



California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS

United States Congressman, 1963 - 1991
California State Assemblyman, 1935 - 1962

January 15, December 10 and 12, 1988
Los Angeles, California

By Carlos Vásquez
Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

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Augustus F. Hawkins, Oral History Interview,
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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 cooperating 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

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer:

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Interview Series, UCLA Oral History Program
B.A., UCLA [Political Science]
M.A., Stanford University [Political Science]
Ph.D. candidate, UCLA [History]

Interview Time and Place:

January 15, 1988
Hawkins's office in Los Angeles, California
Session of one and one-half hours

December 10, 1988
Hawkins's office in Los Angeles
Session of one and three-quarter hours

December 12, 1988
Hawkins's office in Los Angeles
Session of one and one-half hours

Editing

Vásquez 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 editor are bracketed. Dale E. Treleven, director, UCLA Oral History Program, wrote the biographical summary. Alex Cline, editor, prepared the table of contents and interview history. Hawkins reviewed the edited transcript and returned it with only minor corrections.

Papers

There exist no private papers which the interviewer was able to consult for this interview. However, prior to the completion of this transcript, the Augustus Hawkins Papers (Collection #1642) had been donated to the UCLA Department of Special Collections.

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

Augustus F. Hawkins was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, on August 31, 1907. He spent his early years in Shreveport and Denver, Colorado, before his family relocated to Los Angeles, California, just prior to 1920. After graduating from Jefferson High School in 1926, he earned a bachelor's degree in economics at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1931.

Hawkins's earliest direct involvement in electoral politics occurred as a Young Democrat for presidential nominee Franklin D. Roosevelt and as a volunteer for Upton Sinclair's End Poverty in California (EPIC) campaign. In 1934, he, along with a small group of Los Angeles African American Democrats, launched a successful campaign for a seat in the California State Assembly representing the Sixty-second Assembly District. Hawkins's assembly service lasted through 1962, when voters in the Twenty-first Congressional District elected him to the United States House of Representatives. His congressional service extended over twenty-eight years from 1963 to 1991, when he retired to devote himself to the Hawkins Family Memorial Foundation for Educational Research and Development, which he had founded in 1969.

When Hawkins joined the assembly in early 1935, he was the youngest member of that body; by the time he left for Congress, he had accumulated the longest continuous service in the history of California. In 1959, he narrowly failed to win the assembly speakership.

A New Deal Democrat throughout his political career, Hawkins while in the assembly chaired the following committees: Public Utilities; Labor and Capital; Unemployment; Rules; and the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization. During his twenty-eight-year tenure, he proposed several hundred bills that became law, particularly in the areas of child care centers, old age security, apprenticeship training, adult education, civil rights, slum clearance and low-cost housing, and workman's compensation for domestic employees. Among the many significant legislative bills he carried were those resulting in California's Fair Housing Act and the state's Fair Employment Practices Act.

Hawkins's career in the House of Representatives, briefly discussed in this interview, began in the Eighty-eighth Congress, where he continued to staunchly advocate

[Session 1, January 15, 1988]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

VASQUEZ: Congressman Hawkins, we'd like to delve into your personal life history, your origins and such. I guess we can begin with the question, when and where were you born?

HAWKINS: I was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, August 31, 1907.

VASQUEZ: Who were your parents?

HAWKINS: My parents were Nyanza Hawkins and Hattie H. Hawkins.

VASQUEZ: Was your mother's maiden name Hawkins also?

HAWKINS: No. Hattie Helena Freeman.

VASQUEZ: Where were they from?

HAWKINS: My father was from New Orleans and my mother was from Texas, so far as I remember, from Marshall, Texas.

VASQUEZ: What were their backgrounds culturally and ethnically?

HAWKINS: My mother was a mixture of black and some Indian blood.

VASQUEZ: Do you know what nation of Indians?

HAWKINS: From Oklahoma, I would assume.

VASQUEZ: Everybody ended up in Oklahoma, all the Indians.

HAWKINS: Yeah, Oklahoma. What tribe I don't recall, but my father was a descendant of English and French as well as black blood. My grandfather was from England.

VASQUEZ: Oh, is that right? How long had they been in Louisiana?

HAWKINS: My father was born in Louisiana, my mother in Texas.

VASQUEZ: How about your grandparents? Were they from Louisiana at all on your father's side?

HAWKINS: On my father's side, my grandfather was from Overtree, England. He was an explorer, explored Africa quite a bit. I think that is where the name Nyanza originated.

VASQUEZ: What was his name, your grandfather, your paternal grandfather?

HAWKINS: I can't recall offhand.

VASQUEZ: That's fascinating. Were you brought up in a very religious home?

HAWKINS: Yes. My father was Catholic, my mother was Methodist. I was primarily raised in the

Methodist religion. It was quite a religious home, continued to be all my life, while my parents were alive at least. My mother was very active in the church and continued even when we migrated to Los Angeles.

VASQUEZ: What did your father do for a living?

HAWKINS: My father was a pharmacist, operated a drugstore of his own in Shreveport until, because of health, he was advised to leave that business. He then operated a transportation system, an interurban automobile system from Shreveport to outlying towns, primarily on his own. I don't think he ever had more than two or three automobiles in the operation, but that was principally his business, plus investments and real estate. Between those two things we lived rather comfortably.

VASQUEZ: Were his business dealings primarily with the black population in Shreveport?

HAWKINS: Yes, it was almost exclusively with the black population, although they did on occasion serve others. But because of the restrictions it was not, let us say, an integrated business. It was primarily a black business.

VASQUEZ: I would imagine you lived in a black area.

HAWKINS: We lived in a black area, and it was adjacent to a black school.

VASQUEZ: What parish did you live in?

HAWKINS: This would have been Caddo parish.

VASQUEZ: And the school that you attended was . . . ?

HAWKINS: I attended Central Colored High [School]. I did not attend the school adjacent to where we lived because I did not attend high school in Shreveport. I, for the most part, had tutoring. I started out being tutored by certain teachers who were friends of the family. My dad was not too fond of the particular education that I was being given, so I was pretty much tutored until I did go to the lower grades in the adjoining school's Central Colored High, which also had some elementary grades, earlier elementary grades, until I came to Los Angeles.

VASQUEZ: Who had the most impact on you, that you can remember, in those early years of education? Was it some of these tutors? Or the schoolteachers?

HAWKINS: There was one of the tutors, and I can't recall her name offhand. I might be able to get that for you. But I recall being highly motivated by the tutor that I had. It was a very personal

friend of the family. Most of the education that I can recall has been really in Los Angeles rather than the Deep South, because other than that tutoring I didn't go to any southern schools. At Central Colored High, for all that I can remember, it was probably two to three years at the most that I went to public schools.

VASQUEZ: What was it that was impressive or generated interest in learning from this woman? Was she a hard taskmaster?

HAWKINS: Oh, very hard, yeah, very hard and very dedicated. And, of course, she had a personal interest in me. I would say she certainly laid the foundation, some motivation in me to want to do something. Even in post-secondary [school] I early had the idea of becoming a professional in engineering--which was a lifetime ambition of mine, to go into engineering.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember why that was or where you first got that?

HAWKINS: I don't know. I was very interested in mathematics, and out of that I think developed the idea of building bridges or buildings or whatnot. It was always an ambition of mine,

rather than wanting to become a medical doctor. The engineering I think was always my ambition.

VASQUEZ: Are there any particular landmarks or pieces of architecture in Shreveport or New Orleans that might have attracted your attention?

HAWKINS: Nothing in the Deep South. I think it probably must have come out of books. I don't know. I don't recall anything that geographically would identify this ambition with the town in which we lived. Shreveport was quite different from New Orleans. It did not have the same exotic atmosphere, although I recall visiting New Orleans on occasions in my early life.

I don't even recall most of my other family members. We did have other family members, part of the New Orleans society, but I was never a part of that group.

VASQUEZ: It wasn't a real close extended family?

HAWKINS: No, they were pretty well scattered. Some went in as part of the French society in New Orleans, and others were distinctly a part of the black society.

VASQUEZ: Is there any Creole involvement in your lineage at all?

HAWKINS: I'm sure there is.

VASQUEZ: But not anything that's of significance?

HAWKINS: Not of any great significance.

VASQUEZ: Were you an only child? Or do you have brothers and sisters?

HAWKINS: No, there were five children: four brothers and one sister, and I was the youngest.

VASQUEZ: Could you give me their names starting from oldest to youngest?

HAWKINS: The oldest was Nyanza Hawkins, not a junior because he was Nyanza A. Hawkins; the second one was Edward Hawkins; the next one was Dickerson [Hawkins]--he was the one who later became a doctor--and the sister was Mattie Pearl Hawkins.

VASQUEZ: And then you were the youngest?

HAWKINS: I was the young one.

VASQUEZ: Did your mother work in the home?

HAWKINS: Primarily in the home. I don't think she ever worked, insofar as I know, outside the home as long as we lived in the South.

VASQUEZ: Did she play any role directly in the tutoring or education?

HAWKINS: Yeah, she was closer to me than my dad.

VASQUEZ: Oh, really? Tell me about that.

HAWKINS: My dad was, I would say, more of the conservative type, and my mother was very outgoing, sociable, and in later life was the Democrat in my family. My dad was the conservative Republican.

VASQUEZ: All of his life?

HAWKINS: Yes. And I think that it was through my mother that I became more active in public life and was also politically persuaded to be on the more liberal side as opposed to the conservative side. She had a remarkable influence on me, yes.

VASQUEZ: How old was she when she passed away?

HAWKINS: I'm the only member of the family of all that I have named who is still living.

VASQUEZ: How old were you when your mother passed away?

HAWKINS: It was the first session that I was in Sacramento.

VASQUEZ: So it was 1935?

HAWKINS: In 1935 she passed away, and my dad two years later.

VASQUEZ: What motivated the family to come out to California? And what year was that?

HAWKINS: Well, it was approximately 1922. Now, we did leave the South on two occasions. We left once to come . . .

VASQUEZ: In 1918, your biography says.

HAWKINS: Yeah. It could have been a year or two later. Nineteen eighteen, I think, 1918, '19, we moved, but we moved to Denver. And when I date the coming to Los Angeles, it was a year or two later. We returned to Shreveport and then moved to Los Angeles. So those years may be a little bit confusing because of having left twice. It was the desire of my father to, one, get his family better educated, and, two, avoid a lot of the problems that we had run into, particularly myself, in the Deep South because of segregation.

To give you one example, the streetcar that we used had signs that separated the blacks from the whites, and invariably when I would get on a streetcar and sit in the seat, they would move the signs so that I would be in the white section so as to protect me as a white child. But it caused me a problem, because one might have thought that I had deliberately adjusted to this in defiance of the law, and many times little incidents would occur. In that particular case, I solved that by simply not using the streetcar and walking from my home downtown, which might have been, if I can recall correctly, about three

miles. I became quite a walker in those days.

VASQUEZ: That's quite a ways to walk.

HAWKINS: Because I didn't want to disobey the law. On the other hand, I found it inconvenient to be trying to comply in such an instance. But it was incidents like that.

VASQUEZ: Where did you feel the social pressure in that situation more? From other blacks? Or from an internal pressure?

HAWKINS: I think my father realized the uncomfortable position in which we found ourselves many times. The members of the family who were more or less white complexioned ran into these difficulties. Now, we had members of the family who were not as distinctly white as I am.

VASQUEZ: But all your brothers and sisters were more or less the same shade?

HAWKINS: No. One other was probably close to me in complexion. We had one who was brown, a brother; my sister was distinctly brown, recognizably so. My oldest brother was considerably darker than anyone in the family, and that created some problems within the family unit itself.

VASQUEZ: I was going to ask you about that.

HAWKINS: I do know that where we lived we had one hill which was where the blacks lived, a valley, and another hill not too far away was completely white. So there was always this problem of being chased back and forth from one hill to the other, and many times I was in the cross fire of the two, because I wasn't distinctly recognizable by the whites on the other hill and sometimes found it difficult getting back to the blacks on the black hill. So there were always incidents of this nature.

VASQUEZ: That must have caused problems for you.

HAWKINS: Well, it did cause problems, and I think it was because something of this nature might lead to more serious problems that my dad decided it wasn't worth it. Although he was doing very well in his business and had accumulated a considerable amount of property, he also felt some of the same problems, because his property was more or less in the downtown area and most of his tenants were white. Many times his tenants would take advantage of the situation, and many times he would lose rents because they would move away and there was not very much he could do

about it.

VASQUEZ: In the home, were you raised as being black?

HAWKINS: Oh, definitely, yes.

VASQUEZ: And was there an emphasis on that?

HAWKINS: We were in the black society. Mostly around our area were the doctors, the prominent mortician in the city. One of the more prominent dentists was Dr. [H. Claude] Hudson, who later moved along with my dad. As a matter of fact, my dad persuaded him to come to Los Angeles, and after we moved, Dr. Hudson. . . . I think you have had him in one of [the UCLA Oral History Program's interviews]. Dr. Hudson lived on the same hill that we lived on, and the family doctor also lived there.

VASQUEZ: What was that area of Shreveport called? Did it have a name?

HAWKINS: It was called the fairground area, and opposite us was a large vacant land, I would estimate about between three and five acres. When the circus came to town, they used that area, and it was also used as a recreational area by many.

I recall at an early age my dad put a tennis court on that land and just used it. Everybody was using it, and we had a tennis court. We had

HAWKINS: to duplicate the features that were denied by the city to blacks, so we had this tennis court in that area on the property. Where we lived we had a recreation room, and my dad built a billiard room over the garage to provide some outlet, because he said he didn't want his kids going into poolrooms and things like this. We had three lots on the area, and we also from time to time used it in conjunction with the school. We made it available to the school, that sometimes entertained outdoor recreation and entertainment on the property.

It was a two-story house, and it faced a ballpark which was across the fairgrounds. This was the Texas League, and we could, from our windows on the second floor, almost view baseball games, which was one of the things that almost got me into trouble. Once, as a kid, I decided I wanted to favor the local club, and when the opposing batters were up, I once or twice shined mirrors to try to affect the outcome of the game, [Laughter] for which I was given a real good spanking by my dad after the officials of the club found out where the light was coming from.

They would surely very much have demanded some discipline but realized it was just a kid and it was not some professional gambling outfit. But anyway, I got the beating. It was in close proximity to the baseball park.

VASQUEZ: Now, your father wanted to get you out of Louisiana because of problems he felt you would have due to race. Did you ever witness any racism while you were there as a child?

HAWKINS: Not directly, but there were racial incidents.

VASQUEZ: You were aware of it?

HAWKINS: Yes. At an early age I was told that a black had been lynched just adjacent to this fairground. The trolley car in the city was next to the fairground, and beyond that was a wooded area, and just at the edge there, there was a hanging that took place, what I would call a lynching.

VASQUEZ: Now, when you went to Denver, what was your dad going to do in Denver? What business did he go into over there?

HAWKINS: He was thinking of opening up a retail store of some kind or even possibly going back into the [pharmacy business].

VASQUEZ: What was it that made Denver not attractive?

HAWKINS: Well, my dad was persuaded to come out by friends of his, the Spratlings, who were a prominent black family in Denver. Spratling was the last name. Dr. Spratling and his wife were friends of my dad's, and they told us of Denver. My dad was attracted to go out. He did go out there, and it was during a winter in which there was a coal miners strike. It was a pretty tough winter for people in Denver, so I guess he found out that Denver was not as attractive as he thought. I suppose that turned him to the idea of going west, where the sunshine would be more prevalent than such winters.

VASQUEZ: But you went back to Shreveport?

HAWKINS: Went back, yes.

VASQUEZ: And then tried it again?

HAWKINS: My mother had visited Los Angeles prior to that time, and she had become attracted to Los Angeles, so she had that in mind as well.

VASQUEZ: She was a pretty strong woman in their man-woman relationship?

HAWKINS: Yes, right.

VASQUEZ: So when you came out to Los Angeles, where did your father set up business? What part of Los

Angeles did you move to right away?

HAWKINS: When we moved to Los Angeles, we lived at about Twenty-eighth [Street] one block east of Central [Avenue]. They had bought [property] at that location, and shortly thereafter he went into business with a retail tobacco store in conjunction with, I believe it was called, the Burns Billiard Room. That was on Twelfth Street near Central, which was at that time the very center of the black community. My dad had the part of the building on the front where soft drinks and cigarettes, tobacco, sundries of that nature were sold. That is what he followed primarily, at least until the Depression. Then we got into the years of the Depression, and things were pretty sour all over.

VASQUEZ: Did he loose a lot of savings?

HAWKINS: He lost a lot of money.

VASQUEZ: Had he bought any property, gotten into real estate the way he had in Shreveport?

HAWKINS: We only had a home, only a home.

VASQUEZ: But you came to the black community, to the middle of the community?

HAWKINS: Oh, yes. That's where our friends were.

VASQUEZ: How did you fit into the black community?

HAWKINS: Oh, there was no problem.

VASQUEZ: I'm wondering, were you in the "society" of black Los Angeles?

HAWKINS: As that society was called, you know, the black society was pretty well concentrated in the Central Avenue area, and my dad was identified with the professional people, although he was not professional himself--Dr. Hudson being one of those professional persons with whom he was identified.

We had a tremendous number of friends already from Shreveport in Los Angeles. At that time I would say, outside of Texans--and they might have outnumbered Texans--people from Louisiana were heavily represented in Los Angeles. And we had a tremendous number of clubs. People from Louisiana were very disposed to organizing clubs.

VASQUEZ: What kind of clubs?

HAWKINS: Social clubs, little groups that transported their social activity from one place to the other. And they were heavy drinkers and very fond of food.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember the names of any of these clubs?

HAWKINS: I don't. I was not really that [aware]. Keep in

mind that I was the youngest of the group. But I don't.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember going to the activities of some of them?

HAWKINS: I remember going to some of the activity, but I was primarily the youngest one involved in this. Later, in political life, they became very helpful, because it was through many of these clubs that I got some entrée into the community-- people that were a captive constituency because of a very close-knit geographical alignment to people of the same state.

VASQUEZ: So those clubs seem to have lasted over decades.

HAWKINS: Lasted. They are not as strong now. Perhaps I'm not as fully aware of them, but you are talking about a generation. . . . Two or three generations have passed away, and you are now talking about individuals, the children of ladies of Los Angeles. But after a couple of generations they have lost some of the same habits and customs of the people from the Deep South.

VASQUEZ: What kind of customs and habits, for example, do you remember seeing as a young boy here and then

saw dissipate or change over time?

HAWKINS: Well, I think they would be identified as highly social. I have already mentioned, wine was the principal drink. We are talking about days of Prohibition, so primarily they were people who enjoyed drinking and highly seasoned food and card playing, very fond of cards. That was primarily the social activity.

You are also talking, even in Los Angeles, about a society that's highly segregated, where the outlet for social activity was centered in the home and not outside. So you didn't have an exclusive club to go to. Many of these clubs enjoyed outdoor barbecues. Everyone, members of the club, had very fancy homes, well furnished, and a delightful backyard, and in the backyard there was always a barbecue pit and activities that were related to enjoying yourself. They moved from one home to the other on a circuit, and each one tried to outdo the other. So it was rather enjoyable yet somewhat forced on them by the idea of a segregated society.

VASQUEZ: I would imagine that networks for future careers in businesses as well as marriages were built as

a result of these clubs.

HAWKINS: Well, related [activities] primarily came out of this social activity. It was not exclusively, let us say, just a consumer type of social activity, but it was activity that brought them together and made them somewhat clannish. They supported each other in business activities.

I keep referring to Dr. Hudson as an example because I know that he is one of the best examples. His clientele was built out of the people from these clubs, for example. My dad, as long as he operated the business, was primarily, let's say, supported by many of these same people. It was almost a service, in a way, that he provided for the ones who supported his business.

I recall that his business was located at a transfer point, where people transferred from one trolley line to the other. They would leave their transfer coupon at his store, and someone coming up who wanted to go in another direction could pick that up. So in a sense, during a time when things were tight, many of them had some means of transferring from one line to the other

and getting from one trolley line to the other. It was just little things like that they worked out among themselves in order to make life easier for each other, and it was built out of this kindred spirit which brought them closely together, primarily by having come from the same state.

VASQUEZ: What are your first recollections as a young boy here in Los Angeles?

HAWKINS: Well, primarily the school and the playground.

VASQUEZ: What school did you attend here?

HAWKINS: Jefferson High [School]. And the adjoining property was near what is called the Ross Snyder [Recreational Center] playground. One [part of] the playground was for tennis. I was very much involved in tennis, and most of my friends or the chums that I identified with enjoyed tennis. We had a tennis club in conjunction with the Ross Snyder playground. Jefferson High I enjoyed because I pursued my studies and was preparing then to go into engineering.

VASQUEZ: Were you still good at math?

HAWKINS: Yes, I went all the way through as far as I could in math and was preparing to go to UC [University

of California] Berkeley into engineering when the recession got into the depth of the Depression, and that changed my plans. I decided I would go to UCLA and wait until the Depression was over, or at least until I could accumulate enough to go off to Berkeley. But then I got myself involved in three or four years before I could do that, and at that point I became involved in politics.

VASQUEZ: How did you get involved in politics at UCLA?

HAWKINS: It wasn't really at UCLA.

VASQUEZ: It was while you were there?

HAWKINS: It was while I was at UCLA, but I was not in political science, for example. I never was inclined to take political science.

VASQUEZ: You got your degree in economics, didn't you?

HAWKINS: Yes, I decided that I would at least do that until I was able to go to Berkeley. I went into economics, thinking that I could probably get into business in the meantime.

VASQUEZ: Any professors at UCLA that stick in your mind or influenced you a lot?

HAWKINS: Yes. The best one I know of was Professor [John E.] Boodin. Boodin was a philosophy professor, which was one of my favorite [subjects]. I was

always very interested in economics. Dudley [F.] Pegrum was the economics professor who taught me public utility regulation. I was very fond of him until I found out that he was employed by one of the utilities. I felt it was a conflict of interest.

VASQUEZ: But you still got an insider's view of the public utilities.

HAWKINS: I did, and he was a very good professor. It was just a quirk of mine at that time; I don't particularly justify it necessarily. But Boodin was an outstanding professor. He was a friend and associate of Einstein's. I enjoyed his lectures. He was a very modest type of man who taught me metaphysics, and I was very excited over the subject matter.

VASQUEZ: Were either of these professors black?

HAWKINS: No.

VASQUEZ: Were there any black professors that you remember?

HAWKINS: I don't recall that there was a single black. We are talking about an entirely different period of time, you know. As I can recall, there couldn't have been more than six or seven black students. We started at the old campus [University of

California, Southern Branch] on Vermont Avenue, and I recall that there were just about seven or eight black students, one of which was Ralph [J.] Bunche, who had been at Jefferson also, but two classes ahead of mine.

VASQUEZ: Were you friends with him at all?

HAWKINS: Yes. Those of us on the campus who were black were friends. I recall that at least three of us had jobs as custodians in the buildings. I recall that one of my friends had the science building. Ralph Bunche, if I recall, had the administration building, and I had the girls [gymnasium]. I always said that if I had had the administration building and Bunche the gymnasium then I would have turned out to be the statesman and Bunche the politician. But it was on the old campus.

VASQUEZ: So you were going to UCLA when the transition took place in 1929? When it went up to Westwood?

HAWKINS: Yeah, I graduated from Westwood.

VASQUEZ: What was the atmosphere like for a black student at UCLA in those days?

HAWKINS: There was not a real color problem, as I recall, in the classroom. The emphasis was on academics, and if you kept up, you got recognized.

VASQUEZ: How about the social settings?

HAWKINS: You just had certain limitations that you didn't go too far in social activity.

VASQUEZ: For example?

HAWKINS: Blacks had their social activity off campus among themselves, and the whites did likewise. As far as the actual education of it, the opportunities were there. As far as the social activity, you were pretty well conditioned, and you attended a lot of activity among blacks. Blacks had a tremendous amount of opportunities. I recall that basketball was very prominent at the time, and during the weekends there was always a black basketball game sponsored by black organizations, fraternities. Sororities were just beginning to become popular.

You had oratorical contests that were sponsored in the black community that were very well attended, and blacks had an annual picnic in Brookside Park in Pasadena where you saw everybody. Everybody was there. You didn't have a very large population, and everybody attended events of that nature. And the churches had young adult clubs, lyceum activity, forums, and

things of that nature. So while it was not, let us say, integrated, you made the best out of it, and it was not substandard by any means.

VASQUEZ: Again, where did black society in Los Angeles live in those days?

HAWKINS: Primarily along Central Avenue, I would say, most of them east of Central or a block or two west. Central was primarily the hub. None of the blacks lived west. . . . Well, as far west as Avalon [Boulevard], and I recall the first few blacks that did move west of Avalon created quite a problem.

VASQUEZ: In what sense?

HAWKINS: Well, the property was restricted, had restricted covenants which were legally recognized, and the few blacks that moved west of that area had problems. Many of them had to defend their homes.

VASQUEZ: But your people never tried to do that?

HAWKINS: No, we lived near Forty-second [Street] and Hooper Avenue, and that was not a problem. Although where we moved to--this was the second home in Los Angeles--had restricted covenants. But they were being ignored because whites were moving away, selling out to blacks, and blacks were moving in, I

think. On the block that we moved to, we were about the second black family that moved into that neighborhood. But it wasn't very long before the neighborhood became all black, anyway.

VASQUEZ: Now, you got through UCLA and then went to USC [University of Southern California].

HAWKINS: I did not really technically go to USC. I had a course at USC.

VASQUEZ: In the Institute of Government?

HAWKINS: They claim me, but I don't want to assert myself.

VASQUEZ: But you never did graduate work there?

HAWKINS: No. It was a course sponsored by the Institute of Government. It was at a time when I was involved in juvenile delinquency prevention work, and it was in connection with that. I worked in juvenile prevention with [Los Angeles] County.

Now, all during this time I had one other job that lasted basically all through my college career: that was as a soda jerker--which is what we called it in those days, anyway--at a drugstore at Twenty-seventh [Street] and Central. That afforded me the opportunity to complete my studies at UCLA during the year. My first UCLA employment was as a custodian, but then I got this job, which

lasted throughout my career until I graduated. Then I decided, well, I had graduated, I shouldn't be a soda jerker any longer. I had graduated, and I ought to be able to do something else.

At about the same time we had three or four other young people who were somewhat of the same mind that I was. The principal one was Leon Washington Jr., who became the editor of the [Los Angeles] Sentinel. This is a long time, however, before the Sentinel was established. Leon Washington Jr. and two or three others of us were young people together, and we became quite concerned that young people were not obtaining the opportunities that we were.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

HAWKINS: The days that I'm talking about, I'm dating it to the thirties and possibly early forties. You still had discriminatory signs in the windows, in the restaurants along Broadway Avenue and Seventh [Street], which was a central point. Not that they did not solicit Negro trade. I recall in the bus station at Sixth [Street] and Main [Street]--which was a prominent place, where all

the buses and red cars, primarily red cars, originated, at Sixth and Main; then they radiated out to outlying places--the restaurants in that building also had signs posted, "We do not cater to Negro trade." Those were the days that were still existing in Los Angeles, throughout the state for that matter, but also in Los Angeles. The theaters were integrated, but not the restaurants.

Now, getting back, I think I was just getting into politics.

VASQUEZ: A group of you . . .

HAWKINS: Right, a nucleus group of about five young people.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember the names of these people?

HAWKINS: Well, Leon Washington Jr. I recall. Edith Keyser was another one. One was a student out at UCLA named Ismael [P.] Florey, and another one was a man by the name of Alfred Green. I can recall those now. There might have been one or two others.

VASQUEZ: What is it that brought you together?

HAWKINS: We were active primarily in the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], and part of us, three of us, were from UCLA: Edith Keyser and Ismael

Florey and myself. And the other two were active in one way or the other. Leon Washington was just then beginning to become active in trying to publish something, and he depended on us to help him distribute his throwaway newspaper to get started.

VASQUEZ: What was it called?

HAWKINS: I've forgotten the name of the throwaway. I don't think it was called the Sentinel.

VASQUEZ: But it became the Sentinel?

HAWKINS: It became the Sentinel. So that was the way we got together. But we soon developed an interest in the political situation. At that time, the city was divided up in such a way-- The [Los Angeles City] Council managed districts so that blacks constituted a major part, not the majority, but a major part of four different council-managed districts out of the fifteen. But they were such a small part of it, they weren't able to elect a councilman. However, that black vote, which was in an assembly district, one assembly district but four different council-managed districts, was used by the city political machine to elect the city

council. They used the black vote primarily, they controlled the black vote, and they parlayed that into controlling these four council-managed districts. Also, it was very heavily used in electing the city attorney and the district attorney.

VASQUEZ: And who were the brokers for this vote?

HAWKINS: [Erwin P.] Pete Werner was a city attorney, and his wife was named Helen Werner and she was a politician who organized the whole thing. It was called the "Werner machine," and she was called "Queen Helen." She gave out little favors in the black community, primarily to what were then looked upon as the key people. They were prominent ministers or identified with certain organizations.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember any names of those people or their organizations?

HAWKINS: Well, you had one who was called Pop Sanders, who controlled the patronage for the railway system, L.A. railway system. To get a job in that system, in any way, primarily laborers . . .

VASQUEZ: This is the Los Angeles Railway [Corporation], not the Pacific Electric [Railway Corporation]?

HAWKINS: No, L.A. Railway. You had to go through Pop Sanders; he had that patronage under his control. To get a job in the gas company--I'm talking about low-level jobs; you know, custodians, laborers, whatnot--you had to go through the other politicians. The California Eagle, which was a prominent black newspaper then, was controlled by the Bass family, Joseph [A.] Bass and Charlotta Bass. They controlled the media at that time.

VASQUEZ: This was considered the black newspaper?

HAWKINS: Yeah, they supported this machine.

VASQUEZ: Who were some of the ministers? Do you remember anyone?

HAWKINS: The one who was named [] Carter. I'm trying to think of his first name. He was from Pasadena, but he was primarily considered to be the individual most influential among the Baptist ministers.

VASQUEZ: Carter?

HAWKINS: Yes. But the important thing, I guess, in connection with this would be that all this took place within one assembly district.

VASQUEZ: Which district was that?

HAWKINS: At that time, the Sixty-second District. And

that district was represented by the only black elected official anyplace in the state.

VASQUEZ: What was his name?

HAWKINS: [Assemblyman Frederick M.] Fred Roberts. As young people, we saw what was going on. We developed a new plan of apportioning the districts so that they would be more equal, or let's say fairer to blacks, so that blacks would not be split up and not be important. We saw that as the key to upsetting this machine. Well, that was dangerous in those days, and as a result of that we were hounded a lot when going around to public meetings to try to explain anything.

VASQUEZ: And this was just the five or six of you on your own?

HAWKINS: Well, there were others, but we were the principal ones.

VASQUEZ: Was it under the auspices of the YMCA? Or just on your own?

HAWKINS: We were on our own.

VASQUEZ: You didn't form an organization or give it a name?

HAWKINS: No. It developed later into a Democratic club, but we didn't start as a Democratic club because that was very unpopular. To be a Democrat was

unpopular because everyone was Republican then,
and the only black official was Republican.

VASQUEZ: Fred Roberts?

HAWKINS: Fred Roberts.

VASQUEZ: He'd been in office quite a number of years?

HAWKINS: Yeah, he served sixteen years and was a senior member--as a matter of fact, the dean [of the assembly]--at the time when I defeated him. In other words, we were expressing ourselves as young people, perhaps a little foolishly, because we were up against tremendous forces: the city attorney, the district attorney, the police department. And the police department was under the control of a rather corrupt political machine.

VASQUEZ: Who was the police chief at that time, do you remember?

HAWKINS: I can check that.

VASQUEZ: It's no problem, I can find that. [James E. Davis]

HAWKINS: But the principal part of the police department was a group of individuals who called themselves the vice squad, but it was really a Red squad.

VASQUEZ: Oh, really?

HAWKINS: Yes. Anybody who differed was considered to be

Red, and so interpreted by many. And that was the thing that was used against us going around. All we wanted was an opportunity for decent employment, something like that, but it was interpreted as fighting against the leadership of that day. And all the people--the secretary of the YMCA, the prominent ministers--were all on the other side.

VASQUEZ: What kind of harassment did you get from the Red squad?

HAWKINS: They would follow us and attempt to break up meetings where we might assemble, were obviously present in some of the public meetings, would come in and be very prominent, show themselves as a means of intimidating.

VASQUEZ: Did they have black officers or white officers?

HAWKINS: No, these were primarily white officers, although there were a few blacks, but they were just a few who were beginning at that time.

VASQUEZ: And these white officers thought nothing about coming to a black meeting and standing there?

HAWKINS: Oh, no, absolutely not. Nothing whatsoever. They would intimidate individuals along the streets. As a matter of fact, I had a good

family who lived next to us. One of the members of the family was very black, and he was married to a black woman who was white complexioned. They could hardly go around the community without getting stopped until it was soon found they were both black.

VASQUEZ: What was the black attitude towards mixed marriage?

HAWKINS: It was somewhat strange. It was not as popular or acceptable at that time as it later became, a matter of no concern whatsoever. But it was not really the most popular thing.

VASQUEZ: Tell me more about your political activity.

HAWKINS: So we got into a battle to unseat this black official because we saw him as a key member of this organization--a real decent guy, very well educated, but a very conservative Republican. We just interpreted his office as being part of this attempt to exploit the black community politically for the sake of this machine in return for a few crumbs. And the newspaper [California Eagle] was very supportive of this.

VASQUEZ: Was the mayor seen as an integral part of this?

HAWKINS: [Frank L.] Shaw.

VASQUEZ: Was Shaw seen as the leader of it?

HAWKINS: He was not held in too high esteem by a lot of people and later was practically disgraced, but that was as political developments went.

VASQUEZ: But this is when the man was in his heyday?

HAWKINS: Yeah, he had the city under his control. So we attempted to unseat this black guy as a means of establishing new leadership, and in 1932 we supported a candidate against him and found out that the candidate we supported had been put in by him.

VASQUEZ: Who was that candidate?

HAWKINS: I don't recall.

VASQUEZ: That's all right, I can find that.

HAWKINS: But it would be the Democratic candidate.

[Courtney Ellsworth]

VASQUEZ: Also black, of course?

HAWKINS: Also black. And we found out afterwards, after we had tried desperately. We worked like a devil only to find out that this guy would not show up at rallies. He would do a lot of things that were just discouraging.

VASQUEZ: How did you find out specifically or unequivocally that he had been bought?

HAWKINS: Well, I cannot say conclusively, although we were later told that. And that's pure rumor.

VASQUEZ: Everything added up to that?

HAWKINS: Everything added up to that. It was pretty obvious to us that we had been, in a sense, what we would say "sold out." And the candidate himself just proved that he just didn't want to win. He wasn't supposed to win, and yet we made a very good showing.

VASQUEZ: I was going to ask you, what kind of showing did you make?

HAWKINS: It was a good showing, but we were in a Republican district. We didn't have strong organization. In a sense, what we saw ourselves doing was taking over the group or organization, but we could not really build one ourselves. We didn't have the means of doing it.

VASQUEZ: So what did you build into, then? Churches?

HAWKINS: What we'd do, we would go to one of the prominent places at that time for discussion, civic discussion, the Civil Liberties Union of the Elks. This was the central auditorium on Central Avenue. They had forums from time to time on civic issues.

VASQUEZ: So it was a black Elks club?

HAWKINS: A black Elks club. We would go to that club, and we found reception at some of these places, the way we talked.

VASQUEZ: So oratory became important?

HAWKINS: Yes, right. Many times we would go in as a small group of some six or seven people, scatter in the auditorium, and one of us--we didn't have mikes so much--would attempt to get the platform to present our views or get up in the audience when someone would come who was telling us the wrong thing.

For example, if they had a discussion on utility rates, gas bills and so forth, we would clearly capture the audience by indicating the alignment of the political groups in the community supporting a utility that was imposing such rates on us. We would attempt to get our voices heard, and we would have individuals who would say, "Let him speak, let him speak," things like that, and we soon captured the audience merely through pure logic.

VASQUEZ: Who was the best orator in your group?

HAWKINS: A fellow by the name of [Richard] Dick Abrams.

But we soon found converts, people in the Civil Liberties Union, for example, who began to speak out as well. With our small group we had to plan it. We had one individual in the group who, when one of us would make a statement which we thought was very definitive or emotional, would just sort of grunt, "Uh-huh, ain't it so," something like that, and sort of get the audience stirred up.

We soon found out we could go to other groups, to organizations, and get a voice. We could not possibly present ourselves because we were not known; we were considered to be upstarts among some of the established leadership.

VASQUEZ: Were you ever red-baited?

HAWKINS: Not so much, except by the police squad.

VASQUEZ: But your own people never red-baited you?

HAWKINS: No, no, no. We soon began to find a favorable reception, because most of them had never really given too much thought to what was happening, what had grown up over a period of time. They had an elected representative, and they respected him because he was the only one they had, and there was nothing about the man that was disgraceful. Very talented, very able, very educated, but

just in the wrong crowd, from our point of view, politically. And you still had, as I say, that Republican loyalty that we had to overcome. But then things began to change rapidly because of the Depression.

VASQUEZ: Well, '32 was the depth of the Depression, wasn't it?

HAWKINS: Yeah.

VASQUEZ: How was the decision arrived at to, one, run somebody for assembly in that district and, two, have it be Augustus Hawkins?

HAWKINS: Well, it was decided that we could not possibly trust someone we did not know after that experience. We were convinced that we had been sold out, so we said, "Well, next time we run one of our own." We just got together and began to discuss. Edith Keyser was a woman, and she did not think it was wise. One by one, it was sort of a process of elimination, and I was the least offensive, I guess, because I had not really done anything that anyone could bring up. We felt that because of my long time in YMCA work and also at UCLA and the fact that I had made a lot of friends in the drugstore. . . . The drugstore was sort of

a meeting place for a lot of people.

VASQUEZ: As a soda jerk?

HAWKINS: Yes. I seemed to know quite a few people, and it was thought that maybe I was the best one, for some reason I don't know, because there were others we might have selected. But we wanted one of our own; we weren't going to take a chance on anyone else. So the decision was made that I would be the candidate.

VASQUEZ: About when was the decision made?

HAWKINS: Oh, that would have been about 1933.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember what part of the year?

HAWKINS: No, I don't.

VASQUEZ: Okay. Now you have made a decision, you've got a group of people, you've met a lot of people, you've learned how to rabble-rouse--if I might use that term, how to work an audience--you've learned how to get your issues out. Were you a pretty fair orator?

HAWKINS: No, I would say more logical than . . .

VASQUEZ: Than fiery?

HAWKINS: Than fiery.

VASQUEZ: How did you put a campaign together?

HAWKINS: Well, we felt, first of all, that we had certain

things that we could do. One, we recognized that the district was split, that we had a substantial white population still in the district, and this white population was strongly Democratic. We felt that while the blacks were Republican, that they almost offset the Democrats. It was just about evenly split. So we had a Democratic constituency, we had a Republican constituency. Fred Roberts would not appeal to the whites at all because they were so strongly Democratic, way before the blacks tended to become Democratic. We felt that was one possibility that we had going for us. Just filing on the Democratic ticket was itself helpful.

We also felt that while we didn't have the newspapers then, we had our throwaway. Leon Washington was beginning to develop a throwaway.

VASQUEZ: The Eagle wasn't backing you, for sure?

HAWKINS: Oh, no, the Eagle would be strongly against us, we knew that, strongly against us. We knew that to begin with.

VASQUEZ: And the L.A. Times and all the other papers?

HAWKINS: We also saw the development of a labor movement in the district. Industry, from a black point of

view, was the railroads.

VASQUEZ: What were the major unions involved with the railroads?

HAWKINS: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

VASQUEZ: Did this include conductors?

HAWKINS: Well, not the conductors. We didn't have any.

VASQUEZ: On the trolleys, did you have black conductors?

HAWKINS: No, no. We basically had the railroad unions-- the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the [Brotherhood of Dining Car Cooks and] Waiters-- and we also had the [American Federation of] Musicians. They were all segregated unions controlled by blacks. We knew that these individuals were breaking with the rest of the black population because Bass's newspaper was one of those on the list to receive the money from the Pullman [Palace Car] Company and the corporate sector. They were anti-labor, and yet we had this new labor movement among blacks. So we figured that was an asset that we could use, and we did use it, very much so.

VASQUEZ: How?

HAWKINS: They campaigned for us, they supplied the foot soldiers, and they also supplied a little money--

not a great deal, but at least it was enough.

VASQUEZ: What kind of things did you use? Flyers, posters, billboards?

HAWKINS: Well, primarily we used meetings. Politics was a lot more personal then. You could advertise. This was during the Depression. You could advertise a meeting in one of the school buildings. We'd take over the school auditorium. Perhaps we would raffle off a ham or something of that nature, or give door prizes, and then we would advertise the issue of jobs, building it around getting relief.

At that time, the [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt administration was just being created, and you had projects that paid \$55 a month, which was pretty high then. We would organize the unemployed, and we would have meetings at the schools, at the Ross Snyder playground, and put those on, and the unions would support us.

I recall we had several outdoor feasts, and we used an old baseball park, which at that time was near the Jefferson High School auditorium, where the black baseball league had their games. We would take that over and get some

donations of beer and meat and things like that and have a big outdoor feast.

So we went to the people. We knew we couldn't go to the usual organizations. We knew that the ministers were not going to support us.

VASQUEZ: I was going to ask you, did any of the churches help?

HAWKINS: None of the churches.

VASQUEZ: None of them?

HAWKINS: None of them. They were practically all on the other side. And I'm not saying that they were bought off. I'm saying that their idea was that we have a respected public official, and let's not defeat him. But from some of them I suppose we did receive some donations, but we didn't have any ministry with us. We went to their parishioners just the same, and it was there that we were able to stand outside the church and pass out literature. And we could see a difference.

In spite of all of that we had, we planned that we would probably not win the black community. One, my complexion was not identifiable with blacks, many of them didn't know I was black--so I lost votes. On the other side, on the white

side, however, it was an asset, so it was a gamble as to which would be the greater loss.

VASQUEZ: Who did you link up with in the white community to try and work that community?

HAWKINS: We had several groups. Well, first of all, we had the labor group, the white labor group.

VASQUEZ: Do you remember what unions?

HAWKINS: Again, we had the railroad unions with us on the white side. Through the black brothers we got the railroad unions on our side. But we also had the central labor council. And we got a little financial support, not a great deal.

VASQUEZ: Any individuals from that labor council stick out in your mind who were especially helpful?

HAWKINS: Not that I can recall strongly. Our greatest connection with the labor movement at that time was through the railroad group. As a matter of fact, my campaign manager was one of the union representatives, Clarence Johnson. He was with the waiters union, but we also had the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and, at that time, A. Philip Randolph. I had become acquainted with A. Philip Randolph. His organization did not believe in endorsing candidates. However, he did

come out in big church meetings, and he was popular across the spectrum among blacks. He did speak out against newspapers that had been bought off and newspapers that were fighting against the working people. That fit into our campaign.

VASQUEZ: So without endorsing you he supported you?

HAWKINS: Without endorsing me he supported me. And [Cottrell] C. L. Dellums was one of the vice presidents from Oakland, and he also got involved in the campaign.

VASQUEZ: Would he be any relation to [Congressman Ronald V.] Ron Dellums?

HAWKINS: Yes, his uncle.

VASQUEZ: He's his uncle?

HAWKINS: He's still alive, too. A great outspoken individual, good speaker and all. We got a lot of support out of him.

So the election came, and we began to count the votes.

VASQUEZ: Before you get into vote counting, the EPIC [End Poverty in California] movement was pretty strong that year.

HAWKINS: Yes, EPIC. I could have mentioned that. That was on the white side.

VASQUEZ: Were they helpful?

HAWKINS: They did not endorse me.

VASQUEZ: They didn't?

HAWKINS: No. They were helpful because they created the issues, and they were strongly of a liberal persuasion, but they did not endorse me. I was one of the few candidates elected without their endorsement.

VASQUEZ: Why didn't they endorse you?

HAWKINS: They had asked me something about medicine, and I had indicated a response that they felt did not support socialized medicine. It was a peculiar thing, because later, when I went to Sacramento, prepayment health insurance was one of the things that I was strongly supportive of. But the way they presented it to me, I told them that I couldn't specifically commit myself.

VASQUEZ: They might have done you a favor by not supporting you, as it turned out.

HAWKINS: As it turned out, yes, except that it helped on the white side.

VASQUEZ: How about leftist groups? How about the Communist party or groups like that? Did they try to come into your campaign? Were they

helpful?

HAWKINS: They were not openly helpful that I know of, and I don't know that they had much strength. They didn't have much strength among blacks. As time went on they became more active, particularly in some of the unions, but originally I'm talking about some of the liberals who might have been accused of being Reds. But everybody with a liberal persuasion was a "Red" almost then, but they were clearly not communist.

VASQUEZ: It seems like the most tangible organized support groups that you had for that first election were labor.

HAWKINS: Labor, yes. It was the best organized. And there was another movement among the whites, on the white side. It was called the . . .

VASQUEZ: Was this the Townsend movement?¹

HAWKINS: It wasn't. . . . Well, Townsend was one. But this was. . . . I have to get this name for you. I've forgotten the name of it. It was another group that had organized around the

1. A social movement in California led by Dr. Francis E. Townsend which proposed a monthly pension of \$200 for every person over sixty with a record of good citizenship.

cooperative movement. [Utopian Society] But anyway, they used code names. The ones who joined had a certain number, and they identified themselves by this, almost like an American Express number. And I know that on my literature I put that number. But among the blacks this was not popular. Among the whites, it was, and they said, "Oh, he's a member of our group." And it was a legitimate group.

VASQUEZ: How about other candidates, other incumbents? Did you get endorsements? Did you try and find others?

HAWKINS: No, I did not. We did not.

VASQUEZ: You stayed within the black community except for that white area in the district?

HAWKINS: Yes, in the general election we got that, but this is all the primary.

VASQUEZ: You ran as a Democrat?

HAWKINS: I ran as a Democrat.

VASQUEZ: Openly as a Democrat?

HAWKINS: Openly as a Democrat.

VASQUEZ: You filed only as a Democrat? You did not cross-file?

HAWKINS: You could cross-file then, but I did not cross-

file. And if Fred Roberts had cross-filed, he might have won. He might have won both.

VASQUEZ: It sounds like it.

HAWKINS: But he was such a dyed-in-the-wool Republican. And there were other candidates on the Democratic ticket who did file.

I don't recall offhand, but there were three or four others, including a Dr. J. A. Somerville, a very prominent pioneer and certainly a very respected individual. He was the one who built the Dunbar Hotel and was a very prominent dentist. He expected us to support him because we had been identified with him, and he was shocked when I filed, because he filed also. But we again were suspicious, and we weren't so sure whether or not he might have been a "ringer." Whether he was or not, I don't know, but he filed, and the vote was split.

But we had so much going for us, and we had youth on our side, plus the fact that we were able, as young people, to convince a few of the old-timers that it was time for a change. But we did have that other support which was completely separate from the black community. I had white

support, which, regardless of who else was going to vote for a Democrat, all we had to do was make sure they voted.

VASQUEZ: So how did your vote come out?

HAWKINS: In this primary we won, not by a great deal. I have forgotten, but it wasn't a great deal. In the general election, I know it was only fifteen hundred votes when we defeated Fred Roberts. But having become the Democratic nominee, I was then the only Democrat obviously available and in the run-off. We figured that we lost the black community by a small margin, but we did split it, and that's all we needed to do.

So when we began counting the votes, we were behind until we got to the dividing line between the east and the west, the west side of the district being white and the east side of it black, and, as I recall, about fifteen hundred votes separated us.

VASQUEZ: And it was that white vote that made the difference?

HAWKINS: The white vote made the difference. But we did succeed in splitting the black vote. Then, not because of this but because of the Roosevelt

administration, it began turning Democratic. It was split along party lines rather than on racial lines. Although one might obviously say whites versus blacks, it was the whites who were Democrats. Of course, in the next election we didn't have any trouble.

VASQUEZ: You were twenty-seven years old then?

HAWKINS: Yes.

VASQUEZ: You were the youngest assemblyman at that time?

HAWKINS: At that time, yes. Of course, my opponent said it was a fluke, and he figured that we had captured the white vote merely because of complexion and that the blacks did not really understand the issue in terms of party affiliation. But by that time the blacks were becoming so Democratic until we had both sides lined up, and we had no problem thereafter. Thereafter I filed on both tickets, because I could get the Republicans, the black Republicans, to support me.

VASQUEZ: By what time could you do that? After how many terms?

HAWKINS: The next election after that, we had already started cross-filing.

VASQUEZ: What were the issues you took on in your first term that won black support so quickly? Or was it just the knowledge that you were black by then?

HAWKINS: We began to get into other issues. Up to that time, Fred Roberts had relied completely on the fact that he had not allowed any anti-civil-rights actions to take place, that he had protected them. In other words, he was a watchdog.

VASQUEZ: A paternal figure?

HAWKINS: Yes, yes. That nothing bad had happened, and that he was a Republican and blacks owed the Republican party so much that they should continue to be loyal. That's about all he ever got. He was active in some education matters. What positive things he did were primarily in terms of the schools. He had supported very strongly a normal school, which later became really a university but at that time was a school of education for teachers, and he was active in that. He did a good job.

But he had also exposed himself in certain other areas. He had sponsored a bill to establish a black Tuskegee University in the

West, and we used that against him. He was sponsoring segregation in the education code. The code actually said "a university for Afro-Americans," and we took him on over that.

VASQUEZ: He used those terms, "Afro-Americans"?

HAWKINS: Uh-huh. The biggest thing one could really say about the man was that he spent--and this was primarily the way we phrased it--sixteen years in Sacramento and he had gone to sleep. It was true that that's about all he ever did. He was reactive in nature rather than proactive and trying to get things done.

Now, we began to put in bills that related to education.

VASQUEZ: Before we get into your first term, because I think we are going to have to do that in a future session, what was the reaction to your election by the black paper, the Eagle, and also by the white papers, or the establishment papers?

HAWKINS: The Eagle began to lose ground from that time on, not merely because of this, but because of other events. Blacks were becoming pro-labor. Blacks were becoming Democrats. The Eagle was just out of step and began to lose face. In the meantime,

Leon Washington with the Sentinel began to pick up.

In issues of segregation, so many things were happening. Dr. Hudson was arrested down at Manhattan Beach for daring to bathe in the Pacific Ocean. Things of that nature began to take place. And blacks really began to see Roosevelt almost as a savior. They were eating better.

VASQUEZ: So the New Deal helped you?

HAWKINS: From then on it was the New Deal. We moved with the New Deal, and we also began at that time to lay the foundation for the Civil Rights movement. A. Philip Randolph continued his organization, continued to fight against discrimination in industry and so forth. The whole political climate just changed dramatically, and it became respectable to be a Democrat. It also became a mark of intelligence for an individual to shift from one side.

So all of this old leadership began to lose face, began to die off. One woman had been pretty well organized. Betty Hill had a lot of clubs that were part of the social life, although politics and social life pretty much merged. She

began to lose face in her club, and no longer
were black women beholden to Betty Hill.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[End Session 1]

[Session 2, December 10, 1988]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

VASQUEZ: When we last spoke, we had come to your first election. But before we get into the particulars of your first term, can you go back and set the tone of the times for me in terms of a movement of blacks from almost exclusive membership in the Republican party towards an acceptance of participation in the Democratic party? You've mentioned that it was in part a result of the New Deal. Could you expand on that?

HAWKINS: It was a movement over time. Things were shifting rapidly after several Republican administrations, and after prosperity seemed to be well established, suddenly the whole thing came to an end in 1929 with the stock market crash. I think that a lot of blacks felt it keenly, because they were thrown out of jobs. Those who were so-called middle-class lost what they had. The banks closed up. In my particular instance, my family suffered along with the others in that my father,

HAWKINS: who had accumulated substantial wealth in real estate and transportation in the Deep South and brought it to Los Angeles, overnight lost what he had. He represented one of those who was a dyed-in-the-wool Republican, was a very devout Hooverite. Suddenly he was faced with a loss of what had been accumulated.

This, I think, was widespread throughout the black community. It was a matter of survival. In the early days of the thirties, 1930 and '31, and before Roosevelt became president, bread lines developed. We had various references to the [President Herbert C.] Hoover administration: little towns that were being struck were called "Hooverilles," the shantytowns were called "Hoover huts," and some of the individuals kidded themselves on the fact that they didn't have any "Hoover paper" in their pockets, meaning, of course, dollar bills.

The whole thing was a transformation of individuals and their thinking. Individuals were fighting with each other over the garbage that was put out in restaurants. It was quite a shocking event.

VASQUEZ: In the early 1930s, only about 20 percent of the population here in southern California was native-born; the rest had come from other parts of the country. Did that produce a rather unstable social situation? Perhaps a fluid situation is a better term.

HAWKINS: I would say fluid, yes. I think that would be a good description. Many of the most aggressive people at that time were the newcomers. They came out of the Deep South and brought certain possessions with them. California was the land of opportunity in comparison with the Deep South. This was slightly before the Depression. But the Depression struck, and everybody developed the same tendency to look on things in a different light.

VASQUEZ: Looking back on it now, do you think there was as much demoralization among Californians because of the Depression as there was in other parts of the country?

HAWKINS: I think we felt it, perhaps not quite as much as other parts of the country. Certainly we were among the better areas, I think, because we did have some security. That was before Social

Security and other things. But living was a littler easier in terms of housing. You didn't have the extreme climatic conditions. Obviously, food was a little more available because we were growing it here. The tendency was to live in a more hospitable climate, as we didn't have the type of social programs we have now. Welfare was charity, you might say, but a little more charitable than elsewhere. And obviously from the racial point of view, blacks were treated somewhat better, although it was a long, far cry from what it is today. There was still a hostility against minorities on the West Coast.

VASQUEZ: Tell me, when you ran for office as a Democrat, was that an obstacle for you in the black community?

HAWKINS: It was to the extent that most blacks were still Republican and voting the Republican ticket. So that did create a problem that I had in my first campaign. Blacks had to overcome this traditional allegiance to the Republican party, and they were slow to change. I would say "slow" in the sense of several years.

The great change obviously occurred between 1930 and 1933--perhaps not a slow change, one might say, because it was within a period of two or three years. But it was not until 1934 or 1935 that, I would say, a majority of blacks voted Democratic. On the other hand, in the district from which I ran [Sixty-second Assembly District], about half the population, or almost half, was white.

VASQUEZ: And that population was essential to your success, wasn't it?

HAWKINS: Yes. The white vote, ironically, saved me, because that vote was ten-to-one Democratic. So, with a slight division among the blacks, the white vote could prevail.

VASQUEZ: So when you campaigned in black areas, did you emphasize black issues rather than Democratic issues?

HAWKINS: Oh, yes. Without a doubt. We openly identified ourselves as Democrats. We had what was a nucleus of a young, black Democratic club.

VASQUEZ: Who were some of the principal players in that club?

HAWKINS: I think I'll have to go back to some of the names

I've previously referred to, such as Leon Washington, Edith Keyser, Al Green. And there were those, I would say, consisting of probably a group of some twelve or fifteen individuals. Most of the others are not as well known as the ones I mentioned.

We met at a very prominent real estate office of a family by the name of Walter [L.] Gordon, a real estate broker who was very friendly and was one of the few adults in the group. His son later became a prominent lawyer, Walter L. Gordon [Jr.]. I think he's still alive, if I'm not mistaken. I don't know. But it was a very well-known family. Mrs. [Vertiner] Gordon was very prominent in social activity. And there were a few adults like this who gave us some credibility.

VASQUEZ: As you were mostly all college-aged.

HAWKINS: That's right. And the rest of our adult supporters were primarily from the labor movement and prominent in the Elks club, which was at that time located on Central Avenue, a very prominent meeting place. If we could pick up any supporters among that adult group, particularly among the

Elks, it also added to the credibility.

VASQUEZ: In that time, of course, the Townsend movement and the utopian movement were rather strong. Did blacks gravitate to those kinds of movements?

HAWKINS: Not to a great extent.

VASQUEZ: Why not? Why do you think they didn't?

HAWKINS: Most of them were centered in white communities. The Townsend movement came out of Long Beach. It came out of rather strange backgrounds of persons who had migrated to the state from Iowa and places like that. Therefore, they did not openly involve participation of blacks. We had what was called the Utopian Society, which was a semisecret society, although I would not evaluate its secrecy as being too strong. But the members were given numbers to identify themselves, and there was a certain amount of appeal.

VASQUEZ: What was the purpose of that?

HAWKINS: Well, it was primarily charitable in its nature. The idea was that it would share some of their good fortune with others, of a very small nature, perhaps.

VASQUEZ: But there was no significance with the numbers

and all of that? What was the purpose of that?

HAWKINS: I think it was a gimmick, really, to excite people, to make it seem something else. It was used commercially. I recall that even on my stationery I used my number. No one was offended by it, because those who didn't know too much about the society didn't know what it meant. And those who did obviously said, "Well, this guy's a member of the society." And it helped out particularly, as I say, among the white community. Among the blacks, the Father Divine movement was also very widespread.

VASQUEZ: What was attractive about Father Divine for blacks?

HAWKINS: Well, the thing I think that attracted the average person was the fact that you'd go there to Father Divine's places and get a meal for ten or fifteen cents with all five courses. At a time when food was not as plentiful as it was elsewhere, to get a meal for ten cents was a great opportunity. And it was well cooked and a very pleasing environment. The movement spread quite extensively.

VASQUEZ: I wonder, how much do you think these movements

represented a lack of confidence in government or a disillusionment with government at the time?

HAWKINS: Well, I think that was involved in it. I think people were grasping for straws. That was also a basic foundation for some of it. The [Upton] Sinclair movement, for example, had a very strong economic base fighting against monopolies and fighting against the exploitation of individuals based upon the fact that the prosperity should be spread around.

VASQUEZ: This was the EPIC movement?

HAWKINS: Somewhat a "semi" of the EPIC movement, yes.

VASQUEZ: Did this make it any more difficult to get people excited about electoral politics?

HAWKINS: Well, I think there was a certain amount of excitement due to the attraction of these movements. There was a certain amount of resistance, obviously, because of the strong hold of the black church on blacks. This thing persisted and still persists; their basic foundation has been the black church, and it still remains. These movements, while they attracted those otherwise nonaffiliated, they certainly did not in any way demean the black church, which all through this

period was still a place that attracted most blacks. However, religion is conservatism, and blacks were not tempted to join other movements as long as their faith in the black church was never shaken. I think it was inevitable that eventually the black church would become the soul of the Civil Rights movement and begin to change itself.

VASQUEZ: But at the time, the black church leadership was mostly Republican?

HAWKINS: In the Republican party and voted safely Republican.

VASQUEZ: Why?

HAWKINS: Because of old alignments. When I first ran, I couldn't get into the black churches. The ministers were not Democrats. They were highly supported by Republican sources. I say this not in any way derogatorily, but historically they had been supported very strongly by Republican wealth, and they continued to be so supported up until quite recently.

VASQUEZ: Were church leaders slow to come around to the Democratic party?

HAWKINS: Very slow, yes.

VASQUEZ: Slower than the community, perhaps?

HAWKINS: I think slower than the community itself, yes. I had no trouble reaching the membership of the church, but I just couldn't appear in the church as a speaker for Democratic causes.

VASQUEZ: So in a way you opened up the black community for the Democratic party--your generation and you as a political actor--is that right?

HAWKINS: Yes. I think that's very true.

VASQUEZ: Do you think that the Democratic party effectively responded to the interests of the black community and came forth to provide leadership and offer help?

HAWKINS: Well, I can't say that the black community was welcomed that much in the early days. You still had the old carryover in the Democratic party. And that was still prevailing when I went to Congress, for that matter. The [congressional] committees were controlled by southern Democrats. The Democratic conventions were pretty well controlled by moderate Democrats, if not some of the racists.

It was not really the great love for the Democratic party itself that caused blacks to

change; it was just a matter of economic survival. And, of course, when Roosevelt came along with his programs of Social Security, unemployment insurance, and whatnot, it began to supplant the old way of doing things. And blacks went for that. They were more for Roosevelt than they were for the Democratic party, for the Roosevelt principles.

When people were poor, they eventually ended up in what was called the poorhouse up until Roosevelt's time. These were institutions where they had to go. Unemployment insurance and Social Security replaced those things. If a person was mentally ill, that person was locked up. We didn't have mental institutions that cared for them as sick people. This whole thing began to change under Roosevelt and to be put on a sounder basis. It was programs like that that attracted blacks; it wasn't that they became dyed-in-the-wool Democrats.

[Interruption]

VASQUEZ: Did the [Governor] Culbert [L.] Olson administration attract a lot of support in the black community?

HAWKINS: Not at first. I would say that it was not that enticing to blacks.

[Interruption]

VASQUEZ: We were talking about the Culbert Olson administration and its appeal to the black community.

HAWKINS: Yes. Culbert Olson himself was not a really attractive candidate among blacks. Although being a Democrat, and with the EPIC movement gaining ground, the tide was shifting, and it continued to shift during his administration. He began to name Democrats to state offices for the first time: the first athletic commissioner, the first black to ever be named to a housing commission.

VASQUEZ: Who was that?

HAWKINS: Mrs. Jessie [L.] Terry. The athletic commissioner, if I recall, was Norman [O.] Houston. I may be wrong on that, but I think that's true. The first black named to the [California] Highway Patrol was Homer [L.] Garrot [Jr.], who later became a judge. And Culbert Olson did what had up to that time remained untouched--that is, the first black judge in California was named by

Culbert Olson: Edwin [L.] Jefferson, who's still alive. Homer Garrot is still alive. And there were other appointments of this nature. That really galvanized greater support for the Democrats and certainly greater support for Culbert Olson's administration.

VASQUEZ: He, of course, identified himself with the New Deal a great deal.

HAWKINS: Oh, without a doubt, yes.

VASQUEZ: Let's get to your first term. You were elected; you were a young twenty-seven-year-old assemblyman. Tell me about how you got acclimatized to Sacramento. What was your experience getting there and trying to learn the ropes?

HAWKINS: It was quite a shock because, unlike the previous representative there, I tended to be a lot more actively involved in the process itself. Fred Roberts was a person of great integrity, and from a personal point of view I don't want in any way to indicate that he was not. It was just the nature of the times that blacks, even in such prominent positions, did not fully participate. They accommodated themselves to what they felt were racist situations and did not press to be

included. That still prevails as quite the thing to do.

I was elected with a group of persons, the only black among a group of individuals who were active at that time. They were active in the Democratic movement, and as a result of that we became a lot more exposed. The first evening that I can recall spending in Sacramento I was in the presence of a group of my friends in the Senator Hotel talking about different things. One senator, whose name I will not reveal, because I don't think it's significant, came up to the group, and the first thing he said was, "I understand there's another nigger that's been elected to the assembly." My friends began to nudge him so he wouldn't embarrass himself. But I can recall to this very day how embarrassed he did become, and he later apologized, and we became rather friendly with each other.

VASQUEZ: Was this a Democrat?

HAWKINS: Yes, a Democrat. But it was very common to label individuals like that. It was the thing done among nonminorities. I remember that at different banquets and other events that

individuals often--public officials I'm talking about, members of the assembly and senate--told what they called coon jokes. Well, all that began to get out of date as blacks became more apparent. Certainly, as I went around, I was treated with, I think, respect, because things were beginning to change. Because here was a black person among them whom they would not really identify as black. They began to put two and two together and to change. But it was a long time before many of the places in Sacramento opened their doors to blacks.

VASQUEZ: Was there still segregation when you were there?

HAWKINS: Yes.

VASQUEZ: Tell me your impression of the other blacks that were in the legislature when you were up there.

HAWKINS: Well, it was several years before we had the second one, and that was [Assemblyman William] Byron Rumford of Oakland.

VASQUEZ: So you were the only one when you got there?

HAWKINS: I was the only one when I got there. Byron Rumford was the second, and I certainly worked hard to get him elected, because it eased the burden on all of us. There were times when I was

so sensitive to the fear that something in the civil rights area would go unanswered or would slip through that it kept me constantly busy. And to share that watchdog responsibility with a second black to me was a great relief.

Rumford was a very able legislator. We alternated on bills. The bills that I had been introducing, such as fair housing, fair employment practices, and whatnot, we began to alternate. One year, I'd sponsor them; the next year, Rumford would sponsor them.

VASQUEZ: Why did you alternate that way?

HAWKINS: Well, I just felt it was the thing to do. And we both had the same constituency. Rather than one of us assuming all of the load, I felt sharing it with someone else was not only helpful to me, but I felt in the long run we would have worked to get all of it through. It was just a matter of good, ordinary common sense.

VASQUEZ: Now, he was from northern California, you were from southern California.

HAWKINS: I was from the south, and he was from the north, right.

VASQUEZ: And at the time, that was the greatest division

in the state, north and south, even more than party. You bridged that?

HAWKINS: Yes. It was sectional interests prevailing, but in terms of what we stood for, Rumford and myself, there was no sectional division. It worked out well, because Rumford soon was able to get support from areas of the state that I did not have direct influence on and vice versa.

VASQUEZ: Was he able to round up, for example, "cow county" votes?

HAWKINS: Not "cow county" votes so much as Bay Area votes, the whole San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area. At that time, the county of San Francisco had--I've forgotten the number--but they had more than one senator. That was later realigned and the one-man-one-vote theory prevailed, and that whole idea of the cow counties and northern counties outvoting us was changed. So that the political power in a sense shifted south, and Los Angeles picked up. When Olson was elected governor, he was the only state senator from L.A. County, despite the fact that 40 percent of the vote was in L.A. County. So the voting patterns changed as the control shifted south. That, in a sense,

helped us--that is, helped not only the south but the Democrats.

VASQUEZ: Before we get into that, let's go back to the early years when you first got to Sacramento. You said you were elected with a group of, I suppose, like-minded liberal Democrats?

HAWKINS: Yes.

VASQUEZ: Who are some of these other people that you remember who were essential to your success in your early years or that you identified with, perhaps?

HAWKINS: Well, I could give names. I don't think they would be too easily identified now. There's Lee [E.] Geyer from the Compton area. There was [Vincent] Vince Thomas from San Pedro. A year or two later, Glenn [M.] Anderson was elected.

VASQUEZ: But the group you went up there with. You had mentioned earlier that you were elected with a particular group.

HAWKINS: Well, it was a group that at that time was called the EPIC group. William [M.] Jones, who became [assembly] speaker, was the leader of the group. While he was not an EPIC supporter as such, he was endorsed by the EPIC movement. As a

matter of fact, every one of the delegation from the Los Angeles area was endorsed by the EPIC movement except myself. I was the only one who wasn't endorsed.

VASQUEZ: Why weren't you endorsed?

HAWKINS: I believe it was because of a question that was put to me during an interview on medicine: Did I support prepaid medicine? I indicated at that time that I did not have a position on it, but that I would study the proposition. I had been very much identified with the medical profession by association, more social than political. I had many friends who felt that the EPIC movement stood for socialized medicine.

VASQUEZ: Was Dr. [H. Claude] Hudson one of them?

HAWKINS: I can't recall that Dr. Hudson was, but most others were. I can't really identify many of them. But they were, in a sense, identified with my own brother, who was a doctor. This was a peculiar thing, because this feeling later was almost reversed. I became a very strong supporter of prepaid health insurance after I had studied the proposition and gotten into it. [Governor] Earl Warren, for example, was a very strong

supporter, and I was a very strong supporter of his in this program. And it was the thing that later, although this is jumping the gun a little bit, was used against me when I ran for the speakership of the assembly [1959]. I was not elected, primarily on the basis of the votes that came from those who supported the California Medical Association, which was against prepaid health insurance.

VASQUEZ: I want to get into that later on, that 1959 run for the speakership. But right now I'm trying to reconstruct what happened in your first term. Were you able to be effective at all? You were a Democrat, you were black, you were from the southern part of the state. It seems to me you were swimming against the tide.

HAWKINS: Well, I wasn't swimming against the tide in the legislature that year. The first year was quite a movement away from that northern conservatism that had dominated the state, the cow counties that had the most votes. We began to introduce--when I say "we," the block from southern California in particular--quite a few pro-labor bills and programs that went to the subject of housing,

HAWKINS: health, and things of this nature. That was right along my line, because I had by that time become identified with such issues.

Among some of the first bills I introduced were pro-labor bills, which were almost revolutionary at that time. As I recall, the first bill I introduced. . . . In the railroad industry, there was the idea that you could have sleeping and feeding programs in the same coach. That applied to dining cars, for example. The tables on which patrons ate in the daytime would be used for the employees to sleep on at night. The railroad employees, who obviously were among my strong backers, were trying to do away with that because it was uncomfortable, particularly in the state travel. So one of the first bills I introduced was to do away with that.¹ Eventually, the railroads provided dormitory coaches for people to sleep on. But that was a type of bill that we were concerned about.

It was a period in which we had the so-

1. A.B. 17, 51st Leg., Reg. Sess. (1935).

called yellow dog contracts, whereby individuals who got employment had to pledge that they would not join a union. Well, we fought against that, and I led one of the first battles against that. This was the nature of the legislation that I was identified with, which was quite different from what had been going on for the previous sixteen years under a Republican assemblyman.

VASQUEZ: So you came in with a class that was shaking the traditions of the day?

HAWKINS: Right. Absolutely, yes.

VASQUEZ: Tell me your impressions of the Speaker of the Assembly of that time, Edward Craig.

HAWKINS: A very able and, I would say, a person of great integrity. Very conservative, ultra-conservative. Primarily an individual that I would say was a good presiding officer but of no great consequence otherwise. Other than, as I say, there was no confrontational aspect to his presiding.

VASQUEZ: Tell me, what was your overall impression of the leadership in the state legislature?

HAWKINS: Oh, mostly conservative, but the friendly and get-along type. It showed no great difference

towards me as an individual. If I wanted to make it personal, I was accorded full respect. I tended to get along with the Republicans just as well as I did with the Democrats because of the fact that my background had, to some extent, been softened from the Republican side. My dad had been a Republican all his life. I didn't see any great difference there. Also, at that time we had a nonpartisan state due to [Governor] Hiram [W.] Johnson's background and the legacy that he left us. We were nonpartisan. In all of my subsequent elections, other than the first one, I ran on both tickets and got elected on both tickets.

VASQUEZ: Tell me, this shift that you mentioned earlier that happened in '34 or '35 towards greater concern for social issues, did that bring about any increase in partisanship at all? Democrats were now respectable to vote for, and more people were becoming Democrats. Did that increase partisanship at all?

HAWKINS: Well, it became more popular to the extent that I ran on both tickets. It so happened that when I would go out to get Republican names to sponsor

me, more and more I couldn't get Republicans because all of my friends were becoming Democrats. So we almost shifted completely to the other extreme.

VASQUEZ: How did the Republicans react to that?

HAWKINS: With some hostility at first. But they became the ones that were acceptable, you know, seeking acceptability, rather than the other way around. It became rather unusual to hear of a prominent leader who wasn't a Democrat. That is almost the same today.

VASQUEZ: In your first term in the assembly, how would you characterize the relationship between the assembly and the senate?

HAWKINS: I would say that relations were strained. The senate had dominated so long that the assembly was almost looked upon as a lower house, lower in many significant ways. I recall we used to call the senate the "house of lords," because they tried to appear to be more prominent than we were. And they had longer tenure, because it was very difficult to unseat a four-year incumbent as opposed to a two-year incumbent who had to campaign all the time.

The money seemed to flow--campaign money--to the senate rather than to the assembly. While bills could get through the assembly, it was difficult to get bills through the senate. For that reason I think there was a very sharp demarcation between the two. And that lasted for a long time. As a matter of fact, it's almost true today. Or I should say it lasted up until cross-filing was abolished, the seniority system was threatened, and whatnot. And it soon became just as popular to be in the assembly as in the senate, particularly when the state had reapportioned and you didn't have all the senators from one region.

VASQUEZ: Legislative initiatives, some people have observed, came mostly out of the assembly rather than out of the senate. The senate initiated or created very few original ideas in legislation. Is that your characterization of things?

HAWKINS: That's marginally true, yes. They dealt more or less with rural interests, such as highways and fishing rights.

VASQUEZ: And water?

HAWKINS: Water, whereas we dealt with the everyday

issues. And I think that's probably still true today.

VASQUEZ: How did you feel about the committee assignments you drew your first session? Were you satisfied with them?

HAWKINS: At first I was. I was chairman of [the Committee on] Public Utilities and enjoyed that. I was on the Revenue and Tax Committee. I enjoyed that. It was not until later, when cross-filing was abolished and [Jesse M.] Unruh became [assembly] speaker, that I parted ways with most of the speakers after that.

VASQUEZ: Why is that?

HAWKINS: Because I did not support the practices of enlarging the power in one or two individuals. When Unruh became speaker, for example, he became a broker for the rest of the assemblymen, and he did that throughout his tenure. It meant that, in terms of raising money for your campaign, for example, the lobbyists began to deal with him rather than with the individual members. I didn't like that practice, and still don't like it. But if you didn't vote for the speaker, then you didn't get the money from his speakership

fund. I thought that was wrong.

For that reason, I did not get committee assignments that I should have had from him. Instead, I then campaigned for the Rules Committee chairmanship, which is named by the members of the [Democratic] caucus and not by the speaker, and I served as chairman of the Rules Committee. I was able to get the votes of my colleagues rather than be named by the speaker. So I just used that as a technique in order to get around it. It never seemed to hurt me politically or in my own service. I think I got just as much financial support as anyone else. But it was a relationship that I had. I was able to say yes or no to the ones I wanted.

VASQUEZ: What was the influence of the Third House when you got there?

HAWKINS: Very tremendous.

VASQUEZ: Give me some examples of the kind of interests and the kind of groups that were represented.

HAWKINS: Well, you had the oil interest, the liquor interest, horse racing interest, the insurance industry, and whatnot. These were some of the major interests. Arthur [H.] Samish was one of

the most noted lobbyists who, I suppose, more than any one other individual, spent more money than anyone else.

VASQUEZ: Which ones of these did you have dealings with more often?

HAWKINS: I don't know of any that I had that I could count as real enemies.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

HAWKINS: [Regarding] the amount of revenue and tax issues, most of the things that I campaigned for or against were a reflection of my own district. I never supported taxes on liquor and cigarettes ordinarily as a matter of conviction because my district didn't want me to. I was never against horse racing because people in my district believed more in having horse racing than those who, for any other reason, didn't want it. With the number of liquor stores in my district, for me to put a tax on liquor was politically unpopular. So most of the issues that some were lobbying for or against were, more or less, not of any embarrassment to me.

But the oil interests were the big battle

then, the major companies against the so-called independents. And that was one of the major issues of that time.

VASQUEZ: What side did you line up with?

HAWKINS: Primarily I was lined up with the independents, against Standard [Oil Company]. And that was possibly a carryover from earlier days. To be identified with Standard Oil Company and major companies such as the Rockefellers' was very unpopular. But as I say, the major companies were just as big as a Standard Oil and the others, but you had to vote one way or the other.

VASQUEZ: One dinosaur against another.

HAWKINS: Yes. And if you voted one way, you were making an enemy out of the other, but it didn't really make much difference. It wasn't going to mean that a tremendous amount of money was going to be thrown against you. In other words, it wasn't in the interest of either one to put up money that would defeat you any more than it was of interest to Samish, for example, to put up money against me, because the things I voted for he was lobbying for.

VASQUEZ: So you never crossed swords with him over

anything?

HAWKINS: Never that I can recall, because they were all popular issues.

VASQUEZ: Were there large contributors to any of your campaigns?

HAWKINS: I would not say any large contributions, because I never really had to raise a lot of money anyway.

VASQUEZ: Who were the more prominent lobbyists of the day in your first two or three terms, say in oil?

HAWKINS: I think Stevens--and I've forgotten his first name [Charles R.]--represented the majors.

VASQUEZ: Was Harold Morton already an active oil lobbyist?

HAWKINS: Harold Morton represented the others, primarily the independents. Harold Morton was a man of high integrity and had a person in Sacramento, Monroe Butler, that I had worked with in education. He had represented the teachers, and for that reason I always enjoyed a good relationship with Monroe Butler. But it was primarily based on the years that we spent together in education rather than in oil.

VASQUEZ: What were your biggest frustrations in your early terms? What were the hurdles that you most had

to overcome? Color? Party affiliation?

HAWKINS: Well, I can't say that I can recall any great frustration over the issues. We didn't always get things through, but, on the other hand, neither did we suffer any great losses. The greatest disappointment I ever had was the fact that I came close to becoming speaker of the assembly and lost out because of certain positions that I held. I had a split between myself and Rumford over the issue, and would have been elected had it not been Rumford and the medical group that fought me. But that was a long time ago, and I don't look upon it as too frustrating, because you don't win them all, and that was just another case. They paved the way for me to go to Congress.

VASQUEZ: This was 1959 when you ran against Ralph [M.] Brown, is that correct?

HAWKINS: Yes.

VASQUEZ: And you had a lot of the liberal Democratic assemblymen from southern California opposing you?

HAWKINS: Yes.

VASQUEZ: And it was mostly around your stand on prepaid

medicine?

HAWKINS: I had a majority of the Democrats opposing me, yes. I had practically all the Republicans supporting me, and the liberal Democrats opposed me, with whom I had been more closely identified. If there's something about the whole thing as I look back on it, it was just one of those ironic things that happened the way it did. And it was over an issue that I believed to be a very basic one. It wasn't over anything petty. But it was one of those things.

VASQUEZ: What were your main concerns? Looking at your legislative record, you were very active in trying to establish some kind of defensible minimum wage, applicable minimum wage law here in the state. This is your relationship with the labor movement, is that right?

HAWKINS: Yes. I was not really the leader of the group, but I was always highly supportive of the idea of a decent minimum wage, with which I'm currently identified. The strangest thing was, at that time, the opposition felt that we should not have a state minimum but a federal one. They said, "Well, we'll support you on a federal minimum

wage, but not on a state one, because it's unfair. It breeds unfair competition. It will cause industry to move away from the state." It's a strange thing, because when I went to Congress, it was just the opposite. I heard in Congress from the same interests saying, "Well, leave it up to the states." And the chamber of commerce has been on both sides. At the local level, they wanted it to be federal; at the federal level, they wanted it to be state. I had been aware of this opposition all the time.

VASQUEZ: What was the strongest opposition against you in that issue area in the assembly? Do you remember?

HAWKINS: That's the case when the Republicans lined the poll almost to a man. And wherever they were able to split off a certain number of Democrats Well, in those days we had about ten Democrats who were very conservative. Those ten Democrats always succeeded--approximately ten, more or less--in splitting the Democrats and defeating us.

VASQUEZ: Who would some of those people be?

HAWKINS: The nearest one and the one that comes to mind is

one from Los Angeles. That was [Assemblyman] Don [A.] Allen [Sr.]. He was one of those.

[Assemblyman] Gordon [H.] Garland, who became [assembly] speaker, was another one. Those were the two most prominent ones that I can recall.

Oh, [Assemblyman] Earl [D.] Desmond of Sacramento. That was three. I could think of the others, but the names are fading away now.

VASQUEZ: In your first term, one of the joint resolutions that you sponsored was supporting the government's deportation of undesirable aliens.¹ Do you remember what prompted you to take that position? Was this connected at all with the deportation of immigrant workers, say from places like Mexico that at the time, during the Depression, were being pushed out of the country?

HAWKINS: Yes. But it was just an ideological position. And if I recall, it primarily related to the hostility against the Chinese and Japanese in the state that I ran into around my first session, particularly in terms of the labor movement. The

1. A.J.R. 31, 1935 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat. r. ch. 54 (1935).

labor movement at that time was very reactionary on the issues, one of the things that I differed with them on and expressed myself on rather strongly. I think it was largely connected with that more than with Mexico or any other countries. And I can't recall the specific battles.

VASQUEZ: Give your assessment or a comparison, say, of Speaker of the Assembly Edward Craig and [Speaker] William Mosley Jones.

HAWKINS: Oh, Jones was by far the more liberal, the more aggressive. A decent chap. He was more of a political nature. Craig was the presiding officer who very seldom went beyond that. I don't think that he got involved in day-to-day issues. Later, [Charles W.] Charlie Lyon, who was a Republican [assembly] speaker, was more the type who got involved in campaigns, issues, and as a broker for different candidates. But Jones was a very aggressive, very liberal man. I enjoyed pretty good assignments under Mosley Jones. Jones's biggest problem, I think, was he had a tendency to enjoy himself a little too much in drinking and social activity, and I think that

largely cut short his political career.

VASQUEZ: That's said about a lot of legislators at the time, is that right?

HAWKINS: Well, the influence of the lobbyists was very great. Keep in mind, I first went to Sacramento earning only \$1,200 a year. During the first two sessions, I guess, we were paid on a weekly basis, so that we got our full amount within the first twelve weeks of the session. Actually, the first year I think it was \$1,000, then it was \$1,200 a year. So within a month or two, the pay ran out, but we were still in session, so many of us had to sometimes persuade hotels to accept stamps that we might have available at the end of the session to pay our lodging. So lobbyists became important, because there was always one-- or several--inviting you to dinner and to spend the evening, you know, at the cocktail lounge, and then food. This went on in a very lavish sort of a way. So lobbyists were very, very important to living in Sacramento.

VASQUEZ: Just for survival.

HAWKINS: Yes. Actually, I have never really looked on this from an immoral point of view, because in my

HAWKINS: opinion it kept a lot of liberal legislators alive who otherwise would not have been able to even go to Sacramento. I think, despite the fact that the source was not good, the result was not as bad as it may seem. I have known few lobbyists that have been so demanding that they felt that buying drinks and food actually bribed anyone or was really that decisive.

I recall that when I first went to Sacramento I had been opposed by the utility companies. I was chairman of the utilities committee. I often went out to dinner with [William] Will Fisher of the [Southern California] Edison Company, who knew that I was as much opposed to him and what his views were as anyone else. But it was just a matter of friendship that developed, and no one thought anything of it. I had never known a vote that he got as a result of going out in the evenings after you fight each other during the day. Sometimes you enjoy the fact that in the evenings you can say, "Well look, I wasn't against you as an individual. I'm just against you on your issues." And I think this was pretty much the

pattern in Sacramento.

VASQUEZ: I want to ask you two questions, and if you would answer them as you saw them happen or develop over time. One has to do with this notion of friendship and mutual respect as a basis of coming together on particular issues or even maintaining a relationship. Or you came together on your party affiliation. It seems that over the years the state legislature has gotten more partisan than it used to be. Is that good or bad?

HAWKINS: I don't think it's bad the way parties are organized today. If parties were organized real well and stood for that platform, for example, I think it would be bad. But that isn't true. I don't think the parties are strong enough. I don't think they really stand for that much. I think the differences are not one party against another, but differences within the party are far more crucial.

You have the idea of deception. I think there are distinct differences in ideology between individuals within the party. But as far as the Democratic party being the party of the

working man as opposed to the party of the elite, I don't quite go that far. I think they're moving close together. I don't see any great difference.

VASQUEZ: Do you think we get better lawmakers when their point of unity among themselves is mutual respect and friendship rather than political affiliation?

HAWKINS: Yes. I don't think political affiliation is as strong. To me it's never been as strong as it is to most people.

VASQUEZ: The second part of the question, again across time, is the notion of the amateur lawmaker versus the professional politician. Which do you think provides the people better law, better legislators: When people are amateurs at their lawmaking and don't have to make a living off of it? Or when they are professionals whose whole livelihood depends on being reelected to office?

HAWKINS: Oh, I would prefer the legislator whose income is assured through other than political sources. Although, there again, I don't think you can generalize too well. Because if an individual is sufficiently trained as a professional, even though he may not, let's say, be a lawyer or a

member of a wealthy family, I think that he can become a good lawmaker. But if I had to choose, I would prefer choosing individuals who have made a success in their basic field rather than the professional politician. In other words, I'd choose a good physician. I'd choose a good businessman. I'd choose a person who had been a skilled worker all his life but who had the idea of wanting to serve. I would choose that individual over the individual who depends only on politics.

VASQUEZ: The other side of the coin, some would argue, is that when the system is set up to favor success for office among those who are already professionals, that leaves out a whole lot of other people, a whole range of people that can never serve because they couldn't afford to take the time off, and therefore, perhaps only middle-class-and-above interests would be represented.

HAWKINS: Well, that doesn't bother me. I think you need a good mix. I wouldn't want a legislature composed of one or the other. I think a good mix is by far the best. And some of the ablest people I've served with have been individuals who didn't need

the money. They've turned out very well. On the other hand, I've served with individuals who, because they needed the money so badly, were not free to vote as they should have. I think a lot depends on a good mix and getting the right individual. And in my opinion, you can get the right individual from either one of the two groups. I don't think you can generalize one way or the other.

One of the ablest men I think on the scene today is [Senator John D.] Jay Rockefeller [IV]. And yet Jay Rockefeller doesn't need the money and probably could buy many opportunities and influence politics through his wealth. There have been many instances like that. It's very difficult to say that one or the other is more desirable. I'd prefer the idea of an individual who has identified himself for a period of time so that you know what the individual stands for. That means it could be a leader in any field who has made a success out of it and wishes as a matter of conscience to serve the people.

VASQUEZ: We are now in the midst of a debate in California, or an emerging debate, about legislative reform,

stemming out of a Federal Bureau of Investigation sting operation of the state legislature. Do you find that these discussions of the need to reform the legislature and the role of money, etc., etc., come in cycles, occur every so many years?

HAWKINS: Yes, more or less. It's popular sometimes because of outstanding examples, and then we go on to something else. Basically I've always felt that people in these public careers should be paid a lot more than they've ever been paid. One's family should not have to suffer because of one's service. And that is generally true, that a family is the one that suffers rather than the people putting out what they should.

But then you have what I think are a lot of do-gooders who look upon, let's say, pay and things of that nature, honorariums and things of that nature in the wrong sense. I have been criticized openly by Common Cause, for example, and by some of the press, because a large amount of my support comes from PACS [political action committees]. I have gone through a period of time in which I prefer the PAC money rather than individual money, because, in a district such as

mine, if I had to depend on the individuals in my district to support a campaign, and if I were in a real hot one, I couldn't raise the money. It would be impossible. But the PAC money is not identified by individuals. One PAC, for example, that supported me in the last campaign, when I had to break it down to who contributed the money, I found out that two hundred people contributed the money to that PAC. So it wasn't a PAC, it was a contribution of two hundred people. And that spreads the thing around, in my opinion. Basically I don't think campaign reformers mean too much. It's just a gimmick that strikes the newspaper, and many of the newspapers criticize members of Congress for various things. But it isn't the members of Congress who make the campaigns expensive. I would prefer public financing, actually.

VASQUEZ: Obviously it's costing a lot more to run for office in this state than it used to. I'm talking for statewide office. I believe that now for an assembly seat \$400,000 is not out of the question. In fact, that's a pretty conservative figure.

- HAWKINS: Well, that practically eliminates all but a few.
- VASQUEZ: Do you think that makes politics any more corrupt today than it used to be?
- HAWKINS: Well, I'll say yes. I think it's a corrupting influence. Because obviously, to raise that type of money, you've got to give some pretty strong commitments. If I had to spend as much as \$100,000 in a campaign, I wouldn't run, because I think you'd get into the area where you would have to be corrupted on positions almost in advance. For people to put up a million dollars, they've got to expect something from you, and that's too much. I've just been fortunate in that I attempt to spread my efforts throughout the year rather than wait for campaign time, and I have enough people to back me up even before the campaign. But if I had to raise the money, I can't think of raising \$200,000 or \$300,000.
- VASQUEZ: Back in the late thirties and early forties, how much do you estimate you would spend on campaigns?
- HAWKINS: Oh, \$10,000 or \$15,000 would be the most, and most of them not even that much.
- VASQUEZ: And what would you spend it on mostly?

HAWKINS: Newspapers. Earlier it was more of a personal nature. We had signs, outdoor advertising, leaflets, throwaways.

VASQUEZ: Endorsements?

HAWKINS: Well, I never spent any on endorsements. I used the display cards and the leaflets, putting out a ticket with other candidates, my share of that, things of that nature. I'd use that and personalize that. But now all that is a thing of the past. It's raising the money to put it into television, radio, and so forth. In some places in L.A., for example, it's almost prohibitive, because you have a big market, and you're paying for the market. And yet you can't cover an individual district and not the other sixteen or seventeen districts in the county. So you're paying for the whole package. It isn't worth that, because you have to localize it.

For that reason, I would say that in a campaign today, I would use mailings more than I would use anything else, because there you can zero in, localize it, and get a message across. But throughout the year I put out newsletters, which are supported by office expense anyway.

And I keep in touch with my constituents, because if you have six hundred people to reach, you can't possibly reach them on an individual basis. You've got to use some mass mailings, newsletters of some kind. But I do it the year round. I don't wait for campaign time to do it. But a mailing would cost anywhere from \$35,000 to \$40,000. One mailing! And I know of some campaigns where they put out six or seven mailings.

VASQUEZ: In your early years, what was the most effective campaign tactic you would use? What was the most important for success?

HAWKINS: Oh, I would say individual mailings. I would keep in touch with voters on an individual basis through the mails. That plus town hall meetings to establish better relations with a few very active people who became the core of the campaign. But the mailings [were important]. And constant touch with certain major groups.

For example, I've always been identified with senior citizens. Even when I was twenty-seven years of age I was identified with senior citizens, and I still am largely identified with

senior citizens. That's a very active voting group, and I have to keep in touch with that bloc. And as for the labor people, I get all the labor endorsements. It doesn't mean a great deal in terms of the way it once did, but it still is a heavy bloc, which if against you would prove troublesome.

So with the labor group, the senior citizens And I've always been identified with such issues as child care. Well, there's a great interest today in child care--parents and that group. And then obviously there is another big group: education. Forty percent of the people of this country are somehow identified with education, either in teaching or in being taught, and if you have education on your side, you have a big bloc to begin with. Well, these major issues, you use those throughout the year, but they also become good political support groups.

VASQUEZ: How did the Second World War change or affect the black community, and specifically your district?

HAWKINS: Well, I think it had a great impact. It was the first time that many blacks were able to enter industry and into occupations that historically

had been closed to them. Up until that time, black women were thought of as primarily domestics, household employees. World War II changed that rapidly, because you saw women, black women, going into the defense industry for the first time. It had a remarkable impact on black women. Black women no longer had to be teachers or domestics; they could go into other fields. That opened up many opportunities.

It was one of the most prosperous times in Los Angeles, for example. We had, unfortunate though it may seem, more nightclubs than we've ever had before or since. Money was rolling. The area was very, very prosperous throughout World War II. It was a great break for blacks, because they were needed. That's how I [developed] such a strong belief in the concept of full employment, in which everybody is being used and used effectively. They build experience, and it breaks down a lot of barriers. It was really the zenith, I think, of prosperity in the black community.

VASQUEZ: Did the issues change then?

HAWKINS: The issues changed tremendously in recent years

because of a backlash. But the concept is still good. But it was under the counterproductive concept of benign neglect that developed.

VASQUEZ: That's later. That's much later. But I'm wondering, was there a noticeable decline in the status of the black community as a result of the end of the war?

HAWKINS: I think occupations had changed, distribution of occupations had changed dramatically.

VASQUEZ: Was there a noticeable downshift immediately after the Second World War for blacks? Did things go backwards rather than forwards?

HAWKINS: Yes. Things went backwards rather than forwards, yes.

VASQUEZ: How did that affect the support of your constituency? Did it make you change issues? Because I see you were pretty consistent on things like employment and education.

HAWKINS: Well, I haven't changed the issues, but the issues have become more difficult. It's much more difficult to advocate full employment now than it was during World War II, for example, because we had the national defense issue with us. That meant that middle-class Americans, the

white middle class, white males, were not opposing us in any way. But now you have a clash between white males on the one hand and blacks on the other because of a fear. What developed was that it was felt that blacks were taking jobs away from the others, the opportunities away from others. But during the war, when everybody was needed, you could advocate these things and you had general support. We lost that after the war was over. We lost that support that we had then. That made a big difference in fighting for such things.

VASQUEZ: As a result of World War II and immediately right after the war, did blacks in your district become more active politically? Or less so?

HAWKINS: Less, I would say.

VASQUEZ: What did that mean for support for the issues that you were trying to move in Sacramento?

HAWKINS: Well, we lost a lot of support because. . . . As I say, it wasn't the blacks that we lost the support of. But we lost the support of allies.

VASQUEZ: Like?

HAWKINS: The principal one would be in the labor movement. The labor movement became divided. You had

certain unions which no longer could afford to lose members, who had unemployed whites to contend with, and they weren't about to say, "We're going to accept a certain percentage of blacks in order to satisfy affirmative action goals." The universities have become the same way.

VASQUEZ: Was there a noticeable increase immediately after the Second World War in juvenile delinquency in the black community? That was one of your areas of concern.

HAWKINS: Yes, I think so. The nature of the offenses have changed a great deal. Juvenile delinquency and violent crime and things of this nature have become more fixed than previously. Because opportunities for young people were a lot more open in a society, or an economy, where the skills demanded were not as great as they are now. A kid could drop out of school and could still get a fairly decent job paying fairly well and probably do well in different fields. Well, it's no longer true that a dropout can do it today because of technology and scientific improvements. It's driven young people to look to street activities as a source of support that

thirty or forty years ago was not true. Some of our most successful businesspeople were dropouts. This is true in general, but it's certainly more true among blacks, because their schools are inferior.

Delinquency used to be, in my generation, stealing a bicycle, which nobody paid attention to. But if you stole an automobile, you were in trouble.

VASQUEZ: Another thing that happened as a result of the Second World War was that the black community grew phenomenally as a result of people coming out here, mostly servicemen who stayed here. How did that change the politics of your district? How did that change the kind of issues and the kind of orientation that you had to represent in Sacramento?

HAWKINS: Well, I used to represent a community that could be identified. I represent a community today that really cannot be identified, because it's in transition.

VASQUEZ: Has it been in that much of a transition since the Second World War?

HAWKINS: Yes, constantly. It's much more marked now than

ever. That's because of immigration largely, but it was always somewhat true. In the earlier days we had a more or less stabilized citizenry. Some of our most prominent doctors, teachers, lawyers, and so forth, lived in the district. That's no longer true.

VASQUEZ: When did that start changing? When did they start moving out of the district?

HAWKINS: I would say it might have started during World War II, but it certainly accelerated thereafter. It was due to several things. Obviously to economic opportunities. Obviously it was due to some extent to the restrictive covenants which were outlawed and which permitted blacks to move elsewhere. It obviously has been due to the differential in income. There's a cleavage between high-income blacks and the rest of the black population. And to some extent it was due to the opening of opportunities in higher education for blacks, which permitted them to move into the higher-paying positions. Affirmative action helped out. So it was a number of things that came together at the same time.

VASQUEZ: Did those changes within your district make necessary the changes in your alliances up in Sacramento?

HAWKINS: Oh, not necessarily. I don't know of anything that changed for me. I still represented the people lowest on the rung. In any event, I might have increased, to some extent, my intercultural alliances. That is, I had more outsiders.

I had an increasingly Spanish-speaking district, for example. That made a difference. I also have a district that has today a more substantial number of whites of different political stripe. Part of Downey, which I represent, is ultraconservative. South Gate and Huntington Park are quite different from Watts. So it's a matter of trying to combine a diverse population. Over 30 percent of my district is Spanish-speaking.

VASQUEZ: That's now, in Congress.

HAWKINS: That's now. But that has been changing for quite some time, don't forget--a matter of ten or fifteen years.

VASQUEZ: Tell me, what is your assessment of [Governor]

Earl Warren's two administrations?

HAWKINS: A good, moderate Republican administration. Earl Warren was not the liberal governor that he later became as a member of the [United States] Supreme Court. He changed dramatically. I think his administration was a good business administration. But on liberal issues, social issues, it was not that good.

VASQUEZ: Yet he was very successful in promoting the programs he thought were important, and he was very well liked and very successful at the polls. Why was that?

HAWKINS: He was well liked and respected, I think, because he was relatively free from any impression of dishonesty. He was straightforward and enjoyed, I think, a certain amount of prosperity. Not necessarily because of his program, but the country itself was doing very well, and I think it rubbed off on him. But we did not look upon him in any way as anything but a moderate Republican. I don't think we ever would have accused him of being liberal. [He was] liberal on one or two health issues, but other than that . . .

VASQUEZ: Was he especially helpful or detrimental to the black community?

HAWKINS: Oh, I don't think he was helpful in the least. I don't think he was highly detrimental in a deliberate manner. I recall that I always had difficulties with him in such issues as civil rights, on affirmative action, for example. He never believed in fair employment practices, for example. He fought the bills that I introduced on fair employment practices. He was never for fair housing. So I don't think he was ever the kind who would have supported full employment as a concept. But most people were doing reasonably well, so you didn't feel injured by his administration.

VASQUEZ: To what do you attribute his dramatic change in many of the areas that you just finished mentioning when he went to the Supreme Court?

HAWKINS: Well, I think the man might have believed in these basically as an individual, but never, for political reasons, openly.

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

VASQUEZ: We were talking about Earl Warren as governor and

his impact on California.

HAWKINS: I don't believe the man could have changed so dramatically if he had not in some way had these earlier inclinations anyway. I think a certain amount of financial independence also brought them out in him. I think that the victory of [Harry S] Truman over Earl Warren and [Thomas E.] Dewey had a dramatic impact on the man. It was quite a shock, because he felt that he would become vice president.

Politically, it was no longer a potential within the Republican party for him to be anything great, so I think he began to assert himself as an individual because he was freed and felt that, "Okay, now I can be myself. I'm fixed for life. I can be myself." And he wanted to go down in history as a liberal jurist.

VASQUEZ: What's your assessment of him as a jurist?

HAWKINS: Great, great. Remarkable impact, I think, on society.

VASQUEZ: Now, tell me, when do you think was the last time you were seriously challenged for your assembly seat? All the figures in the electoral records indicate that you were pretty safe.

HAWKINS: I don't recall really an effective challenge from the first time. I think that the ablest person who challenged me was Porter. What was Porter's first name? [Everett]

VASQUEZ: Only the assembly. At this point, only the assembly.

HAWKINS: Oh, only the assembly.

VASQUEZ: Ivan Johnson [III] ran against you in '41 and came within a thousand votes on the Republican side but didn't do too well in the Democratic filing.

HAWKINS: Well, if you're thinking of that, there were three main challengers: Ivan Johnson, Walter Gordon, and Crispus [A.] Wright. Those were three challengers. And of those three, I would think that Crispus Wright was the toughest.

VASQUEZ: Why?

HAWKINS: He had money, he had a good reputation, and he was very aggressive. Walter Gordon was seen as a playboy and was not quite as strong. I think Ivan Johnson was lazy. But Crispus Wright was perhaps the strongest and made the best campaign. Now, I don't know how it came out in votes under those three; I'm just talking about the one who gave me the most trouble.

- VASQUEZ: Yes, I wanted your impressions, because we have the figures on the votes.
- HAWKINS: Yes, Crispus Wright possibly gave me the biggest trouble in overcoming campaign issues.
- VASQUEZ: To what do you attribute your long tenure in the assembly and your success in staying in office?
- HAWKINS: Oh, a newspaper man in Sacramento asked me that one night, and I told him, "Well, I just think the people like me." [Laughter] It's difficult. You do so darn many things. And you don't know . . .
- VASQUEZ: But over time, you hit on a formula, and you know there are some basic things that you don't pass up. There are certain things you just know you must do. What formula did you come up with?
- HAWKINS: Oh, I just think keeping in constant touch with people. I don't think it's campaign materials necessarily. I don't use billboards. I didn't necessarily think they were that effective. People put a lot of signs around on telegraph poles. Aside from being illegal, it doesn't mean that much. I think it's just keeping in constant touch with people the year round. They appreciate that.

VASQUEZ: How did you organize that? Did you have committees in your district? Did you have an office?

HAWKINS: Well, we don't have anything like a machine, let's put it that way. It's individual contacts. It's all on a personal, individual basis.

VASQUEZ: All the time you were in the assembly, did you have a group of people that were consistently working with you at the district level?

HAWKINS: No, no. It changed a lot.

VASQUEZ: Would you spend a lot of time in your district, then?

HAWKINS: Not an unusual amount of time. Whether you spend it in your district or not, you drop a note to someone, you get in touch with them at Christmas, you try to appeal to them on the basis of issues. If elderly people knew that we were trying to help them with their pensions. . . . And we did start that in Sacramento. It was not until recently, you know, that you have had the organized pension groups that you see now. Pensions were almost unheard of until around the forties. But if they knew that you were fighting

for the pensions, they appreciated that.

I've always been identified with jobs. That's a big issue to most people. You get a few of these issues that you really believe in, that you're doing a pretty good job of fighting for, and you try to let people know that's what you're doing. And it's all done on an almost personal basis. Because we've never had anything that approaches a machine. Well, there's no machine politics in the state, really, that I know of.

VASQUEZ: During the late forties, and then again in the fifties, there were a number of classes of legislators--by class I mean political people that are elected at the same time. Two or three groups called themselves "young Turks" or "good government group." And in interviewing some of those people, you were always on the other side. Why is that?

HAWKINS: Well, I don't . . .

VASQUEZ: Why were you seen as being on the other side?

HAWKINS: Well, most of those groups to me have been phony.

VASQUEZ: In what way?

HAWKINS: They were using it for political advantage. Unruh, for example, I suppose, identified himself

HAWKINS: as a "young Turk" or would corral "young Turks," you know? And I know that he campaigned against me when I ran for the speakership. He used [the argument] among some of the liberals that I was a "tool of the oil companies"--which was so untrue that it's almost laughable. Because, as I say, there's never been a cleavage except between the majors and the so-called independents. And neither one was poor, you know? But while he was doing this, he was flying around the state in a plane that was furnished to him by the oil companies.

I've seen so much of that happen in politics: individuals who use the liberal issue in order to gain some advantage when it's only a front. I've seen so much hypocrisy of that nature that I just don't want to be a part of it. Let's put it that way. And I was never a part of the Unruh machine when I was in Sacramento. A lot of people got elected, blacks as well, by virtue of the money that he put into their campaigns. But it was always to fill his own nest. To me he was never a liberal. He's thought of as a liberal, but to me he never

was. I've seen so much of that hypocrisy in politics that I want no part of it, and I've never joined a group. I'm not a "joiner" as such anyway. But I never joined in such groups because I've never known many of them to be that sincere.

VASQUEZ: So is that the reason that you're known as sort of a loner?

HAWKINS: Well, more of a loner than an outsider. I'm outside of the group, yes, but I was never a "Turk" as such. Except on my own I was a "Turk," obviously, when I ran against Fred Roberts. As a matter of fact, I was a radical. They called us radicals and communists and everything else. But we never changed. In other words, the issues that we fought for then are today acceptable.

When I introduced the first child care issue in Sacramento--the first financing of child care--I was called a socialist by the Los Angeles Times. But then World War II came along, and it was patriotic to be for child care, because that's the way they got women into industry. So overnight it became very patriotic, and I got through funding for the first ones. But I never

changed.

So if you count that, what a "Turk" is is just beyond me, because, as I say, I've never been one who joins many groups as such.

VASQUEZ: So in your career in the California legislature, did these "good government groups" and "young Turk" groups give us any better government?

HAWKINS: No. I don't know that anything has come out of it.

VASQUEZ: You think they just, as you say, feathered their own nests? Promoted their own careers?

HAWKINS: Yes. To me, one of the most successful guys in the legislature was [Assemblyman William B.] Bill Hornblower of San Francisco, a Republican. Many thought he was on Samish's payroll, but I've seen Bill Hornblower obtain more benefits, including the first real pension system in this state. He was very pro-labor and for many issues at a time that they were very unpopular. But Bill Hornblower was out in front. Now, while he might have been thought of as being corrupt to the extent that he was heavily identified with Samish, the man produced results, and that is important to me, who produces results.

VASQUEZ: You're pragmatic about politics?

HAWKINS: Yes. I think you have to be pragmatic about it. I don't believe in those individuals. . . . I've always called many of the "Turks" that I've known "sprinters." They're good for fifty yards, but for a long-distance race, you count them out. They're very liberal for a while. The next thing you know, they've switched over and they've gone the other way.

I think you have to see who is consistent over a period of time, doing the most good for people, getting results. We've had many young people who've come into the assembly that I can recall who turned sour in many ways. I don't want to begin calling names, but they were great for a session or two, and then, when they got what they wanted, it was something else.

VASQUEZ: I notice a lot of legislators went on to the bench.

HAWKINS: Well, a few of them have gone to the bench, yes.

VASQUEZ: Which brings me to another question: the manner by which we appoint our judges by political appointment. Do you think that's the best way to do it?

HAWKINS: Well, I don't know how else you'd do it, really. I think it depends on having the people who appoint them be of high integrity so that you get good judges.

VASQUEZ: Does it unduly politicize the judicial branch?

HAWKINS: Well, I think if they had to run they'd be up against the same old problem of having to raise the money, and it would be the individual who'd raised the most money who would become judge. I don't think you'd find it any better than what the current system is. I think the current system is about as good as any. It's a question of who should redistrict every ten years, you know? I think you'd have the same problem. I don't know how else you could do it.

VASQUEZ: In the years you were in the assembly, who was the best Speaker of the Assembly that you served?

HAWKINS: You're not thinking necessarily the most liberal or the most Democratic?

VASQUEZ: No.

HAWKINS: Irrespective of party?

VASQUEZ: Irrespective of ideology and irrespective of personality. As a speaker, who made the best speaker, as you understand what a good speaker

should be?

HAWKINS: Well, I would certainly say that [Assembly Speaker] Brown was one of the better ones.

VASQUEZ: What made him so good?

HAWKINS: I don't think he had any ax to grind. I don't think he was either too liberal or too conservative. I think he was a good presiding officer and stuck pretty well to that. But I was just thinking of who I could rate over him. That, I would say, would be [Assembly Speaker] Paul Peek. I would rate Paul Peek over Brown.

VASQUEZ: On the same criteria?

HAWKINS: The same criteria. But Peek was a little more liberal. In other words, he was a little more political, but desirably so. Paul Peek, I would say, probably was the best.

VASQUEZ: Who was the worst?

HAWKINS: [Laughter] [Assembly Speaker James W.] Silliman.

VASQUEZ: Why?

HAWKINS: No background, no particular conviction. We used to call him "Silly Man," and that's about my recollection of him. There was no particular reason why this man should ever have been elected. He wasn't qualified. You've had some

bad ones, from a political point of view, who were qualified. [Assembly Speaker] Charlie Lyon was as qualified as any.

VASQUEZ: I was going to ask you about him next.

HAWKINS: Very qualified. And presiding, a very good man. But entirely too political, too involved with the Third House and so forth. But "Silly Man" was the worst, I'd say. [Laughter]

[Session 3, December 12, 1988]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

VASQUEZ: Why did you decide to leave the assembly and run for Congress?

HAWKINS: The district opened up, because I had certain friends in Congress who wanted to see me run.

VASQUEZ: Who were those people?

HAWKINS: [James A.] Jimmy Roosevelt and [Clyde G.] Sly Doyle. Sly Doyle represented the Long Beach-South Gate area [the Twenty-third Congressional District], and his district was getting too large. Jimmy Roosevelt was moving west, and his district was too large. So he came to me and said, "Why don't we put parts of our districts together and open up a district for you?" Now, I don't think that Jimmy Roosevelt felt that because I lived in his district [the Eleventh Congressional District] that I was going to challenge him. At that time, we were such good friends, I don't think so. I think they saw that there was enough of an area that could be carved

out to make it possible. And it was such friends like that in Washington that led the battle to get a new district [the Twenty-ninth Congressional District].

VASQUEZ: Did the '61 reapportionment help? That was a more Democratic-controlled reapportionment. To hear the Republicans tell it, it was a very partisan reapportionment.

HAWKINS: Oh, in '61? No, I don't think that. I never participated very much in the caucuses that tried to carve out districts for Democrats. After the bipartisan nature of the redistricting ceased, from then on I just indicated, "I don't care where you put a district; I'm going to run from that district anyway. Basically, I want my old assembly district, and whatever you join with that is okay with me." From then on, it became one of those games in which individuals were seeking to carve out congressional districts primarily for members of the assembly. It didn't make any difference to me, but I didn't go for that. I just felt it would create more controversy than before.

VASQUEZ: Several people who had been in the assembly

wanted to move and thought that there were bigger and better things for them in the state senate. Why did you choose Congress rather than the state senate?

HAWKINS: I didn't see any difference myself. Only a four-year term.

VASQUEZ: You thought you could do more in Washington? Is that it?

HAWKINS: Yes. I was beginning to look upon the assembly as not nearly as important as Washington. We were dealing with, say, the size of crates for fruit, we were dealing with changes in fish and game law, a lot of things which to me were pretty insignificant in terms of what could be done for the more basic economic policies of the nation. Interest rates, the Federal Reserve System, federal aid to education prospects, and things of this nature just seemed to me to be much more important at that time than Sacramento. And I felt that federal policies, including civil rights, just meant so much. We had done what I thought was a pretty decent job in the state, and I just wanted to move on to another level or else retire. I was losing money by being in the state

assembly.

VASQUEZ: You were in real estate at the time, weren't you?

HAWKINS: Yes. You got to the point where you couldn't engage in a business. I had a partnership, and partnerships to me are not really the way to deal with business. See, if I was going to spend most of the time in politics, I wanted to be in something which I thought was a lot more of a challenge than Sacramento. If you stay anyplace over twenty years, it soon becomes somewhat routine. And if you have any ambition at all in your system, you just want to do something else.

VASQUEZ: Let's talk a bit about some of the legislation that you were most involved with. There are a number of issues that that covers, but perhaps one of the issues that you're most known for is the Fair Employment Practices Act of 1959,¹ which was something that you had been struggling with for almost fifteen years. Tell me why you saw the need for that in California back in the forties. What were the steps that finally got you to 1959?

1. A.B. 91, 1959 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., Ch. 121.

HAWKINS: Well, one of the major interests I had going into politics was my relationship with the railroad employees, particularly A. Philip Randolph. Randolph had organized the effort that led to the issuance of Executive Order 8802 under the [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt administration. That was largely modeled after state legislation; particularly New York State had pioneered in the field. I had felt that we needed something more than an executive order. And obviously, not being in the Congress at that time, I wanted to do something at the state level. I think that's where my interest began to try to get a state fair employment practices law which was modeled after the New York law and to try to get that through. But we failed every time we attempted to bring it up. There was a lot of opposition to it.

VASQUEZ: Who was the opposition for the most part?

HAWKINS: Well, we didn't have a friendly administration. The governor always opposed us.

VASQUEZ: Governor Warren?

HAWKINS: Earl Warren. He was very much against it.

VASQUEZ: Did that change under Governor [Goodwin J.]

Knight?

HAWKINS: Goodie Knight could care less about the subject matter. It wasn't that he was a racist; it was just not his cup of tea. He had other thoughts. As an individual, I think he was free of prejudice. But he took us into a different direction altogether. Other than that, he was friendly, but on fair employment practices we never got to first base with him.

So we were building the steps then to get something through. We did support a statewide initiative¹ which failed because we couldn't get the money for it.

VASQUEZ: What year was this?

HAWKINS: I don't recall the year, but it was just prior to the [Governor Edmund G. "Pat"] Brown [Sr.] administration, so it must have been during the Earl Warren administration.

VASQUEZ: Before '53, then?

HAWKINS: Yes. We failed. We just couldn't get the support for it. Anyway, it was something that I

1. Appeared as Proposition 11 on the November 1946 ballot.

just felt had to be done. After the initiative failed, we said, "Well, the only way we can get one through is to get a governor." So that's why some of us supported Pat Brown. And I recall that I took into his office--when he was attorney general--a delegation of people to talk to him about it, and we got him committed.

VASQUEZ: Who was in that delegation? Do you remember?

HAWKINS: [It was] primarily led by some of the railroad people like C. L. Dellums.

VASQUEZ: Ron Dellums's uncle?

HAWKINS: Ron Dellums's uncle was the most outstanding one that I recall. I believe--and this I'd have to check again--that Leon Washington was also a part of it. But we got him committed. And then we went out, obviously, to do what we could to get him elected. So when he got elected, he was already committed, and he helped to get the bill through.

VASQUEZ: Do you think that made the difference?

HAWKINS: That made the difference, yes.

VASQUEZ: What did that do for you in preparing you for your ultimate project in Washington to pass the Hawkins-Humphrey Full Employment [and Balanced

Growth] Act [of 1978?]]¹

HAWKINS: Well, that was quite different. The Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill came about as a result of our sponsorship of job bills. We had had several bills to create jobs, a training and jobs program. One evening at a reception, I got to talking to [Senator] Hubert [H.] Humphrey [Jr.], who at that time was involved in trying to get a planning board through. He felt that the reason for many of the difficulties was the absence of a long-range planning agency.

VASQUEZ: Was he vice president yet? Or was he just a senator?

HAWKINS: He was just a senator at the time. And he had that proposal in the senate. We got to talking, and we said, "Why don't we put them together?"--a planning agency for long-range planning and an employment program as a means of joining them, setting goals and timetables to actually make it happen, so that we would place responsibility in the president and the executive Office of

1. H.R. 50, 95th Cong., 2d. Sess. (1978), P.L. 95-623.

[Policy] Planning for a full-employment society.

In 1946, Congress had passed--and President Truman had signed--what was known as the Employment Act [of 1946].¹ The Employment Act called for the employment of every person willing and able to work, and it set certain objectives about reducing unemployment. But we felt that was too weak, that it was too specific. So Humphrey said, "Well, I'll work on the planning part, you work on the jobs part, and we'll work on modifying the 1946 Employment Act"--which is sometimes called the Full Employment Law, which it isn't--"and we'll make it real."

So we just decided one evening that we'd do it. So from then on, we developed support among various groups, largely based in church groups. It took us a little time before we could even convince the labor people to support it.

VASQUEZ: Neither one of them are very popular ideas in this country, planning or full employment.

HAWKINS: Yes, so politically it was something that was a little bit unpalatable to most groups. So we put

1. S. 380, 79th Cong., 2d. Sess. (1946), P.L. 304.

it together after several years, and it was a long struggle. It was at least four or five years, because Humphrey had died before we got around to [passing it]. We eventually picked up some Republican support. But [James E.] Carter became president, and then it took us a year and a half to convince Carter that it was a good idea. I don't think he ever really believed in it, but eventually he was sort of forced into accepting it.

VASQUEZ: Were you satisfied with the final product?

HAWKINS: I think it was a good product, and I think it still is good. I think the problem is implementation. We had wanted from the very beginning to have penalties in it, so that against anyone violating it we'd have some recourse, and we'd have the right to sue. But in order to get Carter to sign it we had to strike that out, which I think weakened it somewhat, so that it was left up to the administration in power to implement it or not to implement it. And it's been the failing to implement it that, I think, has been the fault. However, if we'd had some penalties, we probably could have done something

about it. As it is now, the only thing you can do is to hold the president accountable.

VASQUEZ: Are you optimistic that it's still a piece of legislation, a law, that is in place when the right administration comes along?

HAWKINS: Right, yes. I am optimistic that eventually we will get someone in the White House who will say that this is the way to balance the budget, this is a way to restore the leadership of the country to its rightful place. We're now losing in that race, and it's because there isn't planning built into the system and we do things on an ad hoc basis.

Obviously, we're far from balancing the budget because we have too many of our resources that aren't being used. We put our sales into a straitjacket and say, "We're not going to grow fast enough to reduce unemployment, produce price stability, put empty factories to work, and put millions of Americans into production." Consequently, we aren't going to balance the budget.

I think eventually [President George H. W.] Bush will fail to do it his way and that it will lay the foundation for a political campaign in

which full employment will be one of the major issues. I look upon full employment not in the typical sense. To me you could call it full production and it would mean the same thing. I think they're interchangeable.

We're just not producing enough goods and services, despite the fact that claims are being made that "millions of jobs are being created." It just isn't true. Our definition of a job is just not a correct one. Anybody who works an hour during the week prior to the time the survey takes place is counted as being employed. That's silly.

VASQUEZ: Do you think the way employment statistics factor in the armed services now skews those statistics?

HAWKINS: Yeah. Well, obviously that shouldn't be counted. They aren't counted in one of the official rates. But the biggest joke is that regardless of what a job pays, it's still counted as a job. And what we have now is a transition to the retail trade occupations.

Now two jobs pay about what one previous manufacturing job paid. So you've increased the number of jobs, but you haven't really increased

the total wage amount that we previously had. So two people in a family have to work now to keep the family alive if they have children. So that counts as two jobs--maybe a third job if a child is old enough to work at McDonald's or some [other] fast food plant. So you have all of this. Previously, the typical family had one head working on a good job that could support the family. So we haven't gained anything. We've lost, in my opinion. We've created more difficulties.

VASQUEZ: Another area that you were very active in, and it may be similar in the sense that it took so long for something to actually be catalyzed, was something called a fair housing act. You were involved in fair housing legislation, well, going back to the Second World War. Then, in 1963, we had the Rumford Fair Housing Act.¹ Tell me how that developed.

HAWKINS: Well, we were early in leading the battle for fair housing in this state and had actually written the bill . . .

1. A.B. 1240, 1963 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1853.

VASQUEZ: When you say "we," you're talking about you and Byron Rumford?

HAWKINS: Well, even before Rumford.

VASQUEZ: Who would that be?

HAWKINS: Well, using "we" in a general sense. I very seldom say "I"; I always say "we." I call up the wife [Elsie Taylor Hawkins] sometimes and say, "Well, we'll be getting in at such and such a time," and she will say, "Who's with you?" [Laughter] I say, "I'm using it in a generic sense, so don't let that worry you." So it gets me in trouble, using the word "we." But I don't know. Somehow "we" sticks with me a lot better than saying, "I did this, I did that."

But for a long time, I had worked on fair housing and all of its implications.

VASQUEZ: What motivated you to do that?

HAWKINS: Well, I just felt that strongly about it. I don't know. I just resent segregation so badly, and I guess it just comes naturally to me to support the spreading of people around. I think a lot of the problems of blacks would be solved if they, in a sense, spread out rather than flocked together. You know?

A black will go out shopping for a house, and if they see an all-white neighborhood, they have a tendency to move on. If they see a black person, they say, "Oh, this neighborhood's good because blacks can move in, and I won't have any trouble." So it just sort of creates segregation that we obviously have to fight against.

From that sort of a commonsense approach, it's always been my idea that you pioneer. You build. You go out to new areas and spread out rather than all concentrate together. My idea is that when people concentrate together you don't have anybody that can help you out. You need to mix it up.

If I were going to be out in a boat that might have trouble, I'd want to know that some very valuable people were out there that other individuals felt needed to be saved. You know? And then I'd feel safer. But if I'm out there with a group of people no better off than I am, we're not going to be rescued. I just sort of go on that philosophy, I suppose.

VASQUEZ: In your early efforts, who were your most dependable allies and who were the most

dependable opponents to fair housing in the California legislature?

HAWKINS: Oh, obviously the real estate industry was the opponent, and no doubt financial institutions that financed them were. The individuals who were fighting against restricted covenants were our biggest supporters. They, plus the church people. In the early days, Loren Miller, the lawyer.

VASQUEZ: Of the [California] Eagle, right?

HAWKINS: Well, he worked for the Eagle at one time, but he became identified with Leon Washington, who was his cousin. He and Leon Washington were very close, but Loren Miller was the lawyer who fought and won, I think, the battle against restrictive covenants. He was very active with me in housing. Another group was the Urban League. Floyd [C.] Covington of the Urban League was also among them. He was the executive director at one time of the Urban League.

So when Rumford came, we alternated the bill. I would put it in one session, he would put it in the next, and it so happened that it was his bill that was actually enacted.

- VASQUEZ: This is essentially the same bill?
- HAWKINS: Essentially the same bill, but I'm not trying to detract from Rumford.
- VASQUEZ: No, I know that. But it was part of your strategy to keep it alive?
- HAWKINS: To keep it alive. We weren't overly optimistic that we were going to get it through. So in a sense we just said, "Well, okay, you take it this year, and I'll take it the next year."
- VASQUEZ: What was the thinking? To try and wear down the opposition? That eventually the right persons would come in?
- HAWKINS: Not so much, but to keep the drive alive. And it was too much for one individual to always be the one to do it, so we shared that leadership. And then, when it was passed, Unruh, again, named it the Rumford [Fair Housing] Act, which ironically led to his defeat later--that is, Rumford's defeat--because he tried to run for the [state] senate from his area, and the thing used against him was the Rumford Act. In the meantime, it was put on the ballot as an initiative and badly defeated.
- VASQUEZ: Proposition 14, in 1964, which lost two to one.

HAWKINS: Yes. So it badly tarnished Rumford's image.

VASQUEZ: It hurt a lot of other Democrats, I understand.

HAWKINS: Yes, it did hurt quite a few Democrats. But it certainly hurt Rumford as well, even though his district was a liberal district. Well, the senatorial district included some rather affluent neighborhoods. This really led to his defeat, which was somewhat ironic.

I was never too much for naming acts after individuals anyway. I feel that a better title is to indicate really the nature of what's in it rather than giving it the name of an individual.

We recently passed in the Congress a bill, the School Improvement Act,¹ which is the reauthorization of elementary and secondary federal aid to education, and it was named after myself and Senator [Robert T.] Stafford. But I was not really the one who favored that, because I always refer to it as the School Improvement Act. If you refer to it as the School Improvement Act, people at once know what you're

1. Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988. P.L. 100-297, as amended by P.L. 100-351 (1988).

talking about. If you call it the Hawkins-Stafford Act, they don't know what it is.

It's just the same way with full employment. They ended up naming it after Humphrey and myself, I think largely as a tribute to Senator Humphrey. To me, the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act, which is its title, gives a better indication of what it is, and people identify really what it is. That's why I've always felt that way. Even though I've had acts named after me, I still don't think it's a good idea.

VASQUEZ: In your early efforts in housing legislation, did you ever try to make coalescing efforts with, say the [City Councilman Edward R.] Roybal people in East Los Angeles, who were very much interested in the same things? Or, say, [City Councilman] Ernest [E.] Debs, who was on the Los Angeles City Council, then a supervisor [for Los Angeles County], and who is known for having pushed for public housing? Well, housing was a concern of his.

HAWKINS: No, I can't say that I did, probably as an oversight more than anything else. We could have

done a better job [if we] had. But as I look back on it, it was a mistake. And I really look upon it as such, because I had helped Byron closely identify with Ernie Debs and Roybal--more so with Roybal. Roybal is one of my closest friends, and we collaborate on a lot of things, much more than the people of other districts collaborate.

VASQUEZ: Why was that, say, in the late forties and in the fifties? Did the black and the brown communities not see their interests as being the same?

HAWKINS: They've never really developed a healthy relationship as I would envision it and would want to see it. I don't know. I think it's due to several things. I think that there is always a tendency for minorities to look upon each other as competitors. To overcome that is very difficult. That again is due to the fact that there's a shortage of things. You know?

[Interruption]

VASQUEZ: There was the racial designation legislation that you passed.

HAWKINS: That was the early days, back, I guess, way before 1940.

VASQUEZ: What impact did that have? Was there a form of subtle racism?

HAWKINS: Well, it was somewhat complicated. It used to be that one's photograph--there was a period when that was discontinued--had to be on every operator's license. But it also had to be on applications: job applications, civil service exams, etc. And I always felt it was used--and it was--to identify individuals and, for that reason, to disqualify them. So we wanted to do away with it completely. And we did in most instances, and we still do. It helps out in some instances.

On the other hand, also in recent instances--and particularly in terms of affirmative action plans--we've had to identify individuals to find out, in class-action suits or class-action programs, whether or not they were being discriminated against. So we've sought to disaggregate a lot of statistics in order to find out in an effective way whether or not an industry is denying positions to minority groups, to women or to Hispanics or to blacks. The easiest way of doing that is to look at the labor market in a

central area and say, "Look, 30 percent of this area is black, and yet only 5 or 10 percent are being selected for the jobs." So it shows where there's some possibility of discrimination going on. Or let's say in a particular field where women are represented, let's say, by only 2 or 3 percent, it becomes pretty obvious that there's suspicion that women are being kept out on the basis of sex discrimination.

So we've moved, in a sense. We have somewhat confused the original idea that we had in not identifying people to a point where we identify them in statistics. And it all depends. Largely, the test is whether or not it's used for purposes of discrimination or not. So one has to be very careful, I think, in dealing with things of that nature. But in the early days, it was the pervasive discrimination against certain groups that led us to want to do away completely with any identification so that we would feel the testing was on a fair and honest basis.

VASQUEZ: So it was another case where you took a small step?

HAWKINS: Step by step. And you get down to the point where you then become supportive of goals and

timetables, and if you're supportive of goals and timetables, then you have to do something in order to get quick identification of it. We get the same thing in education today, in the field of academic performance. Whether or not a group is getting a good education based on academic performance, one almost has to disaggregate the data in terms of who's succeeding and who isn't. And then, if you find that certain groups are not succeeding and have low academic performance, you look at the disaggregated data to find out who it is that's not getting the equal educational opportunity. So we use it there as well.

VASQUEZ: Let me ask you your impression on a number of processes in California politics over the years, and to reflect on the period that you served in the state legislature. The use of direct legislation, the use of the initiative, the use of the referendum, the direct legislative techniques that the [Governor Hiram W.] Johnson reforms brought about, do you think those have been more useful to disenfranchised groups?

HAWKINS: I think the thread of it is still useful. I

think in the early days it was absolutely essential, because you had a legislature that was not responsive. And I think the progressive movement under Hiram Johnson brought about this reform, and I think it was excellent.

VASQUEZ: Do you think they were used to their best potential while you were in office?

HAWKINS: I would doubt that it's consistently useful now.

VASQUEZ: But when you served, did you find them useful?

HAWKINS: Yes. And I don't think it [direct legislation] was overused at that time.

VASQUEZ: Do you think it is now?

HAWKINS: I think it is now.

VASQUEZ: By whom?

HAWKINS: By special interest groups that are not always thinking of the public. There's too much on the ballot to begin with. Secondly, it isn't always perfected the way it should be. Proposition 13¹ in this state has done terrific damage, and it's been picked up in other states and across the country. It's done terrific damage. However, I think that the problem with it now is that the

1. Proposition 13 (November 1978).

legislature is not doing its job as well as it should. Proposition 13 should never have passed, and wouldn't have if the legislature had done something about the problem. I think the same thing is true when you get down into insurance and things of that nature. So in my opinion, the legislature is not as responsive as it should be. But that's where the job should be done. We shouldn't have to wait for initiatives to do the job.

VASQUEZ: Talking about insurance, we're in the midst of a big controversy over Proposition 103.¹ In the time that you served in the assembly, were insurance interests as strong and as powerful as they seem to be today?

HAWKINS: They've always been very strong.

VASQUEZ: How is it that they manifested their strength?

HAWKINS: Through campaign contributions.

VASQUEZ: Is that pretty much it?

HAWKINS: Yes. And they have really built up large funds to fight publicly, and they're heavy contributors in campaigns.

1. Proposition 103 (November 1988).

VASQUEZ: So there's really no mystery to it?

HAWKINS: No, there's no mystery to it, no mystery at all. And they are in constant contact with a lot of people. They have policyholders who look upon them as a very respectable group. All this is different from the early image of oil companies, for example, while they don't have the same impression that the liquor industry would give. The insurance industry is a very respectable industry. It deals in a lot of campaign funding through the use of money and propaganda. I would fight for their right to do what they do, although I don't always agree with their results.

VASQUEZ: The use of mass media has changed dramatically. In fact, it began to change as you were leaving the state assembly, in the early sixties. That's when television, for example, began to take a more important role. What is your assessment of the role of media in politics? Do you think it has made for a better level of political discourse or a lower level of political discourse among the voters?

HAWKINS: Oh, I think it's a mixed bag. I don't think you can do much about it, because I think that they

are still protected by the Constitution.

However, I don't think that most commentators and most programs through the mass media have a very good reputation of actually reflecting the facts. Too often the media, I think, is guilty of a lack of basic research, therefore they present a one-sided picture too often. It depends on the complexity of the issue or the integrity of the persons involved in it.

VASQUEZ: Some people that served when you did argue, even though you didn't reach as many people directly, that people were forced to seek out the issues then. They were forced to read more, and they were forced to think about things in a more profound fashion than today, when they get it already digested in thirty-second television spots. And that, in fact, because of the electronic media there's been greater harm done to the level of political education and discourse among the public. Do you agree with that?

HAWKINS: Yes, I think there's a tendency to oversimplify and sloganize issues. I think the mind is pretty well controlled by very subtle dishonesty too often, by presenting a very complex issue in its

simplest form so that it captures the imagination. I think the media has to be more accountable for what it's doing, and I think that too often it isn't now.

VASQUEZ: You served twenty-seven years in the state assembly and twenty-seven years to date in the United States Congress. Which of the two has been more fulfilling for you? Which of the two bodies do you think did more for your district? Because it's essentially the same district that you've been serving all these years.

HAWKINS: Oh, the Congress, I would say. Although they are different periods of time. In the state legislature we had less opportunity to really, let's say, provide education and employment and decent housing than we do in Congress. It's just a different arena altogether.

Also, some of the time that I served in the legislature was during the days when people were not looking for the great changes they are now. They were not good years in terms of civil rights, for example. My constituents were trying to accommodate, not change things. There was a lot of resistance to overcome.

HAWKINS: In the labor movement, unions were segregated. So you had a black musicians local, you had black railroad unions, and so forth. It was all segregated. And throughout municipal functions you had the same thing. You had black fire departments, black policemen segregated, and whatnot. There was a certain amount of accommodation to the point, almost a naive point, of looking with pride on some of these segregated units. I recall the time when, if there was a fire alarm going on, blacks in the neighborhood would rush out to see blacks operating the fire engine. And they took a lot of pride in what the [black] musicians local was doing in terms of music and so forth. So you had altogether a different [attitude].

Now, of course, you look back on these things and you say, "Well, we weren't doing too well." Because we were fighting for segregation, in effect. So the whole thing has been reversed. Now I think we're in a little different arena in which we're fighting for larger rewards. Then you were fighting for the crumbs, but now you're fighting to be at the table. The fight, the

intensity, is there, so the battles you win now mean a lot more than what they did then.

VASQUEZ: Are they harder to win now than they were then?

HAWKINS: I don't think any harder, no. No. I think that what we fought for then was not as great, because the end result didn't mean that much. If you got blacks into a segregated unit of some kind, you thought you had won something, but basically you hadn't. You know, the first units we got into the army were great then, but they weren't that basic.

So you fought for what you later had to break down, so that you pass it up. You're playing in the big game and not in some side-show. Now, I think, we're playing in the big game. Whatever we win now, it means a lot more than what it did then.

VASQUEZ: One of the criticisms that some have made of the 1960s and some of the nationalists in the period was that people were too busy fighting for "alternative this" and "alternative that" and in the long run not really making any gains in the mainstream of what the society needed.

HAWKINS: Right, yes.

VASQUEZ: Which of the two bodies has been most fulfilling to you personally?

HAWKINS: Oh, I think the Congress has. I earlier said that I think it's the difference between a spoils system and a system based on automatic progression.

VASQUEZ: Your method of operation has been characterized as an incremental one, one where you take a small step at a time, and you've been very successful. But that's predicated on being a survivor. How have you been a survivor in your district and in politics?

HAWKINS: I think it's a matter of what you get quickly isn't usually very valuable anyway. I think that the safest and best way, and the most secure way, is to build a strong foundation. So I think it has to be incremental to be successful.

I've often called liberals--I think I said this earlier--"sprinters." I don't think things are won that way. I think you have to be in there day after day for the long run. You have to win after you've convinced a substantial number of people that you're right, and you don't do that overnight.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

[Begin Tape 4, Side B]

VASQUEZ: Let me ask you, in your assessment of being in the assembly twenty-seven years, who in your recollection was the best assembly speaker while you were there? And what does that mean to you? And who was the worst?

HAWKINS: I would rate [Assembly Speaker] Paul Peek the best in my experience, and the worst was [Assembly Speaker] Silliman from the Salinas area. Paul Peek, because I thought he was not only a good presiding officer but a very aggressive leader and a person of high integrity. His qualifications, I think, were outstanding. I don't think there was any question about his fairness. Silliman I rated among the worst because I don't think he had the qualifications to be a good member of the state assembly, even. To elevate such a person, in my opinion, was unfair to him and certainly was not desirable from the viewpoint of getting legislation through on behalf of the people of the state. I don't know in particular why, except by accident, the man was even thought to be of that quality.

That's about my assessment.

VASQUEZ: Even though you didn't serve under his speaker-ship very long, there was another assemblyman that made quite a mark on the assembly, on the legislature, and even on state politics, and that was [Assembly Speaker] Jesse Unruh. What was your assessment of Jesse Unruh?

HAWKINS: Well, I did serve, I believe, a year or two under his administration.

VASQUEZ: That's right, you did.

HAWKINS: I don't really favor such extreme partisans and such dyed-in-the-wool politicians for that particular position. I think as a rough-and-tumble politician he was probably without an equal during my time in the state assembly and even subsequent to that. However, I look upon the speaker as being someone who is fair-minded, who can deal with his opponents fairly as well as build a consensus among the members of his own party, his own group.

I think that Unruh ruled with an iron fist basically because he was able to raise money and thereby influence the direction that the legislature took at that particular time, and I don't

think it was a desirable direction to go in.

VASQUEZ: Some would argue that it was precisely because the Democrats started consolidating their money and playing hardball politics that they were able to put into place administrations and legislators who could pass liberal, Democratic legislation.

HAWKINS: I don't count him as a liberal. I don't think it necessarily led to a liberal direction. I think it led to an extremely partisan, bickering direction. I think whatever came out of it was due primarily to the governor's office. At least part of that time we had a progressive governor. We had a senate that was becoming more progressive for the times. And we had, during most of that time, a progressive person in the White House in Washington.

I don't attribute whatever success came out of that period of time to necessarily strong-arm tactics. In the assembly, certainly, he was a strong person. But I think much more could have been gained if we had had an individual with less political strong-arming. I don't like the idea that a speaker becomes a broker for the raising of campaign money and the appointment of

individuals to committees.

I contrast this to what I later experienced in Washington. There's a difference between a spoils system and one which is built out of the seniority concept. I think you have great security under a seniority concept. Even though sometimes senior persons become chairmen of committees and leaders, it's less risk than those who are bought off by campaign money. I disagree that the spoils system established under the Unruh administration was good for the state.

VASQUEZ: Do you think, then, that things like the Unruh Civil Rights Bill¹ were as much a product of the times as other factors?

HAWKINS: That was quite accidental. Why it was ever called the Unruh Bill I don't know, because many of us struggled for years to put civil rights statutes on the books. It was done, I think, in a very thoughtful way. During Unruh's administration, he made some technical correction in it and then added his name. I don't consider him the author of the civil rights bill in this

1. A.B. 594, 1959 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1866.

state, not by a long shot.

VASQUEZ: The thrust of what was in that bill, then, had been introduced by people like yourself and others going back to the 1940s?

HAWKINS: That's what I say. Many struggled for it. And when it came time to make just some technical corrections, he put his name on it. I think it is very misleading. I disagree that he was the author of it, of the basic civil rights law itself.

VASQUEZ: Overall, do you think he made a positive and helpful contribution to the state legislature?

HAWKINS: Well, I don't think that at that time one can say that he was totally negative, and I can't say that some good things weren't done. I'm just rating him on whether he was the lesser of the evils for the time. I think it's true that some good things did come out of his administration. I'm simply saying I don't look upon him as a model, and I would not cite him as someone that I think one entering politics should attempt to emulate. That's the only thing. I think he falls far short of being the type of person that I would say was one of the great legislators of

our state.

VASQUEZ: You wouldn't agree with that necessarily?

HAWKINS: No.

VASQUEZ: Do you think that some of the reforms that came about, partly attributed to Unruh--other people as well participated--had to do with the professionalizing of the legislature and making it more independent from the executive branch and having it be a body that took more initiative in policy than it had in the past?

HAWKINS: Yes, I think the strength of the assembly did increase during that period of time. But I think it was due to many things.

VASQUEZ: What might some of those things have been?

HAWKINS: I think that at that time the weakening of the senate obviously led to the assembly being more aggressive. And [it was] helpful, I think, that the one-man-one-vote [United States Supreme Court] decision¹ led to a realignment of districts, which meant that the legislature was representing people and not cows or areas of land where you didn't have people. I think that was

1. Baker v. Carr, 369 U.S. 186 (1962).

helpful.

I think the rise of Governor Brown, the first Governor Brown, helped a lot, because I think that it brought to the office an outstanding liberal, and therefore we could get bills signed, which makes a big difference. I think there were a lot of things that helped out. The national landscape became much more progressive. There were many things other than one or two members in the assembly.

I think we were beginning to get better qualified candidates to run as members of the assembly, unlike the earlier period when we had a great change during the EPIC movement. We elected a lot of good people, but they were not necessarily highly qualified.

VASQUEZ: Where did these people come from, this generation of the early and mid-fifties? Were these World War II veterans? Why were they better qualified?

HAWKINS: Well, they were largely individuals that had been better trained, I think. They came out of university settings. Many came from the legal profession. They were more inclined to serve.

I think that increasing a legislator's pay

helped out. Getting them staff, I think, was a tremendous step forward. In the early days, we had no staff. We were alone. Many times we had to do our own corresponding because we didn't have offices, we didn't have the staff that we later had. We developed legislative services such as the budget office.

VASQUEZ: And the budget analyst.

HAWKINS: And a budget analyst and these things. I think there were many things that were done to improve the efficiency and the services provided to legislators. They could then become much more independent in their thinking because they had someone to assist them in their efforts. I think there was just a general upgrading.

VASQUEZ: I want to talk a little about the fifties, the decade of the fifties. Maybe a way to open that discussion would be to talk about what impact the 1951 reapportionment had on your district, if any. It was a Republican-dominated [Assembly Committee on] Election and Reapportionment, chaired by Assemblyman Laughlin [E.] Waters.

HAWKINS: Yes, I'm trying to think back. As I recall, that year was done on a strictly bipartisan basis. I

think Laugh Waters did protect, in effect, incumbents whether they were Democrats or Republicans.

Insofar as the effect on my district, I don't think it had a great deal of difference, because at that time I had a strong Democratic district. And, if I recall, after reapportionment there was little change. It became more Democratic.

VASQUEZ: Stronger, as a matter of fact.

HAWKINS: Yes, more strongly Democratic, as a matter of fact. I think that area in the central part of Los Angeles--what we now call basically South Central--has always been considered an area that is just given over to minority groups. Adjoining legislators were not seeking to obtain that area, because they couldn't cope with minority issues, so it was always pretty safe.

It wasn't until later--and that happened to be under Democrats--that the district became more Not Republican, but moved eastward. Whereas the blacks, for example, were moving west, the districts after that reapportionment moved eastward. As I recall, that was the

beginning of my representing areas such as Huntington Park and South Gate. And then, in the last one, Downey was annexed. But in the earlier times it was considered safe.

VASQUEZ: Did that shift help people like [Assemblyman] Gordon [R.] Hahn?

HAWKINS: Are you thinking of Gordon or Kenneth Hahn?

VASQUEZ: Gordon.

HAWKINS: No. Gordon Hahn actually, if I recall, lost out as a result of that.

VASQUEZ: To what do you attribute the 1958 Democratic sweep of the state election? Virtual control of the two houses and most of the constitutional offices were won by Democrats. To what do you attribute that? The ending of cross-filing? Better organization?

HAWKINS: Which year now?

VASQUEZ: We're talking about 1958. The Democrats won every statewide office except for secretary of state.

HAWKINS: Yes. And if I recall, it was the year that Glenn Anderson, I believe, won lieutenant governor. Was it not?

VASQUEZ: Exactly.

HAWKINS: I want to make sure. It was strong organization throughout the state. Clubs were at their zenith.

VASQUEZ: The Democratic clubs?

HAWKINS: Yes. Democratic clubs were at their zenith, and the state was well organized, and I believe that largely as a result of that everybody who got endorsed by the statewide council of clubs. . . . I've forgotten what they called it. I don't want to hazard a guess as to what it was called. I'm trying to remember whether it was the CDC.

VASQUEZ: Well, I wanted to ask you about the CDC, the California Democratic Council.

HAWKINS: It was the rise of the CDC. Everyone who got nominated in the convention in Fresno won. They kept out other candidates. I think it was due primarily to grassroots organization. It just happened to be their zenith. I don't think they've ever been as strong thereafter or before that. But that just happened to be at that particular time.

VASQUEZ: Were you close to the CDC or any of the people in the leadership positions?

HAWKINS: Not extremely so.

VASQUEZ: Were they ever active in your district? Did they ever help you?

HAWKINS: My district has never been that well organized in terms of clubs. We had some. We probably had more at that time than any other time. But the club movement has never really caught on.

VASQUEZ: Why do you think that is?

HAWKINS: There's been a shyness about political involvement in the area, and I think it's largely due to the mobility of the population.

VASQUEZ: You mentioned last time that your district is in transition and has been for years. It seems like the district has continuously been in some kind of transition going all the way back to the forties.

HAWKINS: That is largely so, yes. I would say beginning with the forties, in the forties, it's been an area in transition. In a sense, it's a port for newcomers who come from elsewhere, who arrive here, and they seem to settle in the area. But then, as soon as they become better off in terms of getting good jobs and they can afford to move, they move to the Westside. Earlier it was the moving to the so-called Sugar Hill area, and more

recently to "the Hills," I call them--Baldwin [Hills] and Windsor Hills and places of that kind. I suppose it's just the temptation to try to become middle-class and to get away to better housing and schools. The schools have, in recent years, become much weaker, and families that can afford to move to get their kids into better schools go westward.

VASQUEZ: Do you suppose that this transitory nature of the district had something to do with the Brown administration's seeming incapacity to anticipate the Watts rebellion?

HAWKINS: Oh, I think the Watts rebellion was largely the result of a bad city administration, and by that I mean the [Mayor Samuel W.] Sam Yorty administration. It was during the best days in Washington, in that the War on Poverty was being waged. Blacks were becoming better positioned to take advantage of new occupations and to go into the professions. Affirmative action was helpful. The War on Poverty itself had released a substantial amount of financial aid to areas such as the South Central ghetto, but it was not getting through to the people. Everybody knew

it, everybody was talking about these programs, but they were cut off by the city administration.

I recall that about a week, not more than two weeks, before what I call the South Central "rebellion" or "eruption," a federal hearing was held in the Watts area at Will Rogers Park. I recall bringing the committee that I was on and chaired [House Committee on Education and Labor] out to Los Angeles to see if we couldn't break this deadlock over the funds. The city had not really organized a committee to receive the money, as the law required.

VASQUEZ: What was the reason they gave for this breakdown?

HAWKINS: It was just a matter of a power grab. Yorty wanted the power to spend the federal money as he saw fit, and he just refused to cooperate in making the agency representative of the people in the area, in providing for the involvement of the poor themselves, and it was a deadlock. So we brought a federal committee out. I recall that I chaired the committee. [Congressman] James Roosevelt was one of the members, as I recall. [Congressman] Alphonzo Bell, a Republican from the Beverly Hills area, was another one. We came

out. And we could predict at that time the trouble that would happen. We could really predict it. We notified the city administration that something had to be done, but nothing was done. We could tell from the witnesses that they were anticipating trouble, that they were being provoked into trouble.

VASQUEZ: By whom?

HAWKINS: By the failure of the city to actually become a part of the War on Poverty.

VASQUEZ: Was there a stated criticism of police-community relations in those hearings?

HAWKINS: Yes, but that didn't seem to be the most serious complaint. The complaints seemed to build around the lack of health facilities and jobs. Primarily jobs and health were two of the causes cited by most of the witnesses. Law enforcement, at that time, didn't have a good name anyway, and I don't think that that was as much cited in the hearings as the lack of health facilities and jobs. Housing was probably also included, if I recall.

VASQUEZ: In addition to trying to shake the city administration to attention on this matter, did you talk to any of your ex-colleagues in the

state legislature or to someone in the Brown administration at this point?

HAWKINS: No, I don't think I had any direct connection with the state, as such, and I don't recall that we lodged any notice with them. Probably more of an oversight than anything else. It wasn't deliberate. But we did speak to members in Congress when we got back. We did try to speed up the delivery of the federal funds. By this time, the event had occurred, and we were then in a better position to arouse people. And I don't think Washington was as aroused, because things were beginning to happen all over, not just in Los Angeles.

It seemed so strange that during an administration that was so compassionate that these things were happening. I recall that I talked to [R.] Sargent Shriver of the OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] about it. And it was later that Sargent Shriver took the leadership in bringing to the area health facilities, for example. We opened up the forerunner of the Watts Health Center. It opened up on 103d Street and then later moved to its present location.

VASQUEZ: To what do you attribute this contradiction? You had the administration that had probably done the most against poverty and was raising more issues than any administration had raised in decades about the needs of the disadvantaged, and it's precisely when that was going on that the greatest criticisms, the greatest rebellions, take place.

HAWKINS: Well, I think people began to realize that they were being deprived of things. They could see that something was happening and they were not getting the benefits. Prior to that time, they didn't even have any hope. I think their hope was stirred up by the fact that the administration was providing the leadership in getting the programs that could make a difference, and those who didn't get the programs obviously felt that they were left out, and they wanted to do something about it.

VASQUEZ: Was the Watts rebellion a help or a hindrance in bringing about change in South Central Los Angeles?

HAWKINS: I think it brought about change, but I think in the wrong way.

VASQUEZ: How is that?

HAWKINS: Well, the violence was not well organized; it was not targeted; it was not constructive; it did not have any particular goals. It was just a random eruption without proper leadership. It was more out of frustration than out of common sense.

It started in Watts. It seemed to move northward, almost, you might say, in the direction of [Los Angeles] City Hall. It seemed to be targeted to liquor stores and pawnshops. In this it was, to some extent, a rebellion against outside ownership, as well. I think people felt they were being exploited, both politically and economically. They seized on the places that they felt were exploiting them. They were moving in the direction of the [seat of] power, which was city hall, and got fairly close.

But I think that people feel worse when they know that things can be better but they are somehow being singled out for the suffering. That's the only explanation that makes any sense to me.

VASQUEZ: Did black militancy and the Black Power movement

that emerged here, as in other parts of the country, make your job as a representative in the "system" easier or harder?

HAWKINS: Well, it made it easier to get things done. The immediate benefits, I think, were good. It made it easier to demand things and get them done. We had no problem getting the money for health facilities. We had no problem getting the money for Martin Luther King [Jr.-Charles R. Drew Medical Center].

We soon got quite a number of good things in terms of participation in making decisions. We got the Teen Post, which was for juveniles, where young people could go and get help, counseling, job placement, and things of that nature. Suddenly it seemed everybody in government wanted to do something for what they considered to be Watts, not realizing that Watts was a small area and that a lot of the things that they wanted to do were only symbolic because it happened to be in Watts.

But in the long run, I don't think it basically changed the area. What benefits it brought were tangible, but in the long run it

would have been better if it had evolved in some other way.

VASQUEZ: Within your own district, did the black nationalist movement make things any more difficult for you in reaching your constituency?

HAWKINS: Well, I wouldn't say more difficult. Anyone who calls attention to the deplorable conditions to me makes things better. But I don't think it caught on that much with the rank and file. It was very visible. It was certainly a lot more visible than other groups and individuals who had struggled over the years, who had done a much better job, but I wouldn't count it as a very influential factor.

VASQUEZ: How would you assess the Brown administration and the effects that it brought about for the black community in general in California and specifically your district?

HAWKINS: I thought it was one of the better administrations. I thought it was good. I was not always as highly supportive as some others because I felt that it really failed to build a strong base for its own continuance or the continuance of the liberal movement.

VASQUEZ: Give an example of that, where you think it failed.

HAWKINS: Well, Governor Brown had the inclination to name some of his friends from San Francisco to the exclusion of the southern part of the state, for example. I recall when the attorney general came under consideration, he named one of his friends [Attorney General Stanley Mosk]. A lot of us were trying to favor [Senator Richard] Dick Richards, who was a senator, a very able man who would have made an outstanding attorney general. On a reasonable basis, we also thought it was good because it tied in the south. However, Brown didn't see eye to eye with us. And I recall that one or two of his other appointments, if I cite some other examples . . .

VASQUEZ: Was Stanley Mosk a bad attorney general?

HAWKINS: No, Stanley Mosk was all right. But that was in an earlier time. As a matter of fact, Stanley Mosk got his strong support from [Governor] Culbert Olson rather than Governor Brown.

But I recall that I was discussing an appointment on the civil service commission with him [Brown] one day. I believe it was called the

state Personnel Board rather than civil services-- the same function. Rather than name some of those that some of us had suggested from the southern part of the state--I think we had one or two blacks included on our list--the governor named his wife's sister [May Layne Bonell] to the position. And I openly told him, "I guess you don't expect to be reelected or to run again, do you, Governor?"

And he said, "Why?"

I said, "You put her on a board for a ten-year appointment beyond the election, when you had others that you could have selected who would have built a better organization. But you passed it up."

He just smiled and was somewhat frustrated.

To me, things like this didn't build good organization. I don't think he gave much thought to his judicial appointments. I think he named persons who were friends of his too often rather than individuals around whom you could organize and build support.

VASQUEZ: Criticisms have been made of Governor Brown that he took too long to make decisions that should

have been made quickly and that he tried to please too many people who many times were at opposite ends on an issue. What's your assessment of that?

HAWKINS: I don't think it was the length of time it took. He certainly could have made the same mistakes quicker. I just don't think he was a good organizer. I think he listened to the wrong people.

Even when the opportunity was opened up for him to name a senator, when I, among one or two others, tried to convince him to take the position himself and open it [the governorship] up for Glenn Anderson, who was then lieutenant governor. . . . But because his friends didn't like Glenn Anderson, because Glenn happened to not be the "political" type--too honest and too liberal--he passed up the opportunity. And I think we lost the position eventually because of that.

VASQUEZ: Do you think that perhaps he was trying to please the Kennedys?

HAWKINS: No. I don't think he was trying to please them at all. I think he was perhaps trying to please

some of his cronies from the old San Francisco days.

VASQUEZ: Would you care to mention who you think the wrong people were whom he listened to too often?

HAWKINS: Well, I wouldn't want to do any damage to anyone, and I'd rather not.

VASQUEZ: Do you think maybe some people had an inordinate influence on him who were from his area?

HAWKINS: I think some from the San Francisco area did have too much influence on him.

VASQUEZ: What impact do you think the running feud the governor had with Jesse Unruh had on his administration?

HAWKINS: It weakened his administration tremendously.

VASQUEZ: How so?

HAWKINS: Because he lost the support in the assembly that he really needed. That's where he needed the support, and he wasn't getting it. He wasn't getting the advice. He didn't call in, as he previously had, his staunchest supporters in the delegation. We just lost all contact. He had built his only contact, for a long time, with Unruh, and he went overboard I think, too far, in listening to Unruh. And then he suddenly began

to not listen at all and did not substitute any leadership in the assembly when I think he had a majority of supporters there but just didn't use them.

VASQUEZ: He didn't know how to work it, do you think?

HAWKINS: He just didn't know how to work it, or it wasn't his nature.

VASQUEZ: In 1959 you were involved in a race for the assembly speakership. Would you tell me your version of how that developed and why it is that you didn't become the speaker of the assembly?

HAWKINS: By that time I felt I had been in the assembly too long not to move. I felt the only thing I could move to would be the speakership.

VASQUEZ: What were the first steps you took in that direction?

HAWKINS: Well, I talked to various [people]. I recall that I talked to [Assemblyman A. Phillip] Phil Burton from the San Francisco area. I talked to [Assemblyman] George [E.] Brown [Jr.], [Assemblyman Vincent] Vince Thomas, and others in the L.A. area. I also, if I recall, mentioned it to several persons in the Third House, representatives there, because I knew that many

of them would probably control the greatest number of individuals in a speakership race. I mentioned it to a statewide leader of the labor movement whose name slips me for the time being. I also approached the leaders of the Republican group in the state assembly. The name that stands out right now is [Assemblyman Joseph C.] Joe Shell from Los Angeles. I had known his wife [Barbara Morton Shell] from experience with USC. She was very active in the [USC] Alumni Association. Through her I got to know Joe Shell pretty well.

VASQUEZ: He was a pretty conservative fellow. Did you get along with him?

HAWKINS: Very conservative, yes. We got along very well. I also spoke to Claude Minor, or he spoke to me. I've forgotten who made the first contact. Claude Minor was representing the railroads at that time, I think, primarily.

VASQUEZ: So he was a lobbyist?

HAWKINS: A lobbyist. In other words, I was making individual contacts.

VASQUEZ: Did you approach the growing coterie of young liberal Democratic assemblymen that were coming

into the assembly, like [Assemblyman Thomas M.]
Tom Rees and people like that?

HAWKINS: I did not approach Tom Rees, as I recall.

VASQUEZ: [Assemblyman William A.] Munnell?

HAWKINS: No, I did not, because he was . . .

VASQUEZ: [Assemblyman Robert W.] Bob Crown?

HAWKINS: Several that you mention were very unfriendly. I was never close to them. Phil Burton, among what you call "Turks" or a very liberal wing, I did approach and one or two others from San Francisco who seemed to be free from Unruh. I had to approach people who were free of Unruh because obviously Unruh and I were in an open break.

VASQUEZ: Why?

HAWKINS: I did not subscribe to his idea of organizing what I consider to be a fund to get members elected. I was never a part of his organization.

VASQUEZ: Was it difficult to deal with him unless you were in his organization?

HAWKINS: Yes. If you [weren't], you just didn't get committee assignments. I never worried about committee assignments myself. That's why I went out for the chairmanship of the Rules Committee, because it was not named by the speaker.

- VASQUEZ: And you were elected to that in '53, '55, and '57, weren't you?
- HAWKINS: Yes. But I went to the [Democratic] caucus, and members of the caucus elected me. It was not due to one who voted for the speakership. I never approached him, because I knew it was useless to approach him and some of the others. So I didn't do it. But I put together a pretty good group of fellows. As I recall, I ended up with thirty-nine votes. I needed forty-one.
- VASQUEZ: Why did Byron Rumford go the other way?
- HAWKINS: He voted the other way because he was a member of the [Committee on] Public Health, and the Public Health Committee opposed me on the basis of my previous position on prepaid health insurance.
- VASQUEZ: You think that was the reason why these people opposed you?
- HAWKINS: If I had not been a strong supporter of prepaid health insurance, I would have gotten my friends on that committee. Several who were very close to me deserted because of pressure, including Rumford.
- VASQUEZ: The CMA [California Medical Association] and groups like that had that much strength, is that

it?

HAWKINS: Yes.

VASQUEZ: Did that loss hurt you at all?

HAWKINS: No. I took it in stride. You win and you lose. To me, it was not devastating. As I said, I was thinking of leaving the state assembly. I had been there long enough. I felt that I had made my contribution, and I wanted to move on.

VASQUEZ: When one-man-one-vote made that possible?

HAWKINS: Made which?

VASQUEZ: You going to the Congress.

HAWKINS: No, I don't think that was responsible. I just think it was a matter of a new district opening up. I wasn't put in a position of running against an incumbent.