. It was the lack of knowledge and the excitement of learning so much about the accomplishments of blacks. I'm still amazed when I pick up these little booklets every now and then about black history. There's a calendar that has just been put out, and they were kind enough to mention me. I took it to [a] Beverly Hills school. The children wrote me letters thanking me for coming to talk with them. So it was my lack of education, on the one hand, [and] the need to emphasize this sense of black pride: Stokely [Carmichael] said, "Black is beautiful," in the Black Power movement. The train was just

leaving the station, and you needed to get onto it.

CARR: Now, from the vantage point of black student movements or student movements in general on university campuses during that time--not only with black cultural nationalism but also with the anti-war movement as well--from a politician's point of view, was it really the students who got your attention about a lot of things, or politicians' [attention] in general, or [who] got people moving in a certain way? Or were there certain student activists or movements you were very close to?

DYMALLY: There was something that happened that very few people have taken note of. I was the first person to introduce a resolution on divestiture at any Board of Regents [of the University of California][meeting].

CARR: What year was that?

DYMALLY: Oh, 1975.

CARR: 'Seventy-five. So that was your first year as lieutenant governor?

DYMALLY: Yeah, first year as a member of the Board of Regents of the University of California.

CARR: Which you automatically became as . . .

DYMALLY: Yes, as president of the senate. I got three votes: [Governor Edmund G.] "Jerry" Brown [Jr.], myself, and a Hispanic regent at the time [Vilma S. Martinez]--she was head of MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund]. Wilson [C.] Riles, strangely enough, voted against it. The San Francisco Chronicle wrote an editorial praising him for voting against my resolution. But I was surrounded by a group of young interns, black and white, who were constantly bringing these measures to my attention.

CARR: Do you recall any of their names? Did any of them go onto . . .

DYMALLY: They called themselves Project Loophole. One, I know now the last time I heard of him he was in Hawaii. In fact, I met him in Hawaii when I was there as a member of Congress. They also researched something that I must tell you about. They discovered that the banks in California did not pay any license fees for their license plates. That was in the constitution. They came out with this scathing report on the Bank of America--how the bank was ripping off the taxpayers with their cars and not paying these

fees. At the time we were making \$500 a month. I used to get a loan from the Bank of America to supplement my income. Then I would pay it and borrow it again. When it expired and came up for renewal, the bank refused to renew it.

CARR: Renew it?

DYMALLY: In Sacramento. Yeah.

CARR: Wow. Did you follow student movements at any particular universities at that time?

DYMALLY: Don't forget, I was ahead of the movement. I graduated in the fifties, so the movement took place while I was in the assembly in the sixties.

CARR: Let's go back just a bit to the Urban Affairs Institute.

DYMALLY: When I went to the assembly, I discovered there was a Ford-funded program run by the University of California, Berkeley. Professor [Eugene C.] Lee, a political scientist, was in charge. In the history of that program, there was only one black person--Milton McGee. He subsequently became a lawyer and a vice-mayor of Sacramento, and a partner of attorney [Nathaniel] Nat Collier. Nat was the authority on civil rights for the NAACP--one of the authorities, certainly the authority on the West Coast. So what I saw,

in effect, with that one little blip on the screen, was a lily-white program. So the coordinator of the program and I . . .

CARR: Who was that?

DYMALLY: Lee Nichols, I believe. I almost forgot Lee's last name. But Unruh had a very keen interest in it. He and I developed a proposal and submitted it to the Ford Foundation to develop interns in public affairs. They came out here and interviewed us. One black legislator who thought I was moving too fast [Laughter]--he's a friend of mine now--called the Ford Foundation to protest that the black legislators were not involved in the program.

CARR: Who was that?

DYMALLY: I don't want to mention his name. He's a friend of mine.

CARR: It's a matter of historical record. We need to. I don't think he's . . .

DYMALLY: No, no. I can't mention his name. It's too embarrassing. I mean . . .

CARR: Come on, who was it?

DYMALLY: He doesn't know that I know this. They told me. So . . .

CARR: This is a very significant historical fact.

DYMALLY: Yeah. Well, we'll come back to it later on. The Ford program officer said this: "How can I forget the meeting? She was so beautiful." What happened is, when he came over, we had lunch at the Senator Hotel. Who showed up but Yvonne Brathwaite [Burke]. So when he said the black legislators were not involved, the program officer said, "Yvonne was there. I don't know what you mean that they were not involved."

CARR: Can we pause for just a moment?

DYMALLY: Yeah.

[Interruption]

And they came down to Los Angeles. They saw we had a little makeshift office. But we made a strong presentation. The head of the public affairs program was a guy by the name of Mike Sverdorf. Mike Sverdorf came from the United Auto Workers, as did I. So there was a meeting of some chemistry there, and we were funded. Out of that program are the following people who benefited from that program: [State] Senator Teresa Hughes, [State] Senator Bill Greene, Mayor [Joseph] Joe Serna of Sacramento, [Los Angeles] Councilman Richard Alatorre, [State] Senator Art Torres, Assemblywoman Gwen Moore, the second

black senator in Colorado--whose name escapes me right now, but I'll get it to you eventually . . .

CARR: Dr. Louise Ridgle White, wasn't she also involved in . . .

DYMALLY: Yes, Dr. Louise White. I was just mentioning . . .

CARR: Art Torres you mentioned. Alatorre.

DYMALLY: . . . I was just mentioning elected officials, but there were a lot of young people, one of whom is in charge of a minority business program in Sacramento. His last name is Williams. Jerry Heleva. . . . You saw that picture that looked like Saddam Hussein when you were upstairs? That's Jerry.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: Jerry Heleva. He's a big-time lobbyist. There's an interesting story about Jerry Heleva. You know, the program was designed for minorities. Jerry Heleva was a candidate. Some of the members on the selection committee objected to the fact that he was white, and I recall Teresa Hughes and I made a strong case. He became a very, very good friend of mine. He still continues to be a friend. So Jerry came out of that program. There were a number of other people, some of whom went into academia. We had

one in particular, I think an assemblyman from Phoenix--Assemblyman [Art] Hamilton.

CARR: Now, did Robert Singleton, the professor. . . . Was he involved in . . .

DYMALLY: No. I knew Robert, but he was not a fellow, no. Adonis [E.] Hoffman, who now heads the Africa section of the Carnegie Endowment for [International] Peace, and who was also director of the House Subcommittee on Africa. There was another young woman, Stephanie Lee, who was assistant secretary in HEW [United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare].

CARR: Now, you were able to get Ford Foundation moneys to run the program. Wasn't there an initial resistance from Ford because the program, according to them, really was only geared toward recruiting minorities?

DYMALLY: No. It was politics, not minorities. That's what the word was. The program became very political. What we did was that we made sure that every intern or fellow served their internship with an elected official to train them in the art of politics. Oh, there was a lot of jealousy about the program. Some people thought we were moving too fast, [that] we were getting

too strong. Some criticism arose. They went after me because Bill Greene and I went to a meeting with Mayor [Joseph L.] Alioto. The Jesse Unruh people thought we were going to oppose him for governor. It was just an exploratory meeting. That was one part of the criticism of the program. The other part was I was being paid. Supervisor Terry Francois in San Francisco, who had a Ford-funded diversity program, was on the payroll. Carlton Goodlett, the publisher of the Sun-Reporter, knowing of that fact, moved that I be given a stipend. That became very controversial.

CARR: Was this the \$1,000 a month stipend or something like that?

DYMALLY: Yes. I had to return it. The attorney general made me return it.

CARR: Before we go on to some of the controversy that began to swirl around the UAI [Urban Affairs Institute], let's talk about some of your protégés, or others' protégés, who came out of this program. Namely, let's start with Richard Alatorre. From that point, chart for me, if you will, his acceptance into this program, you getting to know him, and also his rise to

political power.

DYMALLY: Assemblyman Walter [J.] Karabian called and said he wanted to recommend Richard. Joe Cerrell called. Richard at the time was one of the few Hispanics who worked for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. So we all thought he had some soul. Someone told me that they saw him on public service television--I think it must be on L.A. public schools [cable television--KLCS]--and the students asked him who were his favorite politicians. He mentioned [Senator Hubert H.] Humphrey. He said, "The other guy, you don't know him." They said, "Who is he?" He said, "It's a guy by the name of Mervyn Dymally." So I wrote him a letter and I said, "Thanks for the high praise. It would be nice if you returned my phone calls"--which he never does.

CARR: Why do you think that is?

DYMALLY: Richard is really absorbed in city hall politics, you know. If, I think, the call is not directly related to that. . . . Answering phone calls is one of the most difficult problems for a politician because there are more calls than you have time to answer, so you have to be very selective. I just fall between the cracks. When

I see him he's very pleasant. He speaks like that, but he never returns my phone calls.

CARR: There's also Art Torres who came through. Were you involved--I'm jumping ahead of myself--in helping [Torres] get elected to the assembly at all?

DYMALLY: No.

CARR: Who was he supported by? I mean, did he get . . .

DYMALLY: Walter Karabian. Walter Karabian was one of the best fund-raisers in town. César Chávez called me and told me he had a young man who wanted to come and work for the legislature and get into politics. Art Torres, at the time, I think, was making five dollars a week. That call from César . . .

CARR: Was he working for Chávez?

DYMALLY: Yes, for five dollars a week.

CARR: As one of his lawyers?

DYMALLY: No, no, just one of the field men. That call was all I needed, and I hired him. He turned out to be very, very grateful and very, very responsive.

CARR: At this point, one of the things that occurs to me is that, at certain times, especially during the middle sixties and late sixties--and perhaps

as far back as the relationship between [Congressman Edward R.] Roybal and [Tom] Bradley, which was a tenuous relationship at best--there were tentative efforts to build some kind of a black-Chicano coalition in southern California politics.

DYMALLY: It never succeeded.

CARR: It never happened.

DYMALLY: It never succeeded.

CARR: Why not?

DYMALLY: I really don't know. I think there's a cultural clash. We developed some semblance of a coalition during the height of the César Chávez movement.

CARR: How so?

DYMALLY: It was Alatorre, who was always pro-black. It was Art Torres, whose attitude was also pro-black. Remember, there was a division among blacks and Hispanics on the question of bilingual education.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: Some black teachers opposed it. But I was there, and so was Gus Hawkins and César Chávez and Richard and Art. . . . [We] were very much for the coalition. But it never really got off as a

group thing. It was based on some committed individuals. I developed good friendships, one of whom was a young teacher by the name of Ralph Poblano. Ralph ran for the Los Angeles [City] Board of Education. I met him through the [John F.] Kennedy campaign. When I ran for the assembly, he was the first one who suggested I send a Hispanic letter in the Florence district [of Los Angeles]. He and I became friends. He sought to run for the city board of education. I supported him over a black candidate, Reverend Jim Jones of the Presbyterian Church on Jefferson Boulevard. All hell broke loose. I was censured by the Black Political Action Committee in San Diego. I understand there were seven members. The chairman of the committee was Tom Bradley. I don't know how he permitted that to happen.

CARR: So basically you were censured by a committee that was headed up by Bradley.

DYMALLY: I understand to get the fourth vote they pulled a student in from the hallway to come in and vote, 4 to 3. I understand Tom voted with me; he was in the three, but I know that he was chairman of the committee. But in the long run it helped me with the Hispanic community. When I got ready to

run for lieutenant governor, they all knew that I had stuck my neck out for Ralph Poblano. So it didn't hurt me at all. The Democratic party came out in support of me, condemned the action on the part of the committee.

CARR: To what degree do you think the--at the time-- very strong and building black-Jewish coalition impeded the development of a second powerful coalition between blacks and Chicanos?

DYMALLY: I don't think the Jewish connection impeded that. In fact, the Jews were very, very helpful in Bradley's and Yvonne [Brathwaite Burke]'s elections. They were the driving forces behind those two, especially Bradley. Bradley was immensely popular with the Jewish community.

CARR: But I mean in terms of. . . . Was there ever an issue of a battle for resources between blacks and Chicanos that prevented any kind of real coalition building and unity?

DYMALLY: Well, not in politics, but [in] the poverty program. There was a big, big clash between blacks and Chicanos. It eventually led to the death of the poverty agency in Los Angeles.

CARR: Could you explain that to me?

DYMALLY: The program was headed by a Hispanic called

[Rudolph] Maldolano. There was constant bickering between the two groups about who's getting the biggest piece of the pie. It became a crabs-in-the-barrel situation. I wasn't involved in that. I was on the outside.

But the Jewish community did not in any way impede the progress. Indeed, the forerunner to the César Chávez movement was the Jewish Labor Committee, which was run by Max Mont. They were very much involved in farmworkers' issues, and, indeed, worked out of my office in Sacramento before César emerged.

CARR: Now, you also became very involved in some of the farmworkers' issues on a legislative level in terms of trying to get legislation passed regarding education for farmworker children, and so on and so forth. Could you tell me about that?

DYMALLY: [Laughter] I was a prolific bill introducer. I had a young intern who came to me. . . . I did not know that at the time he was head of the student body at UCLA and was a Republican. I didn't know that.

CARR: Who was that?

DYMALLY: God, I've forgotten his name. I sent him into

the fields to look at the farmworkers, and he saw where they were. There were no sanitary conditions there, and he wrote a report. It kind of shook him up as a young, white, middle-class, Republican conservative. He finally worked in the White House and dated [Richard M.] Nixon's daughter. I'll get his name for you before we finish this. Then I had Dan Visnich, who was a go-getter. He was a Ford intern with the Committee on Industrial Relations, and he was pursuing that matter, too. At the time [of] my second term I became chairman of the Labor Committee.

CARR: This wasn't Alan Rosen, was it?

DYMALLY: Alan came in during reapportionment in 1971. Alan and Dan Visnich became very, very dear friends. They still are. Dan was in the state capitol; he's retired now.

CARR: What was some of the legislation dealing with farmworker issues that you felt particularly proud of?

DYMALLY: Well, collective bargaining. It never got through until Jerry Brown became president. That was one issue.

CARR: You mean governor?

DYMALLY Did I say president? [Laughter] He wished. Until he became governor. Howard Berman carried that legislation. When Howard got ready to run for speaker, César. . . .

[Interruption]

[End Tape 5, Side A]

[Begin Tape 5, Side B]

DYMALLY: César, of course, supported Berman. You know, he'd call me about Art Torres--he was close. Art and Richard supported Willie Brown. César was grateful to Berman, because Berman--with Jerry Brown's help--introduced the Farm Labor Relations Act and created the Farm Labor Relations Board.

CARR: Now, at the time, there was a tremendous amount of hope that the Farm Labor Relations Act and the subsequent board would really have an effect in getting a lot of agricultural companies or bosses to comply. It never happened.

DYMALLY: Well, it took a setback with [Governor George] Deukmejian. That's when it started going downhill. Yeah. Under Jerry Brown they did some good things. You know, for a commission to succeed it must have executive support. When Jerry Brown left the capitol, that faded.

CARR: Let's go back just a bit. Let's talk about the

Early Childhood Education Act and what that comprised.

DYMALLY: Well, a commission was set up to study early childhood education. Wilson Riles promised that I would carry that legislation. When the bill was introduced they gave it to [Assemblyman Kenneth] Ken Cory of Orange County, and they gave me the trailer bill.

CARR: Which was. . . .

DYMALLY: The trailer bill is a little minor bill that follows the major bill. Childhood education was a no-no in Orange County, and Ken Cory backed off.

CARR: Why was that?

DYMALLY: Well, the conservatives in Orange County felt that early childhood education then--as I think they still do now--was a matter for parents, and the state shouldn't get involved in that. Remember, at that time the [John] Birch Society was very strong in Orange County. So Ken Cory. . . . This lobbyist for Wilson, instead of giving me the bill, she gave it to Ken Cory. It was too hot for Ken and I got the bill. He gave it to me.

CARR: What was the intention of the Early Childhood

Education [Act] in terms of your involvement with it? What did you want to get out of it?

DYMALLY: You've got to keep in mind I was a teacher, OK? I was concerned about anything to improve education. That was my major thrust of the Childhood Education Act, the Child Abuse Prevention Act, the Dymally-Sieroty Child Care Center Construction Act. It was Wilson Riles's big piece of legislation. That was his big thing.

CARR: Up until then, what prevented the legislature from getting involved and coming up with a very significant package dealing with early childhood education?

DYMALLY: Lack of leadership.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: Uh-huh. People weren't focusing on that so much. They were focusing on classroom size, breaking up large classes. No. At one time there was a movement on mergers of small districts into larger districts. In fact, there was an incentive one time. Then that switched around, and [they were] breaking up. There was a Stanford Research Institute study that said smaller districts are more efficient. That trend

turned around.

CARR: How did it help your constituents?

DYMALLY: That's a very, very significant question. I think it's going to take a little time for me to answer that. The problem with legislation, it does not have any visible effect on poor constituents, certainly not on mine. Most legislation affects middle-class people.

CARR: But you must have supported it because you thought it might have had some [impact], eventually.

DYMALLY: Oh absolutely, absolutely. But the fact is, legislation on the whole had very little effect on the ghetto poor because you still had a serious problem of family dysfunction, unemployment. We weren't addressing the cause of the illness; we were addressing the illness. So very often these pieces of legislation really never affected the poor, even though it was designed for them. So it was well-intended, but I don't know that it had any major impact.

CARR: You sound disillusioned a bit when you say something like that.

DYMALLY: Yeah, yeah. Because you continue to see public education becoming worse. The fact of the matter

is, that was about the peak. After that, we found public confidence in the educational system being eroded, tax measures being defeated on the school level. Some senior citizens were especially selfish. They were saying, "I don't have any children in school. Why am I paying taxes for. . . ." The public was giving them a subsidy in their Social Security. I might add that most senior citizens think that Social Security is the money that they paid in. They only pay a little part of it.

CARR: Right. But didn't it also have to do with the weakening of the Democratic party on a state level, as well as the eventual election of Reagan?

DYMALLY: Reagan, the Proposition 13¹ trend. They had something called the tax override in the school districts where they could add a penny or so for a particular program. That was killed with Prop. 13. Prop. 13 had a disastrous effect on the school districts, especially in capital outlay. Now they can't even get money to fix the roofs

1. Proposition 13 (June 1978), tax limitation.

that are leaking.

CARR: Well, let's go back to your district. I still have trouble really believing that the construction of new child care centers and a meals program for young children really didn't help even those poor and dysfunctional families, as you put it.

DYMALLY: The Child Care Construction Act helped some families, not all. First, the legislature resisted the development of child care centers because the senate was rural, and they didn't need child care centers. It was strictly a San Francisco-Los Angeles issue. Senator George Miller came to me and said--I've told you this story before, it's worth repeating--"You don't come to our parties." I said, "Well, I don't like ethnic jokes." He said, "If you come, maybe they won't have ethnic jokes." So he and I became friends. I went to him and I said, "George, look. Here's the position. I can get elected to the senate by demagoguing my way through the ballot box. Or I can go home and say the senate has been helpful." And he said, "What can we do to help you?" Well, he was chairman of the Finance Committee. That's where the bill was

always killed, and through him I was able to get the bill out.

CARR: Let's stay within your district one more time. Now, the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company was located in your district at the time?

DYMALLY: Yeah, uh-huh.

CARR: That was a major employer, wasn't it?

DYMALLY: Yes, indeed.

CARR: Do you recall about how many . . .

DYMALLY: I don't recall, but there was also, right on the border of the district, Chrysler [Corporation], General Motors [Corporation]--in South Gate--and then Ford [Motor Company], later on in Pico Rivera. So there were a lot of manufacturers. There was United States Steel [Corporation]--in Maywood. They all disappeared.

CARR: Yeah, that's what I wanted to talk to you about because . . .

DYMALLY: Don't forget the aircraft industry. United Auto Workers was very big.

CARR: So with the disappearance of some of these major employers--in fact, the employers really--in your district, how did that . . .

DYMALLY: That's the point I was trying to make. Here you were having some very innovative approaches to

education on the one hand, with Wilson Riles at the helm. On the other hand, all the plants were closing.

CARR: Now, didn't some of the plants begin closing just before Watts? Or did most of these begin happening after Watts, to your recollection?

DYMALLY: I think . . .

CARR: There were one or two before.

DYMALLY: Before, yeah. So you had this contradiction in terms: improving education and declining employment. You still had a lot of family dysfunction, rise of welfare. . . .

CARR: With that in mind, that's why I had a lot of difficulty understanding how you really didn't see the seeds of Watts being sown.

DYMALLY: No, no, no. Nobody saw it. Anybody who tells you that, they're lying. There was no unrest. There were a few gangs, but they were not as violent as they are now with the guns. There were gangs. But the rise of the poverty programs almost eliminated some of the gangs. You had a neighborhood youth corps and a neighborhood program and lots of things going on. But back to the question which leaves you somewhat puzzled. Legislation as such did not have a great impact

on the constituents in my district. It was the unemployment situation that had the impact. The lack of adequate housing, none of which was addressed by the legislature.

CARR: But it seems from your record you did attempt to address some of, I guess, what would be called some of the more institutionalized problems that affect the area. For instance, insurance.

DYMALLY: I thought. . . . [Laughter] They're still fighting the damn thing after all these years. After thirty years, they're still fighting the insurance lobby. They can't win . . .

CARR: Let's stop at that.

DYMALLY: . . . a constitutional amendment; the will of the state. I'll tell you the one area where I saw improvement was in real estate. After the passage of the Rumford Act, Reagan became convinced . . .

CARR: Do you mean the repeal or the passage?

DYMALLY: I'm sorry, the repeal of the Rumford Act. Reagan--he campaigned on that--later became convinced that the initiative was wrong, and of course the Supreme Court voided it. The real estate community and industry market had just changed, but the rest didn't change. Nothing

else changed very dramatically. I mean, if you had money you could buy a house now. So we had reached that stage. But the nature of the work force was changing.

CARR: But wasn't there also the issue of movement from east to west within the city? That there were a lot of the people who would be considered middle-class or upper-middle-class were moving . . .

DYMALLY: All the people who were aspiring. . . . All the civil servants left and moved to the west side. All the aspiring leadership left. I don't think that was the cause of the Watts riots. The Watts riots was a phenomenon that no one ever anticipated. No one knew that anger, that unhappiness was there.

CARR: But even if you're still looking at it in retrospect, isn't it still viable to say, "Look. Here we had a group of things coming together to cause this kind of explosion, this unrest"? Wouldn't that be a significant way of at least trying to make sense out of a very, very disturbing occurrence?

DYMALLY: Well, after the Watts riots, [Lyndon B.] Johnson-- to his credit--really began addressing the question of urban poverty. The Watts riots

brought attention to this rise of urban poverty, and he attempted to address it. Unfortunately, the conservatives spent a lifetime killing it, which they successfully did.

CARR: Now, the insurance thing I think is significant in the sense that insurance. . . . While many people don't think about it, the whole issue of having good insurance, fighting against redlining . . .

DYMALLY: It was discrimination. If you lived on the east side and you had a good driving record, it didn't matter. You know, you still had to pay double premiums. Yes, there was redlining.

CARR: What about business insurance as well?

DYMALLY: I don't know about the business insurance, because most of the businesses owned by blacks were small businesses, and I don't think they had insurance.

CARR: Really. So the redlining you were dealing with in terms of the California Fair Plan. . . .

DYMALLY: Housing and. . . . You know, I almost forgot the California Fair Plan.

CARR: Yeah. Which still exists.

DYMALLY: It's still in existence. So the discrimination in the housing industry, the Fair Plan was

designed to address that. But it still exists, unfortunately. Yeah, it still exists.

CARR: How did your support of the Fair Plan come about?

DYMALLY: It's been so long. This is one that I forgot. I was there, you know, just whaling away at just about every conceivable issue. I really thought that you could solve the race problems through legislation. So whenever the issue arose, I figured if nothing else it focused attention on the issue. OK? So it was an educational process. Even though the legislation may have failed, I figured at least the public becomes aware of this. And some of it eventually passed. A good example was collective bargaining. The CTA [California Teachers Association] and the CSEA [Civil Service Employees Association] used to despise me for introducing this piece of legislation--collective bargaining. This was unprofessional. Today, that's it now.

CARR: Do you recall who [were] some of your allies or advisers on the whole Fair Plan and the insurance issue?

DYMALLY: Well, I was not the lead author, you know. I raised the issue. Subsequently, I think Speaker Bob Moretti must have been the one who authored

it. See, a lot of these issues that I raised, other people introduced legislation and got it passed. You can see that in certain instances. You figure you can't get it passed; let somebody else carry it.

CARR: Let's talk about another issue that becomes a significant trend throughout your career starting in the assembly, moving to the senate, going on when you were lieutenant governor. This is the issue of prisoner advocacy.

DYMALLY: Oh. [Laughter] Oh my God. Why did I get into that stuff? But I'll tell you something, I became so turned off. Two of the greatest advocates for prison reform were shot by prisoners whom they attempted to help.

CARR: Who were?

DYMALLY: Fay Stender, a famous attorney in the [San Francisco] Bay Area who was the number one person for prison reform, was shot by a prisoner. The second one--I'll get you her name eventually [Arlene Slaughter]--her daughter was married to the head of the Black Panthers.

CARR: Huey [P.] Newton?

DYMALLY: Yes, Huey Newton. She was shot by a prisoner. They were both white, and that turned me off.

But you know, I got deeply involved in prison reform because at the time that was possible.

CARR: Why? What do you mean by that?

DYMALLY: Crime was not so prevalent. See, the prison reform movement began fading away with the rise of crime. It was no longer popular to be an advocate for prison reform.

CARR: Was there ever a time when it was popular?

DYMALLY: It wasn't as unpopular, let's put it that way. It was never popular, but then it became terribly unpopular. By that time I was in the lieutenant governor's office.

CARR: I mean, I've read a letter, it was right after you were elected. I think it was one of the many prisoner advocacy groups--"concerned prisoners of" some prison. I think it might have been one up north. Maybe it was Vacaville [California] or something like that. Writing you a letter, congratulating you on being elected as lieutenant governor, and thanking you for all the help you had given them over the years.

DYMALLY: Right, because I am the one who got [R.K.] Procunier, the head of prisons, to give Eldridge Cleaver permission to start up the first Negro history club at Soledad [State Prison].

CARR: Speaking of Soledad . . .

DYMALLY: I visited all the prisons in California.

CARR: What were those experiences like? I mean, what moved you in those experiences? What kept you being involved?

DYMALLY: I hate to admit this, but [Laughter] I kept wondering why such good-looking, handsome, intelligent men were in prison. To this day I cannot figure it out, why very intelligent people resort to crime to solve problems. That intrigued the hell out of me. These prisoners were some very intelligent young men; very good-looking, handsome, African American men. Not just in the context of African American, but just handsome men. I'm saying, "Oh, handsome people do commit crimes too, don't they?" So that was a kind of cultural shock for me. It wasn't a missing-tooth type of person, you know? Very articulate people, many of whom finally joined the Nation of Islam and are today leaders in their community. What drove them to crime I do not know. But I was intrigued with this and thought that I could bring about some [Laughter] reform. How naive was I. But the other thing is that they didn't have an advocate. Look, there's

no votes in advocating prison reform.

CARR: That brings me to my other question. I'm playing devil's advocate now, and I'm coming along saying, well, Assemblyman Dymally . . .

DYMALLY: I can almost anticipate your question. I could give you the answer before you ask it.

CARR: . . . these people aren't your constituents.

DYMALLY: Wait, wait. Wait a minute.

CARR: They don't vote for you.

DYMALLY: Let me answer the question before you even ask it.

CARR: I mean, why did you bother?

DYMALLY: I had the luxury of representing a strong black district that supported me and understood what I was doing. Many of the mothers thanked me for helping their sons. They saw me as the one person who was unafraid. I was young and daring. I suspect I probably wouldn't do it now. So I was the advocate there. I had some measure of satisfaction that I was helping mothers whose sons were in prison.

CARR: We were on the issue of Soledad. You were very involved in the whole Soledad Brothers . . .

DYMALLY: Yeah. [Laughter] Karate Jackson mentioned me in his book as the "establishment senator" who came

to visit him. I'm the one who discovered him in chains around his waist, his hands, and his foot.

CARR: What were some of your successes?

DYMALLY: Well, I got the Negro history club. [Laughter]

CARR: The Negro history club.

DYMALLY: I got some people out on probation. A lot of mothers I meet now say, "You helped my son." Sometimes a brother tells me, "You visited me when I was up in the joint. I thank you." I answered all their letters. But there were no votes there.

CARR: Now, did you have someone. . . . Again, having looked at your papers, I'm just astounded by the level of correspondence your office carried on with people who were . . .

DYMALLY: In prison.

CARR: . . . non-voters. [Laughter]

DYMALLY: [Laughter] One assemblyman, [John F.] Dunlap. . . . What's the wine county? Napa . . .

CARR: Napa Valley.

DYMALLY: Napa County, had joined me. Now, the prison guards were so unhappy with me that one time I introduced legislation to give them a pay raise and they opposed it [Laughter], because they didn't like my position on prison reform.

CARR: Why were they unhappy with you?

DYMALLY: Because I was advocating prison rights, you know.

CARR: Where did you stand on the death penalty?

DYMALLY: Well, I was always opposed to the death penalty, even to this day. That was Deukmejian's one and only bill. He introduced that bill every year from the day he got elected until it finally passed.

CARR: Now, speaking of prisons, let's step back just a bit and talk about some of the historical things going on at the time. Toward the end, you had just been elected to the senate, two things happened: you have the assassination of Bobby Kennedy, and you have the assassination of Martin Luther King.

DYMALLY: I am the last person in California to greet him at the airport and drive him from LAX [Los Angeles International Airport] to Orange County for a CDC conference.

CARR: Him? Bobby Kennedy?

DYMALLY: No, Dr. King.

CARR: Dr. King.

DYMALLY: Bobby Kennedy. . . . I headed the meeting with Karenga, Dr. Al Cannon, who met with him at the hotel, the day before his assassination.

CARR: This was the Ambassador Hotel?

DYMALLY: Yes, just, I think, the day before the assassination, anticipating his victory. We were preparing to help him beyond that. I remember him saying, "Well, you know, when I was a manager I had some say over the campaign, but as a candidate, other people are running my campaign, and often I don't have a lot of say in how the operation is run." Because we were complaining there wasn't enough black involvement, and that angered my friend, Jesse Unruh, that we were going around him. You know, if I'm running a campaign and you come and complain to the candidate, it's a reflection of me as a campaign manager.

CARR: Yeah. What significance did the assassination of Kennedy have on the party in the state? The party . . .

DYMALLY: Oh, it changed the party politics. Before you ask the question I can answer it. It changed the nature of party politics because it was us versus them.

CARR: What do you mean us versus them?

DYMALLY: If you were not with the Kennedy movement, you were kind of outcast. I ended up with Humphrey.

I recall in Miami that my wife went to sit in the California delegation--there were some empty chairs--and they asked her to leave because I was seen as a Humphrey person, not a [George S.] McGovern person. Oh yes, the party was divided: the Vietnam War, the Kennedy assassination. That was the McGovern-Humphrey contest.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: Humphrey was in Chicago where they had the big Vietnam demonstration.

CARR: Right, 1968, Chicago. Were you involved in the Chicago [Democratic National] Convention on any level?

DYMALLY: Yeah. I had to travel there by myself [Laughter], because I was a Humphrey delegate, a Humphrey supporter.

CARR: Really? And you were there during the demonstrations?

DYMALLY: Yeah, but I kind of stayed in a different hotel. I was not with the delegation.

CARR: Again, going back to . . .

DYMALLY: See, understand this: the people who were supporting Kennedy did not switch over to Humphrey. They were still grieving and angry. So all that anger spilled over on Humphrey.

CARR: Where did Unruh fall in this picture in terms . . .

DYMALLY: Oh, Unruh was strongly pro-Kennedy. Oh yeah. He was very close to the Kennedys. So close, it is rumored that after I got elected, it was discovered that I wasn't a citizen, and Unruh called Bobby Kennedy, and Bobby Kennedy made me a citizen. [Laughter]

CARR: Yeah. Now, at the same time, it was also rumored that Unruh's political fortunes began to fall very quickly with the assassination of Bobby Kennedy, because supposedly he was going to get a plum position if Kennedy had been elected.

DYMALLY: That's right. That's true, yes. During the '62 campaign for the new congressional seats, a CDC liberal from the west side, Jerry Patch--I almost forgot his name--came to the southwest part of the city to run against Charlie Wilson, and he issued a statement in which he implied that the Kennedys were supporting him. Jesse Unruh got the White House to change that in support of Charlie Wilson. He was very close with the Kennedys. They liked him very much. They liked his toughness.

CARR: So clearly, there was a time--not to second-guess history, if you will--that Unruh's whole

political career might have been very different,
had . . .

DYMALLY: Yes. May I take a break?

CARR Sure.

[End Tape 5, Side B]

[Session 5, April 5, 1997]

[Begin Tape 6, Side A]

CARR: Good morning, Congressman Dymally. What I wanted to review today--or at least start out with--was the primary and general election of 1966. First, I'd like to take a look at the primary from June 7, 1966, and some of the gentlemen you ran against for senate. Could you tell me what your recollections of that campaign are?

DYMALLY: But first, before we talk about the primary we have to talk about how did I get into the primary.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: There was the one man, one vote, which [was] mandated by the [United State] Supreme Court, that all districts must be equal, plus or minus 1 percent. Los Angeles County only had one senator. Most of the senators came from what were known as the cow counties. So the senate, after much agonizing, was forced--and never really conceded--to reapportion its districts on

businessman, very active in the club movement, in

civil rights movement. He was a successful

Very good. As I said, he was very active in the

class affiliations within the black community?

How would you describe Hollier in terms of his

Unruh.

active in the club movement, and anti-Jesse

very popular figure. He was a builder, very

a strong opposition to me. Warren Hollier was a

rights movement and the CDC Democrats--would make

Hollier--who was very popular with the civil

weak on the west side, and therefore, Warren [A.]

[Boulevard]. It was rumored then that I was very

then up Wilshire [Boulevard] to about La Brea

shaped, from 103rd Street down to 6th Street and

However, they did draw the lines which were L-

move, so they might as well not worry about that.

no problem. Wherever they draw the lines, I will

Oh, in the hallways. You know. So I said fine,

where did those rumors come from?

gerrymander me out of the district.

my office--that the senate was trying to

Congress of Racial Equality--they were camped at

were rumors, because of my activity with the

the basis of that Supreme Court decision. There

DYMALLY:

CARR:

DYMALLY:

CARR:

the CDC. He was a good candidate.

CARR: Right. Now, was he a Bradley ally?

DYMALLY: Yes, very much so. He and Bradley were very close. In fact, he was appointed to the Public Works Commission by Bradley.

CARR: So you have decided you're running. Basically, the strongest competition you have is Hollier.

DYMALLY: Don't forget, Dr. Chris Taylor was a doctor who headed UCRC--United Civil Rights Committee--which was an amalgamation of all the civil rights groups. He was chairman of that committee, and he was based in Watts. He was thought to be a serious candidate, too.

CARR: Now, was he an ally or an enemy?

DYMALLY: No, he was an adversary.

CARR: Adversary.

DYMALLY: One time he was conducting a meeting and somebody told him, "Hey, Dymally's coming to the meeting" at the United Auto Workers on 85th [Street] and San Pedro [Street], and they closed the door. It wasn't me; it was somebody I sent to represent me.

CARR: Why was he such a foe?

DYMALLY: Well, at the time it was, in the middle-class black community, very popular to be anti-

establishment. That made you a liberal, anti-machine politics, and I was aligned with Unruh.

CARR: So that's pretty much it.

DYMALLY: He was deeply involved in the civil rights movement. He was one of those people who could afford the luxury of volunteer civil rights activity, because he was a very successful dentist in Watts.

CARR: I suppose Hollier as well could afford that luxury.

DYMALLY: Yes. Hollier was doing very well too, yes.

CARR: Speaking on that issue, was there a certain kind of. . . . Did certain people look down on you as, quote, unquote, "a budding career politician" if you will? In the sense that . . .

DYMALLY: Well, I was never. . . . The demagoguery about me wasn't very, very visible. It was very private. It never became public, such as "Unruh's boy" or "Unruh's man." That never surfaced publicly, just privately.

CARR: We were talking about who ran your campaign in 1966.

DYMALLY: Well, I hate to admit this, but I've always been involved in running my own campaigns, which is a terrible thing to do. Our slogan was, "He works

harder," taken from the Avis [Rent-a-Car]. . . .
That was the Avis slogan. Avis automobile.
Anyhow, our slogan was "He works harder." We
took a picture in front of Wrigley Field, walking
with my jacket on my shoulder. We had that
posted all over. They did the usual mailing, and
the tabloid.

CARR: Now, from your first campaign for assembly to
this point in 1966, was there any dramatic change
in terms of raising money or how much money one
needed to raise in terms of running a campaign?

DYMALLY: Oh, that was never a problem.

CARR: Why not?

DYMALLY: Money was not a problem because the amount was
small, and Jesse Unruh was always there to help
you out.

CARR: I've read that William Burke or Bill Burke was
your campaign manager in 1966. How did that come
about?

DYMALLY: Bill was introduced to me by a young woman in
Sacramento after he got out of the air force. I
introduced him to Jesse Unruh, and Jesse hired
him to run a newly developed radio and television
office. So he had that. There was a close
relationship. We had birthday parties together,

etc. He came down here and he went to work for [Los Angeles City Councilman William] Billy Mills.

CARR: Bill Mills in city hall?

DYMALLY: He left that and was involved in a medical clinic, then opened up the wine company.

CARR: It was Batik, was it?

DYMALLY: Batik Wine [and Spirits Company]. It got me in a lot of trouble.

CARR: Yeah. We will be getting to the whole Batik Wine issue a bit later. What kind of person was Burke? What was it that you . . .

DYMALLY: Burke was very gregarious. You know who he is?

CARR: Yes, I know who he is. He married Yvonne Brathwaite, and he also runs the [Los Angeles] Marathon now.

DYMALLY: That's correct. A very gregarious person, you know. Full of laughter.

CARR: He never actually became a politician in terms of running for office.

DYMALLY: No. That never was his interest.

CARR: What were his interests?

DYMALLY: His interest was money. Securing a financial base for himself.

CARR: Yeah. But yet he's always kept very close

ties to . . .

DYMALLY: The politicians. Yes indeed, because everything he did had a political orientation to it or needed the support of politicians.

CARR: How did he end up working for Mills's office from Sacramento?

DYMALLY: Well, again, we supported Billy Mills for city council. Jesse Unruh and our group supported Billy Mills. Willard Murray was involved in the campaign at the time, too. Willard ended up working for Billy Mills, too.

CARR: Yeah. So he was like an office adviser or something like that?

DYMALLY: Who?

CARR: Burke.

DYMALLY: Burke. He was kind of a man-about-town, so to speak, yeah.

CARR: What did he bring to managing your campaign that helped you?

DYMALLY: Well, not a lot, really. I mean, he was there to do the necessary things to help the support system. I don't mean to put him down or anything like that, but if I had somebody else as manager I think I would have won also, because I was usually involved in the day-to-day operations of

the campaign.

CARR: Would you have called yourself a micromanager in that way?

DYMALLY: Yeah, very much so. All of my campaigns.

CARR: Yeah. Why did you feel you needed to be so involved in your campaign?

DYMALLY: Oh, I just loved it. I just loved running campaigns. It has nothing to do with other people's ability. It just has to do with my love.

CARR: Your love for the process.

DYMALLY: Yeah. Putting the literature together and the tabloid and all that.

CARR: Besides coming up with the poster, besides dealing with getting some kind of base--which you said you already had from Unruh--did you have any other kind of overall strategy at the time?

DYMALLY: Well, the strategy preceded the election because of my militancy in the civil rights movement. So I was viewed as a natural. The people on the east side--we were worried about the west side because that's where all the civil rights people lived. But it turned out that we did very well there. In fact, that's what caused me to hire Julian Dixon to work for me, because there was a

feeling that I wasn't doing that well on the west side.

CARR: Right. So you hired Dixon to . . .

DYMALLY: All of my opposition came from the west side.

CARR: Aside from Unruh, were there any other major financial backers?

DYMALLY: The industry. The billboard people gave billboards. The liquor industry people, horse racing. . . . You know, the regular industry people.

CARR: Now, the liquor industry, which I think is going to work out to be a theme when we get to the Batik thing a little later . . .

DYMALLY: No connection, by the way.

CARR: No connection. Were you ever criticized for taking money from the liquor industry, especially since there was a certain faction within that district that saw liquor as being a major problem?

DYMALLY: That criticism and that critique really came after Watergate.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: Yeah. Before Watergate, that was not an issue.

CARR: Why?

DYMALLY: Well, the new political ethic started with

Watergate. Jerry Brown, when he ran in '74, supported that proposition on the ballot.

CARR: Which one was that?

DYMALLY: The one that created the [California] Fair Political Practices Commission . . .

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: . . . and the limits on lobbying and stuff like that.¹ But before that, that wasn't an issue.

CARR: For you personally, it wasn't an ethical issue?

DYMALLY: No, it wasn't, because Jesse Unruh said a good politician is one who can take a lobbyist's money and vote against him. So I never felt any attachment to any industry, because I voted very liberally. But you've got to understand, in those days the lobbyists took the position that if they don't get you today, they'll get you tomorrow.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: So they didn't expect a hundred percent response from you, but they knew there was always tomorrow. Only amateurs get mad with a legislator for not voting with them. A pro says,

1. Proposition 9 (June 1974), Political Reform Act.

"Well, maybe the next time."

CARR: Were there ever any times in which you were approached by the liquor lobby, for instance, on issues that you agreed or disagreed with?

DYMALLY: No. They were very friendly. They were very soft sell and very indirect. What they did, they sponsored a series of dinners. They'd never hard sell you. They were always around if you needed some help.

CARR: When you say they were indirect, how would they be indirect if they approached you on an issue that they really cared about?

DYMALLY: Somebody would sponsor a dinner. Most of the dinners were sponsored by Assemblyman John [T.] Knox, who was a wine connoisseur, and they would come there and chitchat and be friendly, and [tell] jokes. In those days you could go in a restaurant and sign a lobbyist's name. You could entertain your guests, schoolchildren who came from the district, and they'd pick up the tab.

CARR: And there was no problem with that?

DYMALLY: No. Now that's a different story.

CARR: Besides Burke, do you recall anyone else who was very involved in that campaign?

DYMALLY: Jim Gibson, who now works for Supervisor Burke.

He had the Wall Street Democratic Club.

CARR: What was the difference, in your opinion and through experience, between the senate and the assembly?

DYMALLY: Oh, a world of difference.

[Interruption]

In the assembly, even though I was close to Jesse Unruh, I wasn't part of his inner circle. I don't think it had anything to do with race. I just didn't fit in with those guys. They were a group of guys who were very gregarious, believed in a lot of jokes--I don't like ethnic jokes--and they drank.

CARR: But yet, you say it didn't have anything to do with race.

DYMALLY: No, it had to do with personality. I mean, I just didn't fit in. I was a freshman, and some of those guys had been there before me, and they were buddy-buddy with Jesse. I'm not too good at kissing butts, so I wasn't part of the inner circle. When I went to the senate, I became part of the leadership, and that was the difference. I was chairman of the Democratic Caucus, chairman of the Reapportionment Committee. At one time I had more staff than Speaker Moretti.

CARR: How many people were on your staff at that point?

DYMALLY: Oh boy. I had a full committee, I had the caucus, I had two or three subcommittees.

CARR: So for you, the difference was . . .

DYMALLY: Well, the other thing is, I found a sense of political equality when I stepped on the senate floor, because I was one of forty instead of one of eighty.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: And I was beginning to feel the strength of my district behind me.

CARR: In what way?

DYMALLY: Well, the senate recognized, during reapportionment, that I had a district that could afford to draw carved lines without being hurt personally. Because we had to eliminate some districts in the north, and bring those districts in the south. One of the things I did was to bring an Hispanic district in the south and eliminate a white [senator].

CARR: Which one was that?

DYMALLY: [State Senator Lawrence E.] Larry Walsh. We eliminated Larry Walsh.

CARR: Who did that bring to the senate?

DYMALLY: I forgot. A guy who was an administrative

assistant--[Alex P.] Garcia. He was administrative assistant to Congressman Ed Roybal.

[Interruption]

CARR: So you were saying you ended up bringing an Hispanic senate district.

DYMALLY: Yeah. And we created another district--I forgot the incumbent's name--which made it possible for Nate Holden to run for the senate. So we ended up with two blacks, Bill Greene and Nate Holden.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: [State Senator James Q.] Wedworth. He was the mayor of Hawthorne.

CARR: Now, how did you get to know Nate Holden?

DYMALLY: Nate was very active in the Democratic movement. He ran for just about every office in town, so you couldn't miss him.

CARR: Isn't that kind of an inside joke with everyone, that Nate--he's always running for something?

DYMALLY: Yes. He became chairman of the California Democratic Council. He ran for just about everything. He beat us in the senate race because at the time we came out in support of Gray Davis for treasurer. Then Jesse Unruh, having lost for governor, decided next time to

run for treasurer, and we had already committed to Gray Davis. Nate Holden goes to Jesse Unruh and says, "You know, those guys are not supporting you. I'll support you on my slate." And he said, "Yeah, they're going to put out a sample ballot." This was our strength, the sample ballot. We invented the sample ballot in '62. And Nate put out a sample ballot. On the other hand. . . . Gosh, he's got the restaurant on Santa Barbara Boulevard.

CARR: [Inaudible]?

DYMALLY: No, on Santa Barbara, I mean King Boulevard. [Frank] Holoman. Holoman was in the assembly. Willard Murray was running his election. The United Auto Workers union was going to give him \$5,000. That \$5,000 was going to go toward the mailing for the sample ballot. Holoman took the money and bought billboards, something that was a no-no with us. We believed billboards were a waste of money. He bought billboards, and the sample ballots got stuck in a warehouse. They were never mailed, and Nate Holden beat us.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: You hear Frank Holoman tell the story, it's different, OK? But that's the facts.

CARR: That's what really happened.

DYMALLY: Yeah.

CARR: What was your involvement in Unruh's gubernatorial campaign?

DYMALLY: Well, not much. Unruh got mad with us.

CARR: These are the primary results there.

DYMALLY: Bill Greene and myself, we didn't know he was running . . .

CARR: These are the results against Reagan.

DYMALLY: We started flirting with Alioto. He got a little upset with us, so we never really got into his campaign very much.

CARR: Really. From your perspective. . . . First of all we're looking at the primary; Reagan got a little less than 2 million votes, and Unruh. . . . There were about three hundred thousand votes [that] separated Unruh and Reagan in the primary in terms of total votes. What did you think the results of the election were going to be at the time? I mean, did you think Unruh had a reasonable chance to beat Reagan?

DYMALLY: Yes. For the first time, the Republicans brought a commercial advertising firm into the campaign.

CARR: That was the first time that was ever done, as far as you know?

DYMALLY: Yes. They went out to an advertising firm that sold soap and toothpaste and brought them into the campaign.

CARR: Did you realize the significance of that then, or is it just hindsight now?

DYMALLY: No. I didn't realize it until the Batik experience. We went to them for some advice on Batik. [On] one of the boards of Batik we had a product that was viewed to be a black product.

CARR: Which was?

DYMALLY: Batik wine. But we were selling it to white people. And we had white girls on the billboard selling wine in Watts and black people selling wine to white people, instead of to black people, in the Valley. They said that you've got to make up your mind whether you want to go to the African American market or the white market. You can't be both things as a small company. That is the strategy that killed us.

CARR: Why is that?

DYMALLY: Because we were trying to compete with the big boys in the white market, and you couldn't do it. We didn't concentrate on selling the product in the black community.

CARR: Are you saying that you should have focused on

selling Batik wine in the black community?

DYMALLY: Yeah, as a black product.

CARR: Would that have raised any ethical issues for you, because you had an interest in the company, right?

DYMALLY: Well, it got me into serious trouble because at least one white reporter, [Robert] Bob Fairbanks of the L.A. Times, thought it was unethical for me to be selling wine to black people. And he went after us. Now, he didn't think it was unethical to sell wine to white people, but for some reason he didn't think we should be selling wine [to black people]. In those days wine had a bad name, don't forget--Thunderbird and all that sort of stuff. Now, wine is the in thing. But in those days, people looked down [on wine]. It was all right in those days--I'll tell you how the double standard works--for rich people to drink wine, but it was a put-down for poor people to drink wine.

CARR: Right. But at the same time . . .

DYMALLY: Because you were a wino. So Fairbanks went after us, and that was probably the worst set of publicity I got, because I was directly involved. We had the representation of Gibson, Dunn, and

Crutcher . . .

CARR: This was the advertising firm?

DYMALLY: Bill Burke was in. . . . No, no, that was the law firm.

CARR: Do you recall the name of the advertising firm?

DYMALLY: No. Bill Burke, before Batik, had gotten into a medical clinic.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: And in the course of discussing the fate of Batik, there was discussion about merging Batik and the clinic . . .

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: . . . and this young lawyer--Andy was his name; I can't remember his last name--told me that the law does not permit lay people to own clinics. At his suggestion and his draft I introduced legislation. I went to the guy who was considered the authority on medical issues in the assembly, who was an optometrist, and then I went to the [California] Department of Health [Services]. So I got clearance and introduced the bill.

CARR: Was it always clear that you had an interest in Batik, and eventually you would have also an interest in the medical company?

DYMALLY: I didn't have any interest in the medical company. I had interest in Batik, not in the medical company.

CARR: OK. But the Times reported that you owned shares in the medical company.

DYMALLY: I had, I think, \$600 worth of shares. Six hundred dollars. See, Batik merged with the clinic, eventually.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: It was none of my doing. When I introduced the legislation the merger had not taken place. So somebody leaked information. It had to be somebody on the inside who leaked information to Fairbanks.

CARR: That you had this interest?

DYMALLY: Yes. Because it [was] a conflict of interest.

CARR: So you were aware that it would be perceived as a conflict of interest if it were known then?

DYMALLY: No. Let me repeat: I had no interest in the medical clinic; I had an interest in wine. I was introducing legislation for the medical clinic. The two had not yet merged, so I had no interest. But I sought an opinion from the attorney general's office and [the] Legislative Counsel's office, both of which declared I didn't have any

conflict of interest. But when I got ready to run for lieutenant governor, that same attorney general's office ruled that there was a conflict of interest.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: Then when [John] Van De Kamp became attorney general [in 1983], I went to him and pointed out the conflict in those two opinions, and they were supposed to resolve it, and I haven't heard from them to this day.

CARR: Yeah. Now, the Times reported in that issue. . . . So you went through with the legislation to help the medical company. Do you recall the name of the medical company?

DYMALLY: No. No, I didn't help the medical. . . . The Times exaggerated. The legislation was not designed to help the medical company. The legislation was designed to permit the private sector to own clinics, as a result of which a couple of black people did end up owning clinics. Because they pointed out to me that lay people, blacks in particular, could not own clinics.

CARR: Yeah. The name of the company was called Comprehensive Health Systems.

DYMALLY: Health Systems, yes. Now it turns out that all

of that stuff was moot, because a superior court in San Diego had ruled in favor of private ownership of clinics. But we didn't know about that case until much later after the controversy flared up.

CARR: So you pushed this legislation through in 1970.

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: By about '71, '72, Comprehensive Health Systems . . .

DYMALLY: And Batik merged.

CARR: And Comprehensive Health Systems was up for a \$14 million state Medi-Cal contract, and this is where the Times stepped in.

DYMALLY: Yeah, I didn't know that. I mean, I didn't have anything to do with that.

CARR: Well, according to the Times, the Times said with the \$14 million contract, although you had a small share, you stood to gain \$20,000.

DYMALLY: I think it was more than that. They claimed that . . .

CARR: I think [William] Burke stood to gain at least \$300,000.

DYMALLY: Yes. [Laughter] It turned out all I had was a \$600 investment. The reason why is, the \$600 investment was a gift to me, because to be a

board member you had to have some shares.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: The story was all wrong. By the way, I tried to give the stock away. The [California State Department of] Corporations commissioner ruled that if he gave me the opportunity to dispose of the stock, it would appear to be rendering a legislator a special favor, and he will have to do it for other people. So I was stuck there with it, and I finally gave it to the Children's [Home] Society [of California]. I just gave it to them. It turned out to be nothing.

CARR: How, in the first place, did you even get involved in a wine company with Bill Burke? Did he come to you and say, "Well, Mervyn, do you want to buy some" . . .

DYMALLY: Yeah, we were friends then, don't forget. We were very close friends, and he said he wanted me on the board. We had such supporters as Lou Rawls. We had Tank Younger, etc., etc. And he wanted me on the board, and I was flattered that they asked me. I thought it was the thing to do, because my opposition in, I think, the '66, '68 campaign claimed I never brought any business to the black community. It seemed to me to be a

natural. But you had this dual ethic working where Bob Fairbanks thought it was unethical of me to promote wine in the black community because, you know, it's all right for white people to drink wine, but not for blacks. In those days, poor people drinking wine was a no-no because you had that heavy Thunderbird and those heavy drinks.

CARR: Well, I mean clearly, too, the whole issue of alcoholism having a devastating effect on the community was . . .

DYMALLY: Yeah. But wine wasn't perceived that way in the white community. So that's a double standard. It became very complicated. Here I am, stuck with \$600 worth of stock--\$600, now. Can't get rid of it, couldn't give it away.

CARR: From your political point of view, wasn't there any point before the Times really started to investigate that you at least suspected or thought, boy, this could be trouble for me if it were presented in an investigative kind of article or something?

DYMALLY: No. Never. I never thought that. If I did, I would have gotten out of it. I never thought that they would view this as a conflict. Rather,

I thought they would view it as my trying to do something constructive.

CARR: To switch back a moment, going back to the Reagan campaign, you talked about the difference that the commercial advertising firm made in that campaign. What was it?

DYMALLY: It changed the nature of television advertising. It put glamour to it.

CARR: So what kind of advertising. . . . How was Reagan presented?

DYMALLY: As a glamorous star. People are still--I'm trying to use an appropriate word--induced by Hollywood. So he came out as a Hollywood star, and somewhat conservative. But, you know, he came out as a very pleasant person. Unruh was projected as a big, fat, machine politician. He didn't have the money or the kind of PR [public relations] that Reagan had. Reagan had a public relations firm, Spencer-Roberts [and Associates], in addition to this advertising.

CARR: Wow. So basically the nature of politics . . .

DYMALLY: Changed. There were two basic changes: running the '66 advertising, and public scrutiny over financing in '74, with the initiative.

CARR: Now, Unruh loses. At what point is it clear that

Unruh is clearly diminishing in terms of power?

DYMALLY: At that point.

CARR: Really.

DYMALLY: There was no place for him to go. When you run for governor, that's the highest office in the state. Where else do you go when you get defeated very badly? So it was perceived that Unruh was finished. What got him into this treasurer stuff I don't know, but it was one of the smartest moves he ever made, because he revolutionized the whole way that treasurers dealt with the bonding companies. He gave them some organization, and some strength, and some prestige. That's Unruh's ability.

CARR: In what way? In terms of having influenced . . .

DYMALLY: He organized a nationwide association.

CARR: In terms of an investment program on the part of the state?

DYMALLY: Yeah. He made this program here more visible, and they had to make deeper commitments to the political process. This was a plain rapport for the bonding companies. It was a big secret; nobody knew how it operated. He made it public.

CARR: Wonderful. Later you also endorsed Unruh in a mayoral race against Yorty. Why?

DYMALLY: Against Bradley, too.

CARR: Right. Why? Because Bradley was considering running, right?

DYMALLY: The Yorty thing was easy. Bradley ran at that time, and Unruh ran, right? At the same time. I endorsed Unruh for the simple reason--I caught a lot of hell for that--Unruh was my friend. Unruh helped me get elected. He helped me as a person, and I'm told he liked me, even though he couldn't control me totally. And Bradley had never done anything to enhance my political future. So I had a very tough choice to make. It was a question of making a decision based on race or one based on gratitude.

CARR: So at that point you say you caught a lot of hell for that. What, exactly, did people have to say about you really supporting Unruh instead of Bradley?

DYMALLY: Well, they saw this as an opportunity for a black man to become mayor, and here I am supporting a white person. But race was never a consideration in my politics, you know. My politics was always the politics of the person.

CARR: Did this deepen the perceived divide between you and Bradley?

DYMALLY: Yes. And it strengthened the relationship between Jesse Unruh and I, because he said, "Merv, I always knew you to be a person of integrity, but this one is really beyond the call of duty."

CARR: Beyond the friendship part, were there aspects of Unruh's background that you felt made him a much better candidate to be mayor of the city than Bradley?

DYMALLY: Absolutely. Because he had such a deep commitment to the black community. He lived in the black community. If you stick your finger in the center of Crenshaw High School, that's where Jesse Unruh lived. He had been very supportive of black candidates--Leon Ralph, Billy Mills, Bill Greene, just to name a few. And his program, the Unruh Civil Rights Act¹--he had a very progressive legislative agenda.

CARR: Tell me a bit about the Unruh Civil Rights Act in the sense that initially it didn't have his name on it, I don't think.

DYMALLY: Possibly not. But tombstoning--it's called

1. Unruh Civil Rights Act, A.B. 594, 1959 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat. 1866.

tombstoning--became very important in those years.

CARR: This is '65, I think.

DYMALLY: For instance, some bills got their name by virtue of its author without being written into the legislation, like the Rumford Fair Housing Act. In the case of Jesse Unruh I think it was tombstoning.

CARR: For him, why was it important to have his name on that piece of legislation?

DYMALLY: Because he wanted to prove that he was an economic and a civil rights liberal, even though he was a Texas boy. Jesse had, coming from poverty as he did, a great deal of compassion for the poor. That's what attracted me to him.

[Interruption]

CARR: Now Bradley wants the job as much as Unruh does. Were you on any speaking terms with Bradley at this point?

DYMALLY: Yeah. Don't forget now, when he ran in '63 and he lost against Hollingsworth I was very active in his campaign. But in those days the civil rights group, the west side group, dominated the campaign, so I had very little visibility or responsibility. But I supported him in '63.

CARR: A hypothetical question: You have the Times, which you've talked about being somewhat hostile toward you up to this point. At this point, the Times is shifting very much toward favoring Bradley in its support, seeing Bradley as a leader, if you will, of the black community in L.A. How much of your support for Unruh might well have influenced the Times animosity, if you will, toward you?

DYMALLY: You see, there was this feeling that I should have gone with a black man, period. I don't know if I had gone with Bradley if it would have changed the position of the Times against me. But the Times reporters always played up the differences with Bradley and myself, never the two white persons on the west side. That was not a problem. Whites could disagree with each other, but whenever we had a disagreement with Bradley, it was a headline. But understand this, and one must understand this very clearly: the difference with Bradley had nothing to do with issues. That must be made abundantly clear. It was always candidates. So it was not a question of Bradley was supporting this issue and I was supporting that issue, or opposed him on this

issue. It was always candidates. That was the case with Bill Greene when Bill Greene ran for the senate to replace me. They wanted to make a deal with me, and I refused to.

[End Tape 6, Side A]

[Begin Tape 6, Side B]

CARR: What exactly was the deal that the Bradley people wanted to make with you on the [Inaudible]?

DYMALLY: They called a meeting at Bill Stennis's house. I can remember at the meeting was Stan Saunders, Willie Stennis, the minister who was at Second Baptist [Church of Los Angeles] and went over to USC [University of Southern California]--I'll think of the name [Thomas Kilgore]--and Reverend Brookins . . .

CARR: H. [Hartford] H. Brookins?

DYMALLY: Yes. [David S.] Dave Cunningham, Sam. . . . Sam died. I've forgotten Sam's last name now. He was very close to Bradley. He became chairman of the California Bar Association.

CARR: Not Ruben, is it?

DYMALLY: No, he's black. I'll get you his name [Sam Williams]. He was very close to Yvonne [Brathwaite Burke]. I think Yvonne was there. Yvonne was there too. The deal was that I should

support [Kenneth] Kenny Washington for the senate. If he won . . .

CARR: Kenny Washington, the former football star?

DYMALLY: No, no. That was a big thing. We need to talk about that.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: The same name. "You support Kenny Washington." If he wins, then they have a senator. If he loses and Bill Greene wins, then they will name Bill Greene's successor. So they had a no-lose situation.

CARR: This is what they were presenting to you?

DYMALLY: Yes. What was, I think, humorous is a minister was talking about ethics [Laughter] at this meeting when they were trying to cut a deal with me.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: Now, at that meeting . . .

CARR: Were meetings like this uncommon?

DYMALLY: No, but not with me. I was never part of it. Nate Holden came in . . .

CARR: Where was this meeting held?

DYMALLY: At Bill Stennis's house in Hancock Park.

CARR: OK.

DYMALLY: Nate Holden came in and was supporting my

position--not me--until he found out that that position was my position. When he found I was the author of that position, he switched right in the middle of the meeting. Dave Cunningham was so nasty toward me that Stennis later called me and apologized, and called Dave Cunningham and told him if he ever comes to his house again and he treats a guest the way he treated me, he is going to ask him to leave.

CARR: How was he nasty toward you?

DYMALLY: Oh, I was there by myself, now. It was me against everybody. They just came down so hard on me. God, he despised me at that time. He and I are good friends now. Anyhow, I said, "No," and Yvonne, strangely enough--and I was much surprised--took the position that I did: let the people decide. She pointed out her own campaign with Billy Mills--you know, people made their decision. So she took that position, not so much in support of me but as a principled position. Other than that, I said, "No, let the people decide."

CARR: Now, Burke--Yvonne Brathwaite Burke that is . . .

DYMALLY: I don't think she was a Burke by then. No, she wasn't a Burke by then. She was a Brathwaite

still.

CARR: A Brathwaite still, because they didn't get married until '72.

DYMALLY: I thought it was a little earlier, but I don't know. Fine, OK. You are correct, she was a Burke.

CARR: Yeah. I think it was '71, '72 that they married.

DYMALLY: To the extent of our friendship, we went on their honeymoon with them, my wife and I.

CARR: Really? Where did they go?

DYMALLY: Cabo San Lucas.

CARR: Tell me a bit about her political rise, in the sense that it seems, whereas I think she practiced law with Tom Bradley for a while in the same firm . . .

DYMALLY: That did not hurt her, OK? She was in the club movement, the civil rights movement. A beautiful woman. She made good friendships on the white west side. So when she got ready to run for the assembly, there was nobody there to challenge her. She was very charming, nonconfrontational, even to this day. So she had a great deal of acceptance. She was unchallenged. Then she came to the attention of the McGovern people, made her debut in national politics in Miami, Florida, ran

for the Congress against Billy Mills. I recall during the course of reapportionment . . .

CARR: Which reapportionment was this?

DYMALLY: That affected her--[the] new congressional district. Now we're talking about '71. Phil Burton took the position that he was the master of the lines and came to me. He had Yvonne's district going from Watts through Torrance into Palos Verdes, because he wanted to move Alphonzo Bell from Palos Verdes, where he was very weak as a Republican, down to the Malibu area, where he was strong. I objected on the grounds that this would be schizophrenic to have somebody in the morning having breakfast in Watts and having lunch in Torrance and dinner in Palos Verdes. I mean, it's three different communities. So I objected to that, and I wouldn't sign the conference report, and she was very upset. The subsequent lines gave her a much better district.

CARR: Now, was Palos Verdes cut out of the setup, [in the] subsequent lines?

DYMALLY: Yes, but I held out. I was one of the first few people to hold out against Burton. He was so persuasive.

CARR: One of the things that I find interesting is that

it's not very easy to put Burke--or Burke's career if you look at it as a whole--into one political camp. You cannot quite say that she was a Bradley person or anybody else's person.

DYMALLY: That is the nature of Yvonne. Yvonne does not make enemies, does not fit into camps. She plays both sides of the field. She's nonconfrontational in her politics and in her person. So she's well liked. It takes a very unusual character to assume that role in politics. Gus Hawkins was like that too.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: Bradley was like that too. Except Bradley's opposition came through other sources, not through him.

CARR: About this time--when I say this time, I'm talking about the late sixties, early seventies--how aware were you of Jerry Brown's budding political career?

DYMALLY: Jerry ran for community college board and won. Then he ran for [California] secretary of state. At that time, he used to come to all our parties. Then he won that, and we stayed in touch with each other.

CARR: What was your perception of him as clearly a

potential politician?

DYMALLY: I did not have a negative perception of him until he began running for governor.

CARR: What was that perception when he began . . .

DYMALLY: He was very selfish. You know, self-centered.

CARR: In what way? What do you mean?

DYMALLY: Not generous in his outreach. He doesn't help anybody. His whole thing was Jerry Brown, whereas Unruh was different. Unruh tried to bring people along with him, tried to help other people. That's the major difference.

CARR: What was your relationship with Brown Jr. when he was elected to secretary of state?

DYMALLY: It was fair to good.

CARR: He was also the state treasurer at one time as well?

DYMALLY: No, that was his sister [Kathleen Brown].

CARR: OK. Sorry, that was my mistake. How would you characterize the difference between the two Browns? That is, Jerry and Pat.

DYMALLY: There were two Browns, right. There were two Browns. The first, [California] Secretary of State Brown, was charming and easy to get along with . . .

[Interruption]

He used to come over to my house because we used to have these receptions for Humphrey and McGovern, you know--Maxine [Waters] used to come over there; George Moscone, when he was thinking about running for governor. So West Twenty-third Street was a center of great activity, from Ron Karenga to McGovern to Humphrey. He was very charming and a very nice person. When he began running for governor, for whatever reason--and you have to interview him for this--he began distancing himself from me. He wasn't very helpful when I was lieutenant governor. You know, I was not warm toward Gray Davis for that reason, because Gray Davis had to be the executioner. I shouldn't blame Gray Davis, but I figure he should have stood up and said this wasn't right.

CARR: The perception is clearly that he did distance himself from you?

DYMALLY: Oh yes.

CARR: Why was that?

DYMALLY: Well, I had been subject to all of this critical press in the Times. He was Mr. Clean.

CARR: So by the time you guys both ran for your second terms, he barely won and you lost.

DYMALLY: I lost, not because of him though.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: I won not because of him, and I lost not because of him. I lost because I was targeted by the Republicans. My opposition [Mike Curb]'s father was a former FBI agent. It is rumored--and I have no proof of this--that he encouraged his colleagues to go after me. Mike Curb called me a crook. He later apologized in writing for it after the election. A week before the election, [William] Bill Stout of CBS-KNX affiliate. . . . I've got to go back: Bob Fairbanks, my L.A. Times adversary, went to an investigator in the attorney general's office and said he heard I was going to be indicted.

CARR: On what?

DYMALLY: I don't know to this day. The investigator wrote a note to his superior, [Michael] Franchetti. He put a "PS: This is only a rumor." Someone erased the "PS: This is only a rumor," and the memo was released to Mrs. Stout, who was working for my opposition. She then gave it to her husband [William J. Stout]. He said very dramatically on the broadcast, "I have read it. You have heard it. Dymally knows it." Boom. I

heard it was such a sensational bit of news that the radio stations carried it before the TV broadcasts.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: We were driving down on [Interstate] 405 going to Orange County with my son, [Kenneth] Ken Orduna-- my campaign manager--and I. I told him, "Don't spend any more money." It was all over. Because I was leading by the time at 6 percent. So a friend loaned me his plane and we went all over the state, visiting counties, having fun. I figured there was no point. . . . I knew I was going to lose after that broadcast.

CARR: Did you ever confront Stout on it?

DYMALLY: Hugh Pike, my finance chairman, was mentioned in the broadcast. He filed a suit against him. They apologized to him. It took me almost four years before CBS gave me an opportunity to respond, and they only did that when a black manager from Chicago came here, and I had filed a complaint against them. We sued Franchetti. Franchetti agreed to disclose, but the disclosure had to be put in escrow until after the election. The day after the election it was released that he was the one who released the information. Why

escrow? Because he became Deukmejian's manager, and had that information been released now, it would have had its repercussion. For the first time, the senate refused to approve him for the position of finance director. Virna [M.] Canson of the NAACP led the fight. And [State Senator David A.] Roberti got a lot of heat from the Italian community, but he was very, very strong. He gave the most eloquent speech of his life.

CARR: Yeah. Now, one of the interesting things about looking at your political career is that while, in the first place, you may have run with some opposition in, say, 1966 for senate, by the second time around you practically had no opposition at all.

DYMALLY: Yeah, '68. I think we asked somebody to run against us so we would have some opposition.

CARR: Did you learn anything from Unruh or anyone else in terms of consolidating power? Because it seems to me very clear that, not only did you have very little opposition, the actual numbers in terms of people who turned out to vote for you always increased.

DYMALLY: Not intellectually, but from a pragmatic point of view. I was very active. I mean, I articulated

some of the concerns of the working-class people. I was strong with labor, strong with the churches. I mean, I was identifiable there, and I suspect people looked at me with some different view because of my foreign background. I guess some people were saying, "Here's this guy--came from all the way, and he's representing our views, and some of these brothers here, you can't hear from them."

CARR: Going back to the Browns, could you compare and contrast Jerry and Pat?

DYMALLY: No. Please, please. No comparison. Pat was a very gregarious, very generous, very approachable man. The only difference he and I had, as I stated on an earlier tape, [was that] I was disappointed that he didn't put me on the riot commission.

CARR: And Jerry you've already commented on.

DYMALLY: Yeah.

CARR: They were two very, very different . . .

DYMALLY: Jerry wasn't helpful at all. He wasn't helpful at all.

CARR: Would you say that that's also a generational thing as well?

DYMALLY: Well, Jerry looked at me as being corrupt, and

didn't want to identify with me because he was aspiring to be president.

CARR: Uh-huh. Yeah. During this time, and we really haven't had a chance to comment on 1968. . . . [May] we talk a bit about the [Martin Luther] King assassination, as well as the Kennedy assassination?

DYMALLY: In '68, I was running for reelection. I was on my way with my fiancée Alice Gueno--not my wife yet--to the Ambassador Hotel. We stopped at the registrar's office to see how I was doing. We parked the car in front of the office, took the elevator, got upstairs to the second floor, and people were running around like if there was some kind of earthquake or bomb, hollering and crying. "What's going on here?" Kennedy had just been assassinated. So we went back to the hotel. That was the first time in my life I recall being frightened. The day before that we had met with Kennedy--Ron Karenga, Dr. Al Cannon, and a couple of others--telling him that we were being kept out of the campaign by Jesse Unruh. He said, "Well, you know, when I was campaign manager I could handle some of these complaints. But as the candidate, I don't have very much say about

my campaign." We thought that he was going to be the nominee, and we wanted to set the stage for our involvement later on in the general election.

CARR: What effect did the King assassination, King's death have?

DYMALLY: We thought the world had come to an end.

CARR: Really.

DYMALLY: I couldn't believe it, you know. Here it is, in the spring, one of your heroes is assassinated. Later on that spring, another one. Yeah, that was quite a traumatic experience. Now, I had the rare privilege of being the last person to drive Dr. King in Los Angeles. He came to a CDC meeting in Anaheim, and I picked him up at the airport. I used to drive him in the city before I became an assembly candidate. I felt, indeed, flattered that I had this opportunity to drive him to Anaheim for the CDC convention. He gave his last major speech there on Vietnam.

CARR: Speaking of Vietnam, were there any protests by your constituents concerning the overwhelming or disproportionate drafting of black men into the Vietnam War?

DYMALLY: I don't recall there were mass protests against Vietnam except in the whole context of the civil

rights movement. When these rallies were held, King would talk about it. Bill Greene, believe it or not, introduced the first resolution on Vietnam. Later on John Burton, Willie Brown, and Bill Stanton had come out against the war, and Hugh Burns, as president pro tem of the senate, looked for ways of having them impeached. Bill Greene was the first to introduce a resolution. Then I think [Assemblyman John] Vasconcellos did the other one. We were early [in] our opposition to the war, but there wasn't a groundswell of opposition, so to speak, at that time.

CARR: You based your opposition on?

DYMALLY: Oh, I had been opposed to the war. I think it was a futile effort, trying to fight. . . . It wasn't well-defined, why we were there. If you read the LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] tapes now, even he had doubts about it.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: We were fighting communism. It was kind of hard to sell to black people. You know, the unemployed opposing communism [Inaudible].

CARR: Yeah. You had a great deal of respect for LBJ.

DYMALLY: Yeah, I think he was a master. However, I think he may have stuck it to me, I don't know. I went

to a reception sponsored by him for black elected officials when he was thinking about running for reelection.

CARR: Which year was this?

DYMALLY: Well, he withdrew from the race when? In '68, right?

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: So you're talking about '67 or '68. It was sponsored by a deputy chairman of the DNC [Democratic National Committee]--Louis Martin, who just passed away recently. While there, a reporter by the name of Broder, who was the Pulitzer Prize writer for the Washington Post, selected me.

CARR: Yes, David Broder.

DYMALLY: David Broder. Why he selected me, I don't know. I criticized the war during the context of this reception for us, and I'm told LBJ hit the roof when he read about this, wondering, "Who the hell is this upstart?" I came home and one day, two men--I was at the State [Office] Building in downtown [Los Angeles], which was demolished recently--came from the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] and flashed their badge, and told me they were from the felony unit of the IRS. I

called my accountant who was in Burbank. He was white, and [he] told me, "Don't talk to them." So I had to retain counsel--Gene Wyman's law firm. I was so damn poor in those days I don't know what they were looking [for]. I was living on borrowed money. One year they got me for six dollars. Another year they got me for not paying taxes on my per diem. Another year for something, you know. But it was small change, OK. The per diem one was an outrage, because they had an unwritten agreement with the legislature that the per diem was not taxable. When I brought that to their attention, they told me if I wanted to fight it in court, go ahead. So I just paid them. I have a feeling that someone sent them after me. Usually these guys write you, telling you they want to have an audit. But these just came in, cold turkey, like that, and flashed their badges at me--"Felony."

CARR: Out of nowhere.

DYMALLY: Out of nowhere. I had nothing. You know, I was just living on my salary. I had a few pieces of slum property that I had got. Billy Mills sent a guy after the Watts riots. He just wanted to walk away from the property because the tenants

were not paying him any rent. They went on a rent strike. I picked up the property. And when they found out who I was, it became worse. So one day I said to my seatmate, Senator Al Song, "Hey Al, as a lawyer, what happens if you foreclose on a piece of property?" He said, "Nothing. It just hurts your credit, that's all." So I just gave it up. But I had nothing.

One embarrassing situation was that a friend of mine who was married loaned me some money from her credit union. She had to account for that. I had to account for it. The guy who Gene Wyman assigned to the case told me that he is a [Richard J.] Daley protégé. He said, "I'm used to Chicago politics, and you're one of the most honest politicians I've ever met. If you ever have any trouble anymore, come see me." Because he went through every detail.

CARR: Since we're on Vietnam, I'd like to touch on a few other hot-button issues as well. The death penalty: Where did you stand on the death penalty, and on what grounds?

DYMALLY: I wish I could articulate the grounds. I've always been opposed to the death penalty. I'm unable to give you the reasons for it. I'm not

intellectual about it. I just oppose the damn thing. I just don't believe in taking lives. I've stayed that way, even at times, now, [with] these senseless, senseless killings. I can see how people change their position, especially if you have one of your family shot by some of these thugs. You begin to say, "Let them go, too."

CARR: Right. But you've never necessarily opposed it on any particular religious or ethical grounds, per se?

DYMALLY: No. I must be honest with you.

CARR: In 1970, what was your opinion on school desegregation and school busing in L.A.?

DYMALLY: Well, Bill Greene and I joined up with [State] Senator John [L.] Harmer to break up the school districts.

CARR: Why?

DYMALLY: Because we were convinced from a Stanford Research Institute study that small districts were more effective, and a lot of hearings were held on that basis. So we team up with this conservative. Then we were unhappy with the Los Angeles city school system: discrimination on the administrative level, lack of progress on the part of the children. So what [State Senator

David A.] Roberti caught hell for, several years ago, we had [already] done, and I said, "David, all you should have told the opposition was, 'Dymally is the one who initiated it.'" The bill passed by one vote in the assembly. Of course, it passed the senate, and Reagan vetoed the bill. That's the only time I broke with the NAACP. Roy Wilkins came out [and] held a press conference against it.

CARR: Against the breakup?

DYMALLY: Yeah. Virna Canson, my dear friend, opposed it. But we continued to be friends, after that.

CARR: What was your stance on busing itself?

DYMALLY: I never got deeply involved in the busing issue, although I supported it politically because it was the thing to do.

CARR: You seem to have had reservations.

DYMALLY: Yes, that's correct.

CARR: What were your reservations?

DYMALLY: I believed that the neighborhood schools should have been strengthened, and the busing was not practical. It was time-consuming, it did not really solve or address the problem. The problems were economic. You needed better teachers, more dedicated teachers. Because I

- taught in the ghetto, and I saw where the possibilities were. I did not come out against it. It was not politically wise to do that then.
- CARR: Exactly. What would have happened to you, let's just say you said exactly what you have just said to me, back then?
- DYMALLY: Oh, in those days? Oh boy, murder. I'd have caught hell. I would have been out there by myself in the black community. But I never really was strong in the busing thing. I thought it was an escape hatch, really. It didn't address the real problem.
- CARR: Now, talking about busing--this is after the assassination of King--there's this perception that pretty much the civil rights movement as such was essentially dead, at least on a kind of legislative level.
- DYMALLY: Yes, it took a beating.
- CARR: Was there the perception that busing was kind of the last grandstand for the civil rights people?
- DYMALLY: Well, the busing issue was really pushed by the NAACP.
- CARR: Right. That's what I mean; the classical civil rights . . .
- DYMALLY: That was their legal case. They went to it to

the nth degree. They did not back off at all. That was their issue more than the civil rights issue. More than the civil rights movement.

CARR: Did they have a choice? I mean, this kind of thing that once the ball starts rolling, can you really . . .

DYMALLY: Well, after the desegregation victory they had in Kansas, they had no alternative but to pursue it.

CARR: Yeah, to the end. What was your allegiance with [Los Angeles City Councilman] Gilbert Lindsay?

DYMALLY: Well, when I was a young Democrat, I was told to go visit certain people. Gus Hawkins. . . . I wasn't well-known in the black community, don't forget. Gil Lindsay was one of those I went to see. He was deputy to [Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth] Kenny Hahn at the time. He came to visit the headquarters, and we developed a friendship over the years. It was a good relationship.

CARR: What kind of man was he? What kind of politician was he?

DYMALLY: Very flamboyant. Catered, in my judgment, to the downtown interests at the expense of the central section of his district. They loved him downtown. But he didn't do the kind of urban

redevelopment that's taking place now when he had the ability to do that. Most of his major concentration was downtown. He was a very flamboyant, very likable, very amusing man. And he had total disdain for the liberals, you know.

CARR: That brings up my other question, in the sense that his position, in terms of growth at any cost downtown, flew directly in the face of the west side liberals who were slow growth.

DYMALLY: That's right.

CARR: So you're telling me he almost relished his position.

DYMALLY: Oh, he loved it. He loved to beat them. He just whipped the shit out of them all the time. He did not do as much of that in his district. The reason being, I think, is that these businessmen downtown came to him. He did not initiate them.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: On the other hand, we should have had a movement within the district that came to him and said, "Gil, this is what we think you should be doing." We left that up to him. A lot of people perceived that he was the initiator of the downtown redevelopment. He was a big supporter, a backer.

CARR: A facilitator, as such. Was he . . .

DYMALLY: Very appealing in his district. Was he effective in his district? Yes.

CARR: Was he Bradley's facilitator in the sense that did he pretty much, word for word, carry out what Bradley wanted to have done downtown?

DYMALLY: Yeah. He managed to stay close to Bradley and maintain a friendship with Unruh at the same time. He didn't get in factional fights.

CARR: That's another amazing . . .

DYMALLY: Yeah. Although we viewed him as a friend in our camp, he walked both sides of the street.

CARR: But you guys had a split in 1975 or so, you and Lindsay.

DYMALLY: Yeah. [Laughter]

CARR: What brought that about?

DYMALLY: Well, Billy Mills wanted to run for supervisor. Without any planning, any discussion with his supporters, he held a press conference. We were thrust into the press conference out of our friendship with him and our loyalty to him. We came out against Kenny Hahn, thinking that a black star like Billy Mills would beat Kenny Hahn in the black community. But Kenny taught me a lesson that I never forgot. Kenny Hahn was the

consummate politician. He served the black community probably better than any other politician I know of. Why? He knew what their needs were, and he rewarded the black middle class with symbolism: the [Leroy R.] Weekes [Jr.] Building, the [H. Claude] Hudson Building, [Chester L.] Washington [Golf Course]. No one else has ever done that. He exercised power to enhance his constituents. He was the best. He beat the shit out of us. He beat Billy Mills in his own precinct, and Gil went with Kenny Hahn of course, even though he and Billy were very close. But it wasn't a split. The reason why that split didn't last--we didn't have the white liberals agitating. It was just a split among the family, unlike the split with Bradley, [when] we had those people on the west side constantly agitating.

CARR: So with the people on the west side it was very difficult to repair the breaches at different points.

DYMALLY: Yeah.

CARR: Let's go back a bit to Kenny Hahn, because he was the other person I was going to ask you about. From my perception, it seems to me that many

black politicians who've come up in South L.A. in many ways have modelled themselves--or have at least learned a great deal--from Kenneth Hahn. Is that an exaggeration?

DYMALLY: [It's true] for two reasons. One, because of his strength: his endorsement meant something. Two, the pragmatism of his politics was very effective. Kenny Hahn used the power of the supervisor's office, which was at the time very strong, for his district. There is no question about it. You want to have a rally, and you want to get a thousand people? He used the [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] General Hospital as a base for a captive audience. He brought buses in. He organized the senior citizens. [Interruption]

CARR: You were saying he organized the senior citizens.

DYMALLY: Yeah. The Watts Labor Community Action Committee. He funded that, kept that going. The King hospital really could have been named the "Kenny Hahn Hospital." What did he do? He named it the King Hospital. That's the sort of politician he was. I went to him with a suggestion that he name the King Hospital and the Drew Medical School the King-Drew Medical Center. If you go in the lobby of the King Hospital,

you'll see my name on it. That's the kind of politician Kenny Hahn was. He put a plaque there about the name of the hospital and the school, and somehow my name ended up there. He gave me credit for the name.

CARR: But clearly, without his facilitation it would not have come about.

DYMALLY: Oh, absolutely not. Now, on the other hand, I authored the legislation that made Drew funding possible. But Drew has never done anything to recognize me, as such. One of the members of the board, Caffie Greene, had, particularly at my retirement, a sort of an appreciation day. But Drew has never really done the kind of thing for me that Kenny Hahn did for his constituents.

CARR: Clearly we'll have to spend a significant session on the Drew issue and how it came about. It's that important. But as lieutenant governor, wasn't part of the fight to get an accreditation for Drew through UCLA?

DYMALLY: That became somewhat. . . . I don't think we want to do that in little pieces.

CARR: OK. We'll come back to it.

DYMALLY: Because it's a very significant and lengthy story. So why don't you hold that for later on.

CARR: Yes, that's very significant. I think at this point we can end this session here.

DYMALLY: Fine.. We'll do it next time, because it's a very glamorous little story.

[End Tape 6, Side B]

[Session 6, April 12, 1997]

[Begin Tape 7, Side A]

CARR: Good morning, Congressman Dymally.

DYMALLY: In anticipation of a couple of questions on an issue that you raised last week, let me touch on them even though you may come back--lest I forget. On the question of ethics, ethics in my judgment is like beauty: it's in the eyes of the beholder. Racist people see nothing unethical about not writing about discrimination, about ethical problems when they themselves are so unethical. So I've always had a problem with that. Besides, I did not view these matters as being unethical because I was not benefiting financially from them. And I think--and I hope that I'm right; I may be wrong--that there is a different standard of ethics in the black community than in the white community. I think the ethical standards in the white community are very hypocritical. So when you asked the question did I see an ethical conflict there

[with Batik Wine], my answer abruptly was, "No," because I never thought about it. It's not a question of having thought about it and then making a judgment that it was unethical or ethical. I never thought about it in that term. The second issue is that in retrospect, when I compare Reagan's relationship with me as a person--or as a legislator--and Jerry Brown's relationship, and when you check the record, you will see that Reagan was a pretty good governor, my criticism of him notwithstanding. And when I tell people that, they look at me with some measure of surprise.

CARR: Well, you're going to have to explain that to me.

DYMALLY: Yes, indeed. Look, when you look at the social legislation which Reagan signed . . .

CARR: Such as?

DYMALLY: I'll come to it. You go to these parties: you go to George Moscone. . . . I hope one day you'll be able to tape Willie Brown. He [Reagan] signed the legislation to create the Charles Drew Medical School, early childhood education, child growth and development, child abuse prevention, the lunch program . . .

CARR: Head Start?

- DYMALLY: . . . Head Start, the abortion bill--a 21 to 19 vote--by Tony Beilenson.
- CARR: Wasn't there also a Mexican American training program that he signed?
- DYMALLY: I can't recall.
- CARR: The free-breakfast program, the Bilingual Services Act . . .
- DYMALLY: Free-breakfast program, environmental, anti-smog laws. You begin to recognize that he wasn't all that bad.
- CARR: Did he also sign the Legal Equality for Homosexuals bill or act?
- DYMALLY: I broke the tie on that, yes. I broke the tie on that. I flew in very dramatically from Denver and helicoptered from San Francisco. In the midst of all of this clamor there were about five thousand phone calls to the office.
- CARR: As lieutenant governor you broke the tie?
- DYMALLY: Yeah. As president of the senate, technically. I appeared very dramatically and pretended I didn't know what the vote was. Well, you have to ask what is the vote, procedurally. They said 20 to 20, and I voted "aye."
- CARR: That's a situation we'll get back to later.
- DYMALLY: Yeah. So anyhow, before I forget, I wanted to

say when one looks at the record--and I'm just talking about things that I know. . . . If you check the Moscone record, and you check the Willie Brown record, you'd see that we came out like bandits. Anyhow, let's go back to your question now. But at least you have this on the record in the event that I forget.

CARR: Well, you know, with the Batik situation. . . .

DYMALLY: Let me go through the Batik thing again, because it was the beginning of a series of controversies widely publicized by the L.A. Times. Some guy in promotion got the notion of a, quote, unquote, "black wine . . ."

[Interruption]

. . . Went to Bill Burke, and Bill Burke went to some prominent athletes and entertainers and invited me to participate. Now, one of my critics in the election preceding this invitation was [Lincoln C.] "Lin" Hilburn, a columnist for the Los Angeles Sentinel who actually hated me. He had criticized me for not bringing any business in the black community. And I must confess that my legislation was directed at social justice, because I felt [in] the business community there was very little I could do as

such. So I thought this was an opportunity, and I went on the board, and each board member had to have an economic interest in Batik Wine. I had none, so they gave me \$600 of promotional stock, which was ten cents a stock. Then the wine company went under, and they began talking about merging with Comprehensive Health--no, merging with a clinic on South Figueroa Street.

CARR: Right, which was the Hope Clinic.

DYMALLY: Which later became Comprehensive. In the meantime, this young man from Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher told me about the fact that lay people cannot own clinics. He said one of these days a black person might want to own a clinic, and he wouldn't be able to do it. It was that which motivated me to introduce the clinic bill. Comprehensive didn't need that legislation because they had a doctor. It was a doctor-sponsored merger with Batik. Now, why did they go with Batik? Because Batik was now a shell. Batik then was incorporated, and you didn't have to go through all the necessary papers of incorporation. But that was a legal problem with which I had nothing to do. Well, somebody tipped off Bob Fairbanks of the L.A. Times, who hated

me.

CARR: Why do you say he hated you?

DYMALLY: Oh, he was constantly looking for critical stories about me, and always wrote critical stories about me. I remember one time Bill Greene and I were looking for a house to live in, and we got turned down a couple of times. Rather than file a complaint, we said, "The hell with it. If they didn't want us in the neighborhood, we'll not pursue it."

CARR: This is in Sacramento?

DYMALLY: Yeah, and we went and found other housing.

CARR: Where did you find housing?

DYMALLY: Not too far away.

CARR: And you feel that you were turned down purely because you were blacks.

DYMALLY: Oh yeah, there is no question about that. But look, you know, there's only so many fights you can take on. And so he wrote a very critical article. Somebody organized a letter-writing campaign and wrote us letters saying, in effect, we should have fought it. Then another time he wrote an article. . . . My wife got a job in Sacramento. I had introduced legislation, before I even met Alice, to create two alternative

schools in the two poorest districts in California. And the two poorest districts were, at the time, Enterprise, here in Los Angeles, Del Paso in Sacramento, and one in East Palo Alto--three. Enterprise came out of the mold because they merged with Compton Unified [School District]. So it was Del Paso and East Palo Alto. In the meantime, Alice and I decided to get married, and I went to Del Paso. . . . I knew the superintendent at Del Paso--he was a brother and a friend--and they had an opening there in one of these federally funded programs for a reading specialist. They hired her, and he [Fairbanks] wrote a big story about that, and also stated in the article that Alice had been responsible for my divorce. That wasn't the case. I met Alice after Amentha and I had separated. I went to [Otis] Chandler through Smith, who was on the Board of Regents [of the University of California].

CARR: Smith? Which Smith?

DYMALLY: He was subsequently appointed attorney general under [President] Reagan's administration--the first attorney general.

CARR: French Smith? William French Smith?

DYMALLY: William French Smith. I went to him and complained--he was their lawyer. He arranged for me to meet Chandler, and I said, "Look, it's bad enough this guy takes me on at every turn, but to involve my wife, to criticize my wife for shacking up with me [Laughter] before my divorce is really unfair."

CARR: What was Chandler's response?

DYMALLY: He didn't think it was fair.

CARR: Did the coverage change after that?

DYMALLY: No. [Laughter] No, it didn't change. Not a bit. So Bob was all over me. Then he is the one who went to the attorney general's office and told that investigator that he heard I was going to be indicted. He was always after my case.

CARR: Now, at this point the question that really needs to be asked is, you're the first and only black senator in the senate; did that put you under more scrutiny?

DYMALLY: Yeah, I suspect so. The only thing. . . . I wasn't very sensitive about white evaluation of my performance or with media evaluation of my performance. I was more concerned about what blacks thought. They thought very highly of me, and I was concerned about the black press, and

the black press was very supportive. So this was a white phenomenon. I represented all the blacks in the state in the senate because I was the only one. So I wasn't too sensitive about that problem because I never anticipated running for higher public office. It becomes quite different when you aspire for public office. By Chandler's own admission, they had very little circulation in the black community. He and I drifted off into other subjects, small talk, that the [Los Angeles] Herald-Examiner sports page was more popular in the black community than the L.A. Times, he told me.

CARR: So in a sense, was he admitting that the Times didn't feel any necessity to be any more sensitive about covering a black politician, simply because it didn't matter?

DYMALLY: No, he didn't say that. They were concerned about the absence, the lack of circulation in the black community. All their stories about blacks, up until then, were always negative.

CARR: When we talk about the Batik Wine and Spirits Company--the full name of the company--there was another person who was involved in Batik. His name was a Dr. Ruben.

DYMALLY: Yes. Fine. I kept forgetting the name. Dr. Ruben.

CARR: Dr. Edward H. Ruben.

DYMALLY: Edward Ruben and Bill Burke became very good friends. Subsequently, the attorney general went after Ruben. There was a 60 Minutes story on Ruben, and Ruben was exonerated of every charge put forth by the attorney general's office. He never was indicted, and I got caught up in that because of the same. . . .

CARR: Yeah. Did you get to know Ruben?

DYMALLY: Oh yeah, I got to know him very well. He is a very nice man.

CARR: So when you stepped out of Batik Wine and Comprehensive Health, Ruben essentially became the other principal partner along with Burke.

DYMALLY: Because he was the principal owner of the Health System.

CARR: Ah, I see.

DYMALLY: See, by that time Batik was just a corporate shell. I don't know if you know how this works. If you want to start up a company, you can go to Nevada or British Columbia or Utah and buy a defunct corporation that is still in existence, but had a very glamorous history, and you can buy

the corporation for a dollar or more, and then start off citing its age as an asset, and its previous assets.

CARR: So that's what was done?

DYMALLY: Not yet, because Batik had already gone through the corporations commissioner and all this other stuff.

CARR: There was some criticism leveled at Ruben during this whole situation, that essentially he was a Jewish doctor taking advantage of poor people in the black community.

DYMALLY: Well, I don't think it was a fair criticism.

CARR: I'm just repeating what was in the L.A. Times.

DYMALLY: I understand, I understand that. I'm not saying that you were criticizing him. Yeah, I've heard the criticism. But he was in the black community when white doctors didn't want to be there. At that time, Medicare and Medi-Cal and Medicaid were not fashionable. When that became fashionable what happened is large corporate entities began signing up people, and that's where the criticism and the scrutiny began. Many of the black doctors were very slow in organizing to take advantage of this new dimension, which was started by a young doctor from Stanford

[University] by the name of Earl Brian for Reagan. In fact, history has repeated itself. In this new setup by the county [of Los Angeles], there are about ten satellites, and only one is black, and not included in that is the King-Drew Medical Center. Can you imagine that, that there are contracts given out there, and King-Drew is not involved? Because again, the black doctors were slow in responding to the new challenges. They were complaining and crying the blues, but not making the necessary changes to comply with the state requirements.

CARR: What, in your opinion from that period, turned it around for Medi-Cal and Medicare to make them more appealing and fashionable to doctors in general?

DYMALLY: Well, they saw the large corporations coming in. One of the early targets was Ruben, because he was so successful. You know, they innovated night clinics and this sort of stuff, where people could go in any hour. So it was very visionary, and there was a lot of hard work involved.

CARR: There was one black doctor who was actually very involved in this from the very beginning. His

name was Bassett Brown. #

DYMALLY: He still is.

CARR: And he still is, yes.

DYMALLY: Bassett Brown and I are friends today.

[Laughter] Small world.

CARR: Yes.

DYMALLY: Bassett started his first clinic. . . . Bassett was the visionary. By the way, he's Jamaican. He started his clinic on Central Avenue. He was the first black doctor to start that. Subsequently he opened a clinic on Vermont [Avenue], and now he's trying to refinance the two. I'm working with him still, but I'm working for him pro bono. But that was my rule. People thought that Dymally was into this. I became very concerned about the fact that the black doctors were getting ripped off.

CARR: How?

DYMALLY: The large corporations were coming in, and Bassett was the only guy who had a vision. The other guy who had a vision was Al Cannon. Al Cannon has not been ever given proper credit for his role in community organization. In fact, he lost an opportunity for tenure at UCLA--he was a psychiatrist--because he didn't publish, and he

perished. He started the Frederick Douglass Child [Development] Center, the Central City Cultural Center. He was the one who went to Dr. Weekes and others about the Charles Drew Postgraduate Medical School. And when he could not get tenure, he began devoting his time to community activities. He is the one who came to me and told me that the title of the head of the medical school is "dean," and when you go back East to seek funds, the dean is not considered a very important position in the scheme of educational things, in the hierarchy, and that we need to change the title to "president." I am the one who wrote them. But that was Al Cannon. He was very pioneering, and he finally got so disgusted with the whole system, he left and went to Africa. He died of a massive heart attack [while sitting] in a rocking chair eating ice cream. And guess what? More recently, his wife died in Africa of a massive heart attack.

CARR: Wow. Now, didn't Bassett Brown have his own troubles with . . .

DYMALLY: Still does.

CARR: . . . the law in terms of the investigation of his improper use of funds, and also getting

Medicare and Medi-Cal contracts?

DYMALLY: You know, look, you've got to understand this: I tell my friends in the black community there's a direct relationship between growth and harassment. Bassett Brown was growing. Even now the boys are still hassling him up in Sacramento. They denied him an opportunity to be one of the ten satellites from what is now Los Angeles Care [Health Plan], the omnibus agency that's going to administer the managed care system in Los Angeles County.

CARR: Right.

DYMALLY: He lost out. But he's a survivor. The guy lands on his feet, and he is most visionary. He and Al Cannon--Al on the academic side and he on the pragmatic side--are the most visionary of all the doctors. The state doesn't like the notion that he has a vineyard in Napa, etc., etc. He drives a Rolls-Royce or whatever. So yes, they're still hassling him.

CARR: Now, with the whole Batik situation, going back to that . . .

DYMALLY: But one point I wanted to make--a very important point in my career--I never ran away from a friend who was in controversy. Now, there's a guy who was convicted for selling drugs over the

DYMALLY: counter. He claims he was framed, but nevertheless, he was up in, I think, San Luis Obispo. A staff member came to me and introduced me to his family. It turned out that his sister was one of the top social workers in the county. His brother-in-law was one of the organizers of the black bank with Tom Bradley, and I later learned he was a fraternity brother. So I went up to San Luis Obispo, and then went to the parole board and I said, "Temper justice with mercy. While he is up there his family is on welfare. If he gets out, he begins paying taxes, his family is off welfare, and it's a plus-plus-plus." Well, when he came out, he didn't have a job, so I put him on my payroll for \$100 a month so he'd have a job reference. One day I pick up the Sacramento Bee and there's this big story about my connection with him, giving the impression that I was part of his conviction, and that I had met with some people in a restaurant--we never have discovered the restaurant to this day--and I was referred to as a "soul brother." Well, nobody calls me "soul brother." It's "Merv" or "Mervyn." A few call me "Mervyn." But I didn't run away from that.

Then there was another time when Windsor University, an alternative school, was started. In fact, if I may take credit, I gave them the [name] Windsor because it sounded very British to me. When they started attacking Clark Parker, I supported him. Two very prominent politicians who were very close to him, one of whom was campaign treasurer, they just backed away. I came to his defense. So over the years I was always identified in controversy in the black community because I will not give up my friends. I always stuck with my friends, especially when they were in trouble. In fact, I'm seeing Clark Parker for lunch Monday.

CARR: This whole notion which you started out with is a theme, in fact, of a notion of ethics being like beauty--in the eyes of the beholder. If you could elaborate on that, not to put words in your mouth, but is that to be read as to do what one needs to do in order to accomplish something within the law, or. . . .

DYMALLY: A very good point. Recently the executive committee of the Grace Home for Waiting Children met to discuss an anonymous letter written to the state [Department of Health Services], Licensing,

DYMALLY: [and Certification] for foster care homes accusing the founder of the institution of hiring his son. Yes, his son was working for the home. But what was his son doing? He was a part-time janitor. A member of the executive board said, much to my pleasure, "I hope we don't fall for this red herring because black people need to be employing black people, because there are no jobs on the way, and we can't be intimidated by these letters. This young man needs to stay on the job." Well, that's an example of my thinking on the question of ethics, that what they see as nepotism we see as helping the extended family. I recall when President Kennedy appointed Bob Kennedy to attorney general, and reporters questioned him, he answered them with humor, as he always did, by saying Bobby needed a job. Another time when he came back from a high-level conference, the first thing he did was ask how was Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] doing for the [United States] Senate. So nobody saw anything wrong with his brother being the attorney general. So we blacks have to be very careful or we'll fall into that trap. The Times accused me of nepotism because I had a funded program from the

Rockefeller Foundation, and I think one of the interns was a nephew of mine, but I did not select him. The interviewing committee took the position that because he's Dymally's nephew he should not be automatically disqualified, and they put him on. It was high school students. There was no major academic qualification to get into the program, just first come, first served.

CARR: There was really kind of a salvo back and forth of letters--letters to the editor--after the whole Batik thing happened. One of the strongest letters came from Bill Greene. Bill Greene at the time specifically called the Times article detailing the whole Batik incident--and I quote-- "A white racist attempt to stop the development of black business in the black community." That's what he called it.

DYMALLY: Well, Bill Greene was a prolific writer. He was a journalist by profession, and he's the one politician whom I have supported who never took kindly to criticism about me. In fact the L.A. County lobbyist, when Bill became assemblyman, began criticizing me. He never liked me. I don't know why. He was close to the leadership in the senate, which was very conservative, and

he began bad-mouthing me with Bill Greene. Bill Greene said, "Look, let me just say this to you. I am in the assembly here." Well, first, Bill Greene was the first black on the desk--a desk clerk. "I am in Sacramento here because of Dymally. But beyond that, I agree with everything he does." The same lobbyist went to Kenny Hahn's staff and told them that I had gotten Senator [Stephen P.] Steve Teale, an osteopathic physician, to introduce legislation to kill the King Hospital on the question of joint powers. I get this call from Ted Watkins [Sr.] of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee.

CARR: Joint powers with?

DYMALLY: See, there was a bond issue for the King Hospital, which failed in the county, so Kenny Hahn, the master of coalition, put together a joint powers agreement. With a joint powers agreement, you don't have to go to the public. Senator Steve Teale had a dispute with his hospital district in Siskiyou County or one of the cow counties, and he put a measure in there to kill their joint powers. So Ted Watkins calls me, furious. I never heard of joint powers

DYMALLY: before, so I had to fake it and pretend that I knew what he was talking about. "Well, let me check with Steve Teale and I'll call you right back." I go to Steve Teale and I said, "Steve, what is this joint powers bill you have?" And he bust out laughing. He says, "Oh, I had a little problem with my hospital district, and I just put that in there to scare them." But this lobbyist had conveyed to Kenny Hahn's office that Steve Teale had introduced the bill for me to kill the King Hospital. They called Ted Watkins without exploring what the facts were. He called me, very incensed. I don't think he disbelieved that lobbyist's story. He never believed me, because when I introduced a resolution at the Board of Regents [of the University of California] to change the King school from a postgraduate to an undergraduate school with an affiliation to UCLA, he and Virna Canson, head of the NAACP, were invited, among other people, to speak on behalf of the proposal in Berkeley. After he finished testifying, William French Smith turned to me and said, "Is this guy for or against the merger?" Because he went on to lambast UCLA, and everybody said, "Gee, I thought he came here to support the

proposal."

CARR: He lambasted UCLA on what grounds?

DYMALLY: Racism, etc., etc. He goes outside and begins telling Virna Canson how I tried to kill the Drew school. Virna said, "Look, I work out of Merv's office, and I know him too well. He would never do anything like that." She defended me. I don't know how we strayed away, but we were talking about [Inaudible]. But Bill Greene would tell you in a minute, "Look, don't criticize Dymally. I'm here in politics because of Mervyn." He is the most loyal of anyone of the people I have ever supported.

CARR: Now, the thing is, the criticism that he leveled at the Times, essentially calling their scrutiny of you a white racist ploy or a white racist attempt to stop the development of black business in the black community . . .

DYMALLY: I'm surprised they published the damn thing.

CARR: . . . could cut both ways because, on the one hand, what happened next was that the L.A. Times editors wrote an editorial saying, "Does this mean that any criticism or scrutiny that we level at Mr. Dymally is considered racist?" It made you appear to be a demagogue, in a sense.

DYMALLY: Yeah. Well, they were demagoguing [Laughter], so I make no apologies for it. The L.A. Times was awful. The Times was awful. They also said I stand to gain \$36,000. [Laughter]

CARR: Thirty-six thousand dollars from what?

DYMALLY: From the \$600--on capital gains. They claimed that the \$600 stocks that I had were really worth \$36,000.

[Interruption]

CARR: We are on some of the letters that came into the Times around this whole Batik crisis. Many of them. . . . Most people who wrote the Times took your position. They were outraged. And just to read one small paragraph that kind of encapsulizes the tone, it goes, "The tone, emphasis, and implication of the article would lead the reader to believe that the transactions described were unusual, improper, or perhaps even unlawful. Actually, the transactions are of the kind that occurs frequently in business and financial circles." That was a letter from Joseph W. Adlin. Going on, there's also a letter from Jim Gibson. Mr. Gibson finishes his letter by saying, "The other question that bothers the black community is whether a small black

businessman has the right to a piece of the big ghetto pie, or do corporate interests? Or is the Times suggesting one set of standards for whites and another for blacks?"

DYMALLY: Well, understand this: Bob Fairbanks--and we're talking about ethics again--was annoyed because I was selling wine to blacks. The drinking of wine by blacks was a no-no. It was associated with winos. Therefore, I was perpetuating the wino syndrome. But he did not criticize Gallo [Wine] for selling wine to blacks. You see the double standard I'm talking about? And the different kind of ethical perspectives we have on these cases? If the Times had gone and written an article about white companies selling wine to blacks, I think they would have been in a less vulnerable position.

CARR: Stepping back a bit--this is just when you were leaving the assembly to go to the senate--you were among a group of California legislators who advocated the creation of a state lottery in the late sixties, early seventies. How did that come about?

DYMALLY: The truth of the matter is I don't gamble. I don't even buy the lottery now, but I thought it

was an inevitable consequence of movements taking place.

CARR: Really?

DYMALLY: One of the things--if I may say so with some modesty--I was able to always project trends in the future. I sort of had a feel of what was going to happen. You take this charter school; I introduced the first piece of legislation on what was called alternative schools. Now it's a big thing, but it's a big, white, middle-class thing now--the charter school. I was introducing alternative schools for ghetto kids. But now whites are taking advantage of it. I went to a convention of charter schools, and I couldn't find six blacks there.

CARR: Who were your allies in that effort to start a California lottery? Was the purpose basically a revenue-gaining initiative?

DYMALLY: Sometimes I threw in these pieces of legislation to stimulate thinking and discussion, to open up possibilities and trends. I didn't think it had a chance of passing. Besides that, I was a prolific author.

CARR: Right. Some of the other legislation you sponsored was that. . . . When it came to women

actually putting their names on the ballot, legally, at a certain point in California, they had to either put "Miss" or "Mrs."

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: They simply couldn't just put their name, or they couldn't use "Ms." You sponsored legislation to change that, because what was happening was a lot of women who didn't agree with that were writing their names differently and they weren't getting credit or being registered properly.

DYMALLY: That's a long story. You want to hear it?

CARR: I asked the question.

DYMALLY: When I began running for the assembly, I read that the Congress of Racial Equality was picketing in Monterey Park for fair housing. I went there with coffee and camera. One of the people there just heaped all kinds of abuse on me for bringing the camera. I subsequently went back. . . . Let me skip several years. She died recently and left a tape. It is the most touching testimony I have ever heard about myself. She said that when I told her that she was right to criticize me, and when I continued to come to bring the coffee, she immediately fell in love with me--how I was a man of conviction,

DYMALLY: etc. Well, in the course of dealing with this adversary, I discovered she was British, and had a sense of social consciousness because she was on the lower dual track that sent you out of college into trade school under the British system. I said to her--Mauri Goldman--"At the rate you're going to jail, your husband is going to divorce you. I don't think any white man is going to tolerate his wife going to jail with such frequency." "Oh no," she says--I've forgotten his name now--"he understands." Indeed, there were several parties at her house for us. So lo and behold, she wakes up one morning and discovers he's gone, and she is left with nothing--nothing. Because everything was in his name. She came to me and said she needed a job. I said, "Look, I'll be glad to hire you but I have no space." It was something like this office here--no space. So I went to the Rules Committee--remember, in those days I am in the leadership--and I told them that I need a job. They said, "Fine. If you can find the space, go ahead." I'm walking by the elevator and I saw a door, and I pulled the door open, and there was a little cubby hole with a desk in it. So we put a

phone there and put her in there. Well, out of that experience she introduced through me legislation to create the Community Property Act in California, now, in which a wife is entitled to 50 percent of all of the property acquired during the course of the marriage. She solicited the support of Reagan's daughter Maureen and Reagan signed the bill after three years of trying. You want to talk about Reagan being progressive then. Mauri is the one who probably gave me that bill.

CARR: So much of your women's legislation . . .

DYMALLY: Women's legislation came from her.

CARR: . . . came from her.

DYMALLY: Another one is that a woman did not have equal rights in the adjudication of an estate. It was a man's world in the disbursement of estate funds and such, estate settlement. And again, she did it. By the way, she had never finished high school. She was on a dual track, I told you.

CARR: Yeah.

DYMALLY: The poor track in London. She became the first woman to sign up at the Lincoln Law School in Sacramento--which still exists--and passed the bar, and went on to work for the state. She died

in her sleep recently. Most of that legislation came from her, yeah.

[End Tape 7, Side A]

[Begin Tape 7, Side B]

CARR: March Fong Eu also sponsored a lot of legislation with you when she was in the assembly. Was she an ally, and how did you come to know each other?

DYMALLY: Well, she was interested in the legislation that I introduced . . .

CARR: March Fong, at the time, actually.

DYMALLY: . . . on the California Commission on the Status of Women. She succeeded Nick Petris, who had previously introduced that and went to the senate. She was on the board of education, I think, in Alameda County. So that's how we got together.

CARR: How did your political relationship develop over the years?

DYMALLY: Good, but it became cool later on because she became very conservative. She wasn't viewed as a liberal pioneer within the Asian community.

CARR: Now, was the cooling of your relationship also affected by [the fact that] she seemed to ally herself closer to Jerry Brown than to you?

DYMALLY: No, no. That wasn't the reason. She just had

ambitions to be a statewide officer. It was nothing antagonistic. Besides, we were physically separated.

CARR: Yeah. One of the other things before we move on to some other questions leading up to your announcement and run for lieutenant governor: when you left, essentially the last session of the state assembly, you took a very strong stand against the construction of nuclear power plants.

DYMALLY: I was chairman of the Committee on Industrial Relations. I had this young, white liberal with me--Dan Visnich--and we made a tour of the stations. It didn't please labor. We came out against the nuclear plants because we didn't think they were safe, especially the one in Humboldt County. I think they finally closed it down.

CARR: What was labor's reaction?

DYMALLY: Oh, they were not happy about it because, you know, anything in construction, they support. Safety was not an issue with them.

CARR: So your position was purely based on safety?

DYMALLY: Safety, yeah. It just gives you an idea of many of these movements I began, but they became popular long after I started this issue. And

DYMALLY: I've never gotten credit for these pioneering efforts.

I'll give you one: the San Jose Mercury [News] called a meeting of people they perceived to be leaders of the future. Myself, Art Torres. . . . God, I keep forgetting the name--a Republican woman who was in Jerry Brown's cabinet. And an author in San Francisco. At that seminar, I told them that they were not writing stories for Californians; they were writing stories for white, male conservatives.

They said, "What do you mean by that?"

I said, "Well, this state is becoming a third-world state."

They said, "How do you know that?"

I said, "Well, I can give you the facts."

I went to my office and I said to an intern, "We're going to make California a third-world state."

"How will we do that?" he said.

"Well, I want you to ignore the Census Bureau and call every major ethnic group in the state--the Filipinos, the Cubans, the Puerto Ricans, Samoans, etc.--and get from their leadership what they view to be the numbers."

DYMALLY: So he came back and he said, "All I can get is 40 percent."

 I said, "Well, add 5 percent for projection."

 He said, "Well, we only have 45 percent."

 I said, "Well, you've heard about the theory of plus or minus five?" I said, "Why don't you plus five."

 He said, "OK, we have 50 percent."

 We issued this report. All hell broke loose. Talking about ethical concerns, a reporter from the Long Beach Press-Telegram who was caught for smoking pot criticized me as injecting race in politics. And the media, for some strange reason--in San Francisco, in Sacramento--came down on me for that report. Guess what? Jerry Brown took my study. . . . To justify my study I called a conference at UC [University of California] Irvine, and I had [Norman Y.] Norm Mineta, who was then mayor of San Jose, and he agreed with me. And Mervyn Field came to the conference, and the Census Bureau came to the conference, and they said, "We don't agree with Dymally's methodology, but we agree with his conclusion." Jerry Brown picked it up, and then Jerry Brown was described as a man of vision.

He's the one who gets credit for projecting California as going to be a third-world state. It was my study.

CARR: Did he ever consult with you?

DYMALLY: Oh, hell no. I strayed away from the question somewhat.

CARR: No, you answered the question.

DYMALLY: I think I told you this story. It's probably worth repeating it. I lost the bill on the Commission on the Status of Women because a women's group went to Jesse Unruh and told him that it was too important a bill for a black man to carry. And they gave it to Hugh Burns in the senate, who was opposed to the bill, and he got it out, and I never became the author of it-- even though it passed the assembly. . . . It passed the house by about sixty-five votes.

CARR: Switching, one of the issues that came up later on the status of women was that you were a very strong proponent of equal spending on women in collegiate athletics.

DYMALLY: That's Mauri Goldman again.

CARR: In the sense that you found out that many women, to support funding for university athletics . . .

DYMALLY: They weren't even a consideration.

CARR: They weren't necessarily getting money from . . .

DYMALLY: They weren't even a consideration; they were an afterthought. If there was some money left in the till, they gave it to the women's athletic program. The feds subsequently caught up with them and made that an equal rights consideration. So we were way ahead on some of these matters. I'm sure that was Mauri Goldman again.

CARR: That was really the opening shot in what really became the movement for equal rights for women.

DYMALLY: Yeah. I should tell you another one. I introduced the first legislation on divestment on any college campus in the board of regents. I told you who voted against it: Wilson Riles.

CARR: Wilson Riles voted against it. On what grounds did Wilson Riles vote against it?

DYMALLY: I'll be damned if I know. He was superintendent of public instruction. He got praised by the San Francisco Chronicle as a man of principle.

CARR: Now, Wilson Riles--at the time you were elected to the senate--and you were essentially the only black officials in statewide office.

DYMALLY: That's correct.

CARR: And your names were often mentioned together because, as being . . .

DYMALLY: Yes, because his was a big upset.

CARR: Although you feel in many ways Ronald Reagan's record stood up against criticism that said he was actually extremely conservative, in the middle to the end of 1972 you were very critical of Reagan because he ended up vetoing I think, of the ninety-five bills that went in front of him, half of them. Half of those bills that he vetoed would have really helped the working class and poor.

DYMALLY: Well, you know, he was basically conservative. I'm saying in context with Jerry Brown, who was trying to be a fiscal conservative when he was supposed to be a liberal. I mean, when you match Reagan's record, it wasn't all that bad. But Reagan hated the University of California, and he poured all of the money into the state college system, because the head of the state college system at the time, Dr. [Glenn S.] Dumke, was a Republican. So to offset the criticism that he was killing the University of California, he put money in the state college system. Then he was very conservative on the question of welfare. He liked to cite the welfare-mother-driving-a-Cadillac sort of story.

- CARR: A lot of those bills that were vetoed that year were called the "people bills." I don't know if you . . .
- DYMALLY: Yeah. I think many of them were George Moscone's bills.
- CARR: Moving on from that, one of the things that you talked about later that year was the notion that there was a specific need, regardless of what happened with the Reapportionment Committee, for the creation of federal and state aid to stimulate job opportunity. At the time--this is toward the end of a lot of the efforts by Johnson--how effective were you in getting any kind of aid to stimulate job training programs in your district?
- DYMALLY: A very good question. Most of the aid was given to bureaucracies, and very often never got down to the very poorest of the poor. I went to Washington and met Sargent Shriver. At one time, I proposed a neighborhood information service so that people could come to this neighborhood and get information about jobs, about programs, etc. That didn't go anyplace. At the time, the federal government was deep into jobs creation, and that was directed to agencies rather than to

individuals. I don't know that I was very successful. But I mean, my position is that the poverty programs, in my judgment, were successful.

CARR: But later on you were successful in getting a Mexican American job training program going, weren't you?

DYMALLY: Yes. I had some legislation on Mexican American issues. I was associated with the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation. They still exist. They became very successful, and I helped them. We're still friends.

CARR: Were all of your allegiances with the Mexican American community either politically or on a grassroots level connected somehow with your allegiance with Richard Alatorre in the assembly at the time?

DYMALLY: That was just part of it. It preceded Alatorre. First when I got the Ford grant, Teresa Hughes and I insisted that Hispanics be included. Alatorre was one of them, and the mayor of Sacramento, Joe Serna, was another. I was close to César Chávez. I even took Alice down to Coachella [Valley] to get his blessing. We were very good friends.

CARR: Now, could you tell me, and this is going back to Reagan because. . . . The state budget came up with a tax surplus, by the middle of June 1973, [of] a little less than a billion dollars. It was a huge tax surplus, and everyone weighed in on what to do with this tax surplus. Do you recall your opinion on that?

DYMALLY: No. All I could tell you is that that surplus arose because we initiated withholding tax in California. There was no withholding tax for state taxes, and Reagan opposed it. When we started withholding taxes, we ended up with all of this money. I was always big on using state and federal funds for job creation. We had a number of different projects. But I was way ahead of my time. I don't think that Reagan shared that view. Reagan became much more conservative when he went to Washington, because then he had a road map from the Heritage Foundation. Their plan was to kill all social programs.

CARR: In terms of a public relations problem, this budget surplus, in what way do you think it spurred on or antagonized the tax revolt people who were beginning to get . . .

DYMALLY: I don't know. But I do know that Reagan had a forerunner to Prop. 13--Proposition 1.¹ I'll tell you a little anecdote about it.

CARR: Could you?

DYMALLY: I got a call from Dr. Earl Brian. He said, "Senator, I'm here with the governor, and we have your Drew bill. We want to know what your position is on Proposition 1." And I said, "What position do you want me to have?"

[Interruption]

CARR: They were asking about your Drew bill.

DYMALLY: I said, "What position do you want me to have?" He said, "Of course we want you to support it." I said, "Well, I can't support it, because as chairman of the Democratic Caucus I'll get into trouble. But I'll tell you what, I'll go down to Tijuana and not come back until after the campaign." [Laughter] But anyhow, Proposition 1 failed. It was the forerunner to Proposition 13.

CARR: Did you vote on it?

DYMALLY: I voted against it.

1. Proposition 1 (November 1973), tax and expenditure limitations.

CARR: One of the other things--again, this is dealing specifically with a growing Latino presence in California--you and Alatorre cosponsored a bill dealing with the requirement for the state government to hire bilingual employees.

DYMALLY: Yes, yeah, I remember that very well.

CARR: I think if 15 percent of the population is non-English speaking, consequently the government should make a specific effort to hire bilingual employees. Alatorre supported it in the assembly, you supported it in the senate.

DYMALLY: Yes. I remember that very well. It was just an acknowledgment. You see, my position was--and is--that blacks and Hispanics ought to get together and form a coalition politically. If not on cultural matters, or on bilingual matters, they ought to do it politically. In addition, I've always felt that the black educators were wrong in resisting bilingual education, because if you go to a typical African country--let's take Senegal, for instance--they speak French, Arabic, their native tongue, and then English. Bilingual education is not necessarily limited to the intelligent or the educated. You find ordinary people speaking three or four languages

in Africa. As you travel around the world now, you begin to understand how important it is. Now in California with a surging Hispanic population, you begin to understand its importance.

CARR: Did Alatorre generate that bill?

DYMALLY: I did.

CARR: You did.

DYMALLY: Yes.

CARR: And then you just got him to support it?

DYMALLY: Yes. Usually the way you did this is if you introduced a piece of legislation in the senate, or in the assembly, for that matter, you try to get a cosponsor on the other side so that the person would carry the bill for you. It would give some impression of support from both houses.

CARR: One of the other things that happened in '73 was the death of Johnson. You were effusive in your praise of Johnson, particularly dealing with the Voting Rights Act [of 1965].

DYMALLY: I had met Earl Warren at the dedication of the Martin Luther King [Jr.] Hall at the School of Law at [the University of California] Davis, and I asked him, what did he consider his most important decision. He said the one man, one vote. It seemed to me that the Voting Rights Act

enhanced black political growth. I then began to organize an ad hoc group--the national conference of black elected officials. When I first started, there were about sixty-four in the entire country. Now there must be about six thousand. So you see the effect it had.

CARR: Yeah. But at the same time there was a crucial point, when you were dealing with reapportionment, when that whole principle of the one man, one vote was stymied in the sense that the state supreme court took control of . . .

DYMALLY: Because the senate just wouldn't respond. They did not want to give up their hold on the cow counties. The matter finally landed in court.

CARR: So essentially when the state supreme court took control of how these districts were going to be drawn up, you blame it more on bickering within the senate than with. . . . Reagan also seemed to have a vested interest in having . . .

DYMALLY: That is correct. But the Democrats in the senate couldn't get together for two reasons: we eliminated Larry Walsh's district and created a Latino district.

CARR: Now, is this the same Lawrence Walsh who essentially . . .

DYMALLY: Ran against me.

CARR: . . . ran against you?

DYMALLY: Yeah. Then [Randolph] Randy Collier in the north, we could not please him. He was a friend of Larry Walsh, and he was making deals with the Republicans. George Zenovich tried a plan; it didn't work. We just couldn't. . . . The Democrats did not have twenty-one votes. There was no way in the world they could get twenty-one votes, because Larry Walsh was the twenty-first vote, and he was eliminated. And no Republican would vote for it, not even Milty Marks--Milton Marks--who subsequently became a Democrat, and who praised me for saving his district because one of the compromises that the Republicans were making with me was to eliminate Milton Marks's district in San Francisco.

CARR: So you weren't willing to make that deal?

DYMALLY: No. I wouldn't sacrifice his district, and he knew about it.

CARR: But you had two hurdles. I mean, you had the hurdle of just dealing with each other within the senate chambers. But you also had the other hurdle that even if you were able to come up with something, a decent situation in which you could

get a Mexican American district, you probably didn't seem as if you would have enough votes to override the highly likely veto.

DYMALLY: Oh, no, no. Absolutely. That was out of the question. We didn't have the votes at all. We had no Republican votes. As I said, Milty Marks should have been tough enough--as he subsequently became--and voted with us. We would have had the twenty-one votes. No, I don't think so. We had nineteen. That's the highest number we could get.

CARR: Wow.

DYMALLY: Even Ralph [C.] Dills was unhappy with his district.

[End Tape 7, Side B]