

POSEY: What?

HARRIS: If someone wanted to fix the voting there, they could if they wanted to, right?

POSEY: No, not now. I don't think so. In other words, blacks vote freely. They don't have any trouble voting, and they have black ~~colonels~~ colonels on Governor Finch's staff there and there are blacks on the...

HARRIS: Would you consider them as just being token blacks?

POSEY: No, I don't think they are. They are fairly militant. The president of the NAACP there, Joe Lyons; he's on the governor's staff. He's on the County Democrat Executive Committee. Whites accept what they have to. They accepted it because the federal government ordained it.

HARRIS: Well...

POSEY: You said they were token.

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH

HARRIS: Right.

POSEY: Okay. Are you ready to hit that question again; whether or not I think the blacks of Mississippi ^{who} work for Governor Finch are token. Well, of course, in a way they are, but it's a beginning.

HARRIS: Would you like to explain that?

POSEY: Well, before Finch and Waller there wasn't even any tokens.

HARRIS: Right.

POSEY: So, see, a token is better than nothing at all if you're broke, you see.

HARRIS: That's true. I know what you mean.

POSEY: Okay. See, you're a token probably.

HARRIS: Right.

POSEY: You see, you're a token... People are tokens, unless they have the jobs. Those who have the jobs don't feel themselves as

NOTICE

MDAR This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

tokens, don't think of themselves as being tokens. They think of themselves as being fortunate, and the blacks that don't have the county and the city and the state and federal jobs, they look at other blacks with a little envy and say, "They're just tokens," but once they land a fairly good job then that feeling goes away.

HARRIS:

Well, do you think that ^{with} these fairly good jobs that they are giving the blacks the total responsibility for these positions?

POSEY:

Well, let's face it, the blacks, they crawled in Mississippi. You know, a baby crawls before it can walk. They've crawled for about a hundred years. So, now they're just learning to walk. So, I suspect they'll gradually get a few more jobs under each governor, whether he's a democrat or republican.

HARRIS:

Right. But do you feel like the NAACP here in the state of Mississippi is losing power, because most of the young blacks seem, they're not that interested anymore?

NOTICE

This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH

POSEY:

No, they're not. I noticed at the state convention last year, very few young blacks there^o but let's face it, ~~That's~~ a stage you go through^o among young whites, ^{too}. They don't respect their parents too much. You know, they feel like they're smarter than mother and dad^o ~~and~~ ^{and} a human being is a human being, ~~So~~, naturally, young blacks feel like that the elders don't know too much^o they've probably been to school more than their elders, perhaps, and they've got a little superior knowledge. So, they're not going to pay the NAACP - something founded by their elders - too much attention.

HARRIS:

Well, what are the present dues to join the NAACP. Do you know this?

POSEY:

It's all the way from five to a thousand dollars. In other words, five dollars a year annual dues, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, and then you can go on up to five hundred ^{for} ~~to~~ life membership, then you can go to heritage ^{is} ~~to~~ life membership ^{is} ~~to~~ a thousand dollars.

HARRIS:

What does that mean?

NOTICE
This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U. S. Code).

MDAH

POSEY: Oh, it just means you pay a thousand dollars, you're a life member. I'm a regular life member; it cost me five hundred dollars.

HARRIS: Well, what is the difference in the two of them?

POSEY: Not really anything, except that you're more prosperous if you paid a thousand. It'd make you feel better. Okay. What's your next question?

HARRIS: Well, I guess we'll finish up on the NAACP, really. Do you feel like it's dying?

POSEY: Well, no. I doubt if it will ever die, see, because I think people your age as you get older, you might find... They've got a new executive director, Ben Hooks, whom I suspect will attract many young blacks back to it. See, I think that what happened to the NAACP nationally was this; Roy Wilkins, I've known him a long time, he's a fine fellow, but I think he stayed on the job too long. He stayed on it until he was about seventy-five. Hooks is about fifty-one, and he's going to

NOTICE
This material may be
reproduced by copyright
(Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH

be more militant and outspoken than Roy Wilkins was. So, I really think that Ben Hooks will probably bring some younger blacks back into the NAACP.

Spacing
→

HARRIS: Well, is there an active recruitment now for this state?

POSEY: Yes. They do it by each chapter or branch, whatever you call it. This is October is the recruitment month.

HARRIS: Do they canvass the various areas? How do they go about doing this?

POSEY: Well, actually, they are suppose to canvass ~~just post the candidates~~ in the various communities, and they try to get in the churches. The NAACP's basic strength is probably in the black church, and that's probably one reason there's not a lot of young blacks joining now a days because

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S.C. Code).

MDAH

POSEY: It wasn't the whole state.

HOLMES: Yes.

POSEY: And, you know, they attempted to kill him. You may have heard it, you know, a car wreck. They run into him. His face is still disfigured, but I'm having dinner with him this evening at his expense. He's working now, believe it or not, for the University of Mississippi.

HOLMES: Is that right?

POSEY: Yes.

HANNA: I had him for a teacher. I went to school at Millsaps, and he taught a course over me one summer.

POSEY: He's working for the University Medical Center now ~~and he~~ ^{and he} he's teaching courses about psychology of dying and this and that. He's teaching these people ^{for} nurses, ^{doctors,} you know, or young medical students about the attitude to have toward people when they're on the death bed, you know. Rather a

NOTICE
This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH

subject.

HOLMES:

But really necessary up there.

POSEY:

Yes. Edwin King was the, you know, he is the so-called "daddy of the white Civil Rights workers of Mississippi" that are being made over chaplin now. He's from Vicksburg originally, his people are. Well, if you want to start off on the labor movement, they came here in 1946. Of course, Robert W. Star was director and organizer of the effort in Mississippi. The first big success they scored was the changed affiliation ^{from} of ~~at~~ United Paper Workers, A.F.L.'s ^{to} ~~of~~ the International Woodworkers Union of the American C.I.O. ^[they] at Laurel had five thousand employees there at the Masonite ~~at that~~ plant. That was the first big coup ^{of} Star is still, is director after the A.F.L./C.I.O. merged, you know, in about 1953. He stayed on as state director, ~~and~~ then, of course, the fellow had, a guy name Hines, H-I-N-E-S, was state president of the A.F.L./C.I.O. and they got along well. Hines was the president of A.F.L., and then he took over as state president of the A.F.L./C.I.O. Of course,

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code)

MDAH

next after Hines - he's from Hattiesburg, he died - Claude Ramsey was elected, you know, as state president of the AF^{of}YL^{CLIO} Claude and Bob Star¹-Robert W. Star^{yn} never did get along; ~~Personality~~ conflict, but there wasn't any policy conflict. See, Star is a native of Mississippi, and I think he's ^{from} out ~~at~~ Clinton. I don't guess I'll go into too much of that. You can talk to Claude Ramsey and he'd probably help you. He likes to talk, Claude does, and I wouldn't want to take away his per^{ogative} of telling you *the history* about the labor movement in Mississippi.

HOLMES:

Well, we'd be interested in hearing things he might not tell us.

POSEY:

Well, you know, to be truthful about it, see, Claude Ramsey has always tried to have an alliance between the blacks and the labor union movement vote wise. He came closest to it in the election, of course, of Cliff Finch and then the carry of Mississippi slightly, however so slightly, for President Carter. Well, it seemed that the personality clash was ~~sur~~ Aaron Henry and Claude Ramsey get along well, but Claude Ramsey and Charles

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH

Evers doesn't. Of course, Charles was...

See, all of these people are personal friends of mine, and so that's why ^{I know them so well} ~~I don't want to~~

~~say nothing else~~ I talked to them on the phone last evening. Claude Ramsey says that Charles Evers is too interested in greenbacks, which he is. Charles admits that he loves money. He does everything in the world to make it, you know, I mean you know he'll... Right now, I don't think he's violating the law, but he has in the past. You know, he's run prostitutes, liquor, and everything else to make a dollar. He admits that, you know, in his book, in every speech, but Claude says he's too much of a mercenary, in other words. He thinks that Charles has used his position of being Medgar's brother, you see, Medgar's brother to make money, which he says he has to a certain extent, you see. In other words, he says that...

Charles explanation is, Charles Evers explanation is that Ted Kennedy doesn't let John Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy's bones rest. See, when Charles... Charles was a close friend with Bobby Kennedy. He was with him the night he was killed, you know, in California. Charles was standing next to him

when he was shot. He helped wrestle the killer to the ground. I can't think of the guy who killed Kennedy, but anyway Charles wants...

HOLMES:

Sirhan.

POSEY:

Yes. Sirhan Sirhan, yes. He helped wrestle him to the floor. Charles' explanation is this ~~He~~ ^{He} says Senator Ted Kennedy doesn't let John and Bobby's bones rest in the grave for nothing, and he's not going to let Medgar's bones rest in the grave for nothing. He's going to exploit it and make some money, but this has caused a rift between him and Marilee Evers who is Medgar's widow, and they don't often get along too well. Of course, Charles has divorced his wife, Nannie S. Evers. Nannie is now Nan because she ^{now} is the director ^{for} of the youth projects for the state NAACP. You see, they had given her the job as sort of a consolation prize, you know. In other words, she goes around and tries to form youth groups with all the NAACP chapters in the state. That's her position at the present time. I got involved in these things about 1946 through Thomas A. Armstrong. Tom

Armstrong used to run the former North Farish Street Newsstand at 135 and a half North Farish Street. Now, that's the man I suggested awhile ago that you contact. Tom Armstrong was official photographer for Medgar Evers, and as you see this book on Medgar Evers you'll see that all the photos are ~~a~~ ^{ed} credit to Tom Armstrong. Tom took ~~be~~ my membership dues in the NAACP in 1946, and also the American Veterans Committee, which he was commander of it, the commander of the local chapter there of Veterans Committee. He was very active in the Civil Rights Movement for a long time, but he's now about seventy-three years old and quite cynical; that's all he ever was. He knows, ~~he and a~~ ^{you know, the} whole group, but his close associate was Medgar Evers. In other words, he was Medgar's shadow. He knows more about, you know, ~~Evers~~ ^{the} family - as many as they had - than ~~than~~ ^{and} anyone in Mississippi, except, I guess, Charles knows ~~as~~ ^{as} ~~his~~ much better ^⓪ but if he goes, you know, he knows Charles well, but he's broke with Charles because he considers Charles a crook ^⓪. He's ^{ing his} an exploit ~~de~~ ^{the} people; That's Tom Armstrong's point. Of course, ----- everybody, but see, Armstrong worked back in

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH

the days with Doctor Ace McCoy, who was a black dentist at 125 and a half North Farish Street during the 1940s and 1950s. When Doctor McCoy died, that's when Aaron Henry took over the NAACP. You see, I've ^{before} been a member of the NAACP longer ~~than~~ Aaron Henry or Charles Evers or even Medgar Evers. See, I'm a life member, you know. They charged me five hundred bucks for my membership, but I knew all the original fellows. Fred Banks, he was one of the original members, you know; Jess Brown, you know, the attorney; the Reverend Edwin King. I was in a little before Ed, but he came along later quite strong as the chaplain at Tougaloo. There was a small group of us here. There wasn't much. I was the only white member of the NAACP in Mississippi at that time. That was considered...

HOLMES:

Why did you join at that time?

POSEY:

Well, I had been in the army and the army made a mistake, I guess, you know. There's millions of people... I'm a World War II veteran, and damn if they didn't transfer me into a black outfit. I think they did it,

NOTICE
This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH

you know, just In them days the
 army was segregated, but you know, with
 fifteen million people you've got to make a
^{clerical}
~~clinical~~ error occasionally ^{so}, I was in a
 black outfit for about three months before I
 could convince them folks I was white, which
 is rather comical. Meanwhile, the army made
 a mistake and had me down as a deserter.
 They thought I had deserted, but hell they
 just transferred me to the wrong place. You
 see, I was supposed to have been in Texas.
 Hell, they sent me to Connecticut. Well,
 they had me on their rolls as a deserter in
 Texas ^{they} they had been hunting for me, and
 hell, I was up with a black outfit in
 Connecticut. But finally they got things
 straightened out, you know, and got me back in
 a white outfit, but anyway I came to know
 blacks pretty well. They were sorry for me,
 you know, they understood that something had
 gone wrong because some of them thought I was
^{mulatto}
~~mulatto~~; and others said, "Well, you know,
 I don't believe he is." It really
^{concerned}
 disconcerted everyone. Afterward, ^I ~~my color~~
^{then}
 be came quite tolerant in ~~him~~, and I was
^{Did}
~~onetime.~~ ^{Do} you ever hear of Norman
 Thomas, the old Socialist Party leader?

Well, Norman Thomas ran for president six times on the Socialist Party ticket. Well, he heard from Michael Harrington, you know, who wrote, he wrote this book, The Other America which caused ^this poverty program to come along. Well, Mike was a young kid in those days, ¹carried Norman Thomas' brief case, you see. He used to debate a lot on this radio program, "Townhall." I believe it was a CBS program out of New York; that was before television. And another member of the group there was James Farmer who founded - I was once his room^mate in New York. I lived there awhile. He founded CORE, Congress of Racial Equality. James and I used to serve at, well, we shared rather modest quarters in Manhattan, New York. Then, Marsh Milgram was there who was a friend of mine; that at that time was a young kid running around with Norman Thomas. Marsh wound up as head of this integrated housing business in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and New York and around. Congressman Donald Frazier is chairman of it, you know. ^{Parham}~~Rarden~~ Mitchell, you know, was on the committee who was chairman of the Black Caucus in the House, and also, Henry Royce is on the committee who

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

MDAH