

ORAL HISTORY T-0205
INTERVIEWEE: MR. CHARLES BRIODY
INTERVIEWERS: MR. COOPER AND KATHKA A.
PEOPLE'S PARTY
JULY 26, 1972

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COOPER: Could you give us some background on your own experience and how you became involved?

BRIODY: Ok, I'm thirty years old. I'm single. I was a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara that is a lecturer. I taught English as a second language which is English to foreign students and Norouma for the Black Studies Department. Norouma is a west African language. My being a language teacher goes back primarily to my experience in the United States Peace Corps. From 1962 to 1965 I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Lagos, Nigeria and in many ways my experiences in the Peace Corps; my association with the problems of friends and another so-called democracy, had an effect on where I am today politically. I can remember having discussions over beer with Nigerian friends about the difficult situation they were in in the western region of Nigeria where they had a corrupt government. Nigeria at that time was a constitutional republic that had freedom of speech and assembly and the electoral process, at least on paper, and I said to my friend, "Why don't you do something to change this corrupt government, after all you're a democracy." And they said to me, "It's not that easy." And I sort of filed that away and figured that they probably weren't really trying hard enough to change things by using the system as it existed there. When I came back to New York and was a student at Columbia working on a M.A. in Latin, the Vietnam war started heating up, this was '65 and [Lyndon B.] Johnson had just been put in and was escalating. And with other students I tried telegrams, marches, and what not and was amazed that my sense of the war was becoming an issue—and was amazed that people in the Democratic Party were so quiet about it—even Kennedy. Robert Kennedy was supportive of Johnson for a long time and I couldn't understand if the Democratic Party was the liberal party, the party of the people, why it just didn't see that the American people were in ever increasing numbers turning against this war. I went to California, having completed my Master's in Latin to work on my M.A. in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics. Teaching English in Nigeria had gotten me interested in this whole, whole field called Teaching English as a Second language. By that time it was '67 or '68 and still there was no major politician in the Democratic Party who was speaking out against the war. An effort was mounted in California called the Peace and Freedom Party to get a new party on the ballot and it required, oh, a hundred and ninety thousand signatures. You had to get people to register in that number nine a hundred and ninety thousand throughout the state. Whether its one-half of one percent of the voting population or whatever I don't remember. And then after we went to this arduous effort of getting the Peace and Freedom Party on the ballot, that was an anti war party. [Eugene J.] McCarthy announced, and you all remember the results of that campaign. It indicated to me that even when the Democratic Party had the pulse of the people it somehow

wasn't able Internally to do what was necessary to get a candidate who would stand for those things. Anyway, that sort of convinced me, the Democratic Convention in '68, that you have to build an alternative, and my position today is still essentially the same as it was then. Whether we're going to get the fundamental changes we need in our country through the growth of an independent political party such as the People's Party, or through a transformation or a take over of the Democratic Party by those who want fundamental changes in honor of their democratic tradition, that change will not come unless the strong threat of such political action exists. And I believe that the effort that I've been Involved in the People's Party this whole year vindicates this hypothesis, because whether we like to admit it or not in the People's Party, there were some changes in the Democratic Party; there was some democratization. And we, while working outside the system, were able to influence the system Insofar as the Democratic Party platform addresses some of the issues that we raised. And I don't believe they would have been raised otherwise.

KATHKA: You don't think that people from within the party, Democratic Party itself, brought this about but rather your pressure from the outside?

BRIODY; Well, I'm saying the Democratic Party was pressured into allowing some minimal reforms because they knew that another effort outside the Party was being mounted, which, would be against their own interests. I can give you evidence of that. Maybe I'm not on the track that you want.

KATHKA: Fine.

BRIODY: So, the point of departure was my work in the Peace and Freedom Party. I registered in '67 and '68—I couldn't vote for either [Hubert H.] Humphrey or [Richard M.] Nixon. I knew that Nixon would be bad, but I just couldn't vote. Eldredge Cleaver happened to be the candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party. I would have voted for Eldredge except that his name did not appear on the ballot in California because he was under age—I would have voted for him as a protest. I was active from '68 up into '71 when I was a teacher at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in movement politics and in the local Peace and Freedom Party of which I was the local Chairman. And, going back to last July, when we formed the coalition, I was active there too, This was the coming together of fourteen Independent left parties, Peace and Freedom of half a dozen states, the new party of a half a dozen states, the Michigan Human Rights Party, the Utah Human Rights Party, the D.C. Statehood Party, these are some of the groups that form the various segments of our party now.

COOPER: The People's Party per se now came into being with this coalition approximately a year ago?

BRIODY: Right. At that meeting in Albuquerque, and we thought it was a remarkable meeting for a number of reasons, first, because it was so open and democratic and everything from the agenda to the confirmation of appointments was done in plenary session. It was long and drawn out but it was done, it was no round-robin overseeing committee. And secondly because we formed ourselves into what we called then. The Coalition. People weren't sure that they wanted to give up state party identities and be melted or molded into something, metamorphosis. We did a draft platform and we resolved to meet in November and that was

the Dallas Convention, Thanksgiving weekend last year, in which essentially the same people with a few new faces came together. And said we are going to attempt to get on the ballot in fifty states; we up-dated our platform, we chose Benjamin Spock (the noted pediatrician and anti-war activist) as our stand-in candidate, we called him then, for President, and Julius Hobson, a black educator, professor at the University of Washington— that's D.C. and a candidate on the D.C. Statehood party ticket for Congress—Congressional Representative as a stand-in-candidate for Vice President. We believed that the Democratic Party would not reform at all, at least many of us believe this, and that there would be another attempt to nominate Hubert Humphrey or someone like him. And that there would be a substantial walkout from the Democratic Party and the combination of the ballot stickers that we were able to achieve between November and July, plus the influx of people from the Democratic Party to us as a result of the nomination of a centered or reactionary program would be the nucleus for a new broad based political party that would include blacks and young people, and older People and so forth. This was the perspective that at least I had. I think many other people had it.

KATHKA: (George S.) McGovern was talking about, prior to his nomination about walking out (Interruption—phone) ... do you think he would move to your group as a nucleus—he was talking about building a third party movement?

BRIODY: Well, we challenged him more or less in an article in the Washington Post that appeared several days after he made his third party statement in which we said if you're serious, the People's Party is the only viable vehicle for doing that. And the article went on to say that we're on the ballot in 15 states, we have provisional candidates, they were provisional because you need the name of the candidate in order to get on the ballot. (Interruption)

COOPER: You were talking about McGovern pulling out, threatening to pull out—Is that right?

KATHKA: And that the People's Party would be the only Party... that would accept the challenge.

BRIODY: Right, it was touch and go right up until a week before the Democratic Convention whether our perspective was going to be what actually took place. And Jack Anderson claimed that (Sen. Abraham, D., Conn.) Ribicoff and (Kimmelman ?) who is one of McGovern's top advisors went to (Lawrence) O'Brien and said unless you make the correct procedural ruling to allow this question of the California delegation to be taken up by the entire body, there are young people in our Party that are going to walk out and by implication go the third party route. We always felt there was a aorta of conspiracy in the press not to let people know that this party was actually being put together. We had a devil of a time getting any kind of coverage, even though Spock, even though from the quote unquote "kooky point of view," if one would think a third party effort, with a former pediatrician at its head, fits in that category, it was certainly news worthy. But we never got any coverage. So this article does not mention the third party thing, the Anderson column, although he knew we existed. The Democrats never talked about us in public. But we have reason to believe...we know that through our association with Senator McCarthy who many people in our Party thought would lead that walkout from the Convention ultimately, and from the very vigorous campaign that Spock waged in thirty states and got good local coverage from. Democrats at every level of

the Party knew that we were very serious about this, so notice was served on O'Brien to either shape up or that the younger wing of the party was ready to ship out. Whole sections of the Democratic Party platform, at least in rhetoric, appear to have been lifted from the People's Party Platform.

COOPER: On that point, I was going to ask you earlier, when they were going through the process of selecting delegates, were your people involved in that at all in terms of — I mean I'm struck sometimes by the pamphlets I've read here that you have and some of the issues that were brought before the platform committee prior to the Convention itself are quite similar, I just wonder if there's any sort of liaison between the people.

BRIODY: No, I don't believe, I don't believe that there was. I'm not necessarily happy that that was the case but I think that our attitude toward some movement people was—you're foolish to even bother with the Democratic Party, and their attitude toward us was, you're foolish for not participating in it. I think there's a little bit of that attitude.

COOPER: Are you surprised at the way the Convention went?

BRIODY: Yes, and no. Yes, in so far as McGovern got the nomination. No, in so far as the Platform taken at face value, literally interpreted, is not a radical one but a reformist one. And the fact that even though those same delegates that gave McGovern the nomination could have voted in each one of those minority planks, the word was sent down—hold the wire, hold the wire, let's take the radical tax reform plank, which was basically ours, which Senator Fred Harris introduced. In a very cynical fashion when that minority plank was coming up to a vote, they simply shut off the microphone of the person who was asking for the report on it and it never came to a vote. And so the majority plank stood. The columnist that I read said that someone on the floor said that this would cost us five million dollars in business contributions if we were to pass the minority tax plank. So I'm not surprised. And whether these reforms are window dressing or whether they are a transformation of the Democratic Party, I think remains to be seen. Although, I think it opens the question as to whether there may not be a place for a Socialist wing in the Democratic Party now, whereas there certainly wasn't in '68. And this might put a question mark over the whole strategy for the third party, that is from the objective point of view.

KATHKA: That's one of the things we wanted to ask you is—what were your objectives, I mean, realistically you don't expect to pull much of a vote, do you—or do you?

BRIODY: Well, we were serious—hold that question until I rap a little bit about what it took to get as far as we are. To get on the ballot in all fifty states would have required something in the neighborhood of two million signatures. It's terribly difficult to get a new party on that ballot.

KATHKA: This is the problem with all third parties.

BRIODY: Right. And of course the laws were written that way thru a gentleman's agreement between Republicans and Democrats that they would always divide up the spoils, and that when the Socialists were making inroads and had mayoralties and governorships and a few congressional seats, they said we better put a stop to this. So they wrote laws which if

applied to themselves would be very, very difficult to do. If the Democratic Party were wiped out today and they had to start out fresh, they would find it very, very difficult to get on the ballot in all the states. So, we really do have a political establishment that very vigorously guards its right in its two wings to be the only political alternative to the American people. Anyway, we're on the ballot in the important states, California, Michigan, New Jersey, then a few easy states like Idaho, Montana, Arizona, probably will be in Rhode Island—it's very easy. I don't have them in my head—you know. But what we really set out to build was a permanent, independent left party. And it was always in my head that in so doing that we would at least influence the Democrats to adopt reforms that might get us through the next four years, while at the same time realizing that only changing the current economic system of the United States would get us out of our deep problems. Because the wars that we've been in of the Korean nature and the Vietnam nature, we see as being related to the need for U.S. corporations to maintain the status quo around the world to be frightened of any kind of a revolution, let alone a socialist revolution. And the tax system which severely limits the amount of money that can be spent on social programs at home, which ultimately is to the advantage of the same small handful of people who make the corporate investment decisions for their corporations. So, we have no illusions about being able to mobilize the majority of the American people around a program for fundamental social and economic change. But our argument was, if not in 1972—when? If every time you're faced with this lesser evil thing you always say, well, we can't start a third party because we might elect Nixon, or somebody else—you never get anywhere. So, we used our '72 campaign as a vehicle for building our party. And although we are on the ballot in only ten, we have People's Party organizations of various sizes in thirty states, and that's a start certainly.

KATHKA: So, you see yourself as a permanent thing.

BRIODY: Well, I, as Chairman of the People's Party at this particular juncture, if I were to be honest with you, quite uncertain as to whether its going to be a permanent thing. One of the questions that were deal with today, and tomorrow and the next day when we get our convention started is what to do about the candidacy of George McGovern.

KATHKA: There seems to be something of a movement within the halls (Interruption—phone)...McGovern and what you're going to do about it?

BRIODY: That's exactly it, we have three courses open to us: drop out of the national race, run Spock as a kind of symbolical protest candidate, or back McGovern. Now, I don't know which one of those views is going to prevail. I have a feeling that it may be continued with the Spock candidacy. I understand the reasons of those who say that this is the only principled thing to do, but I think you have to be both principled and practical if you're even working in the electoral system. At this point I personally favor giving some form of critical support to George McGovern, saying the Democrat Party platform in its basic thrust and direction is what we need. Jobs, tax reform, and good medical care, all those things insofar as it lists them vaguely are worth supporting. But, our claim would be that ultimately those things cannot be produced for the majority of the American people without a change in the system. that critical support would take is something that I'm not quite sure about. I think that there are a number of reasons why we should consider giving McGovern some form of critical support. First of all, the first prerequisite of a political party is people, and although I'm not saying that the People's Party has no members, you know—if there were half a

million people who identified themselves as being members of the People's Party, I would be surprised. There are in California fifty thousand registered Peace and Freedom Party people as part of our party. You know—if there were a hundred thousand people in the country who identified themselves as being members of our party, I would be surprised. And that's the difficulty with building a party because you are laying the foundation, hoping that your program will attract a constituency and that the actions of the other parties will drive a constituency to you. Because those things have not worked out according to time table, or maybe to my time table, its very hard to say. Anyway, we don't have people. Who would our natural constituency be? Well, I think it would be poor people, and I think it would be anti-war people, and it would be Women's Liberation people, as well as rank and file Americans. In point of fact, all those groups, although not satisfied, still seem to be working in the McGovern campaign. Whether we like to admit it or not, whether we will be saying to them in four more years, "Well you see, how foolish that was because we're fighting Israel now, or we're fighting Chile, and McGovern really was just another corporation candidate with a liberal image." But I think its a very bad procedure is terms of winning people over to take that approach. And I don't see how we can run a candidacy in opposition to George McGovern without saying that in effect. Granted the fact that McGovern is a corporation capitalist, granted the fact that he's getting money from the liberal wing of the ruling class, granted the fact that America will stay very much the same under George McGovern as it is under Richard Nixon; the people who would change it are backing McGovern on a short term basis to achieve certain tactical goals, certain minimal reforms, and I don't see how we can just not participate in that. Now this is only my view. There are many people in our party who have the exact opposite view as to what we should do.

KATHKA: It seems to me you're saying that you're going to do exactly the same thing the Populists did when they went along with the Democrats in nominating (William J.) Bryan.

BRIODY: And people that tell me that finished the Populists.

KATHKA: They nominated Bryan but they said, "Well, we're not going to go all the way to the Democrats, we're also going to nominate Tom Watson for Vice President, one of our men." But it didn't help. It pretty much killed the Populists.

BRIODY: Well, this is the exact argument that people were using with me. I don't know that the historical conditions aren't a little bit different. I think that Richard Nixon to such a degree represents the forces that want to keep America just the way it is, and maybe even make it a little bit more repressive economically, and from the civil rights point of view for ordinary working people. And that George McGovern to such a greater degree represents those forces that aren't going to tolerate that. I don't know that the choice isn't much clearer than a lesser evil. It may be between from the future of our country, for the future for growth, for any left movement, a choice between a very slight evil on a relative scale and a very greater evil. And its very, very hard to measure that because its hard to say just what a massive vote for George McGovern, even on the current Democratic Party platform, against Richard Nixon would mean. If McGovern beat Nixon ten to one and McGovern had run on the platform of slashing that military budget, of radical tax reform and of some sort of radical democratization of the whole political process, which I don't think one convention signifies, that would Indicate that our country was on a new course. Not because of McGovern, or because of the Democratic Party but because of the coalition of forces that including rank and

file Americans that push the country in that direction.

COOPER: Now, this kind of a problem of tactics, probably even greater strategy that your party faces; I think it's evident from the primaries, the kind of vote that (George C.)Wallace got, if you add the Wallace vote to McGovern—people are mad about something.

BRIODY: Right, but,

COOPER: It seems to me that your group is faced with a very difficult problem trying to will the electorate itself away from the two party conception.

BRIODY: I think that's true, and I would think it was a hopeless task but for the fact that the independent voting sector is now as large as one of the political parties. I guess it's as large as the Republicans—or is it as large as the Democrats?

COOPER: No, I think its the Republican's sector. A pretty good chunk

BRIODY: Ok, that's an indication...young people on polls, although they may register Democrat in larger numbers than Republicans, our member poll would show that they've got no real gut commitment to either political party.

KATHKA: This has been true, at least from the book Motor Behavior Research. It's been true all along that from the first few years ———'—————' of a person's voting life—he doesn't have a commitment, but he then eventually ends up in the party of his parents.

BRIODY: Well, I don't know that—I have no way of saying that that trend won't continue unless of course the party of his parents can't deliver the goods on what that newer voter ultimately wants.

KATHKA: This disregards the historical fact that there may be something going on that would cause him to be disaffected from the party.

BRIODY: Right. People have no—I don't think there's any great ideological commitment to a two party system in the United States. I don't believe that. The Republicans and Democrats will lionize it and idolize it. But I've never—I've met many people who have said, "Yes, we certainly do need a new party, but it's so damn hard to build one, it takes you so long to build it."

COOPER: That's the point I was trying to get at.

BRIODY: This sense of futility that you just—that it's impossible to build a party. I don't think that anything that's happened this year would convince me that it's Impossible to build one. The successes that we've had convince me that it is possible to build one; it just may be a little bit of a longer process than I thought. And therefore its very important whether we make an incorrect decision supporting or not supporting McGovern, or dropping out of the race, or criticizing movement people who are backing McGovern, or holding our tongue on it or saying "America's problems cannot be solved without democratic socialism," or on the other hand just fighting for jobs, justice, health care tax reform, for short range things. And without a crystal ball, I don't know how to answer those questions.

COOPER: Do you really think that the kinds of things you want to do represent rank and file American wishes, or merely these are answers to what they want?

BRIODY: Well, I think they represent rank and file American interests but I don't know that they represent rank and file American wishes. I do know that a poll which the New York Times wouldn't publish, which came out in 1971, and it was a Harris Poll or poll of that prestige, indicated that the American people had experienced a crisis of confidence in all their major institutions, churches, banks, corporations, government, had plunged something like twenty points. So that the dissatisfaction, the disaffection is there—I still say its our obligation to present some kind of a vision of what society would be like under another system, and to convince people that such a thing is possible and worth fighting for. And, that isn't easy either. I've never been at a school of thought that you rally people to a political cause by saying, "Tear it down," without any inkling of what's going to replace it. I can remember I was in Ala Vista during the student disturbances and when the Bank of America was a target, and then _____ of the Bank of America. But a—I remember them going down the street in mass chanting, "Two, four, six, eight, overthrow the fascist state." And, I watching from the window of my apartment with some other friends said, "What we ought to add, seven, eight, nine, ten, what will replace it, think again!" You know, I think that you really do have to offer people a vision of a society which is equalitarian, libertarian, democratic, in which civil liberties will be expanded and not contracted. And in which democracy will be extended into the economic area, that everyone will gain and nobody will lose except a very tiny handful who will probably only lose whatever power and prestige they enjoy as manipulators of the system, and probably lose nothing as human beings. I can't really think that the _____, the Rockfellers and the DePews would be any worse off as human beings under democratic socialism than they would be under the current situation. I don't think its a matter of lining people up against a wall and shooting them, as it is a matter of a transformation of the system.

COOPER: In line of giving them a vision, don't you suffer the problem of elitism then? One of the problems of the west, all the western industrial areas has been trying to overcome this image of the people with the answer, leading the masses out of darkness. Certainly, the left in the United States since the upheaval of the 60's, I think has suffered from this kind of thing. How do you overcome that, or do you feel you've suffered from that in your own party?

BRIODY: Well, I think that the tactical decision that we make backing McGovern, or continuing the independent race might well be an example of what you're talking about. I tried to give an example of the poll to show that the American people are getting more and more fed up with the current system. And there are polls which show that they want health care, they want tax reform, and other things. I myself until I studied a little bit about economics, and a little bit about imperialism, and the corporate state, didn't really know what the problems are or what the causes of some of the problems were we faced. I think the left has gained considerable credibility on Vietnam in terms of when we said it really wasn't going to end, every time there was a peace move that it was a mask for escalation, that Nixon's secret plan to end the war never materialized. I think we've got to extend that bit of credibility that we have regarding the war into things such as the economy, and explaining as clearly as we possibly can why we feel that unless the economic system is changed we're going to have continuing war, inflation and unemployment. And, of course, when you've got

the President of the United States helping you, Nixon's speech around this time last year in which he promised a generation with peace, without war or inflation, is the converse of that, of course, is that we have not had prosperity without either war or inflation. So, when the President of the United States says, "Our system requires either," that's a basis for communication. And in pointing out to people some of the things that are, some of the more technical aspects of corporate society which they feel in their daily lives. They must think it's strange that seventy percent of their tax dollar goes to a war budget, that the majority of foreign aid props up petty dictators around the world, that they really have no interest in helping out. And I think that they can sort of see that somehow or other the United States that people at the top want to keep the world pretty much the way it is, and that liberty really has nothing to do with it because we support—freedom and democracy have nothing to do with it, because we support some of the worst petty dictators. I think the contradictions are there that allow people to see that the problems of America are systemic ones, and not just the little sores and blisters, but rather a cancer. And I think that in outline the American people have a radical analysis. I think, you know, our economics professors and our history professors and our medical experts and others, you know, it's their job to blueprint the division of an alternate society so you can consider the arrangement. Yes, it can be done. Cut the military budget by this much, shift the tax burden this way, and we have the need to pay for all the health care for all Americans free. We'll have a job for every one. It isn't as if the potential weren't there. I think people have to be convinced by people with expertise that it is possible to change the economic system, democratize it, and yet to have a society where no man is suppressed politically or economically. And that requires expertise. I don't think people, the American people react negatively to expressions of expertise, which I would say we need more than elitism. Ok?

COOPER: Right. No. I—the problem as I see it for you is to overcome the image of ideological elitists which I think has permeated the peace movement to the point where, it's going to be a very effective tool for the conventional parties to use. You know, the smart ass kid with the ready answers sort of problem.

BRIODY: That a, well...being for peace and ending the war was one thing, backing the Viet Cong was something else, perhaps.

COOPER: And in effect, on the far fringes anyway, running into this problem about the leadership of the proletariat, you know you get into Marxist discussion about a dictatorship of elitists, and all that. But, you know, this image is there in the electorate's mind involving politics, which I think a third party of your nature is almost bound to run into head on.

BRIODY: We have tried to—if you look at our literature as I guess you have, there isn't too much of it around that I've written at this point. And I may represent a more liberal reformist wing of the party than others in it, although I remain a convinced democratic socialist, as regards what the final solutions to our problems will be. But, I think you will see that even the literature that is put out by the more hard line wing of our Party, avoids some of the rhetoric that you would see, for instance, in S.W.P. (Socialist Worker's Party) literature, or in Communist Party literature, or in Progressive Labor literature. We made it our business to try and sell a program, and if you look at our platform, and I want to try to get you copies of it—there must be copies around, did you get some of the platform planks—we'll have to go up to the 16th floor.

COOPER: I think we got some when we were up there.

BRIODY: Ok, alright. There is—you know, we do try to communicate on Issues and not to let an Ideological rhetoric interfere with it. And this is not disingenuousness on our part, it's just that we think that Marxist rhetoric or radical romantic revolutionary rhetoric obscures what your main points are.

COOPER: Yes, that's a good point, I'm glad that you made that.

BRIODY: I think we've avoided that, and I think that Dr. Spock's campaign—one of the—one of its glories has been the fact that here you have this very conservatively educated and attired gentlemen, a physician placing before the American people a very radical program, in very reasonable language. And if you get a chance to hear Spock speak, or you've heard him speak, or reports of his speeches, he does a very good job of that. Indeed. I just wish his audience could have been bigger.

KATHKA: What kind of relationship do you have with old left people? Do you have old left people supporting you?

BRIODY: No, hardly at all. I wish we did in some cases. The CP (Communist Party) in a lot of its literature and the speeches of its presidential candidate, vice-presidential candidate, Gushall and Winston, said that their main thrust was to help evict Nixon. You know, the Communists traditionally support liberal Democrats and in California oppose the formation of a new party. They didn't seem to oppose it so much this time, but they said that they would aid the formation of a broad based people's party, anti-monopoly, anti-racist, the things that we are. But, there is no—neither in manpower nor in resources have we received any support from the CP. As a matter of fact, in Pennsylvania and other states we were in competition with them for getting on the ballot. In other words, they ran in Pennsylvania, we had to get thirty-six thousand signatures in three weeks, and that's a story in itself because we missed it and it went to a three judge federal panel and they extended our period to August 17th or something. But, the CP was very vigorous and hard working young people _____ out status, but they made it impossible for the people who had signed their ballot petition to sign ours. So, they were actually competing with us, no matter what they said, no matter what they said, they were competing with us. The Socialists Worker's Party has an even funnier political stance. They claim to be building a new political party, but their two candidates don't qualify by reason of age. And they will probably not gain ballot status. So, again that's another bruise for allowing people to sort of think they can work for a radical candidate and then allow them to vote for a Democrat. I would think that we should be able, you know, if we had a reasonable left somehow, or a less fragmented left, we should have been able to put together a party in which, say, if the SWP was on the ballot in five states, and we were on in ten, that we could somehow get back together. Under the current political climate both from our point of view and from theirs, I don't think it's possible. Those are the only forces of the old left that I can think of. Now we have a lot of people in our party who at one time or other were members of the Socialists Party, and we have the backing of the (Debs ?) Club of the Socialists Party, at least we had it up to a point, I don't know if we still do. And there are former CPers and former Socialists and former Progressives, who as individuals support us—older people. Our whole—keep in mind that this whole effort was done on a budget of twenty thousand dollars.

COOPER: That was something we wanted to ask you, too, is where you are getting your money.

BRIODY: Well.

KATHKA: How much money you have and where your—

BRIODY: Well, I haven't been paid in a month. I was supposed to get fifty dollars a week. I gave up a ten thousand dollar a year job at the university to head up this effort. Was promised fifty dollars a week, or least that's what we hoped we would be able to get, and I don't think I ever got that for more than a month. It's been twenty, ten, and I haven't been paid for a month. I'm two thousand dollars in debt, a thousand dollar personal loan, and another thousand dollars—seven hundred of which, it cost us seven hundred dollars to get New Jersey on the ballot. We sent a—we had a group of McCarthy people who came over to us when Gene dropped out. We rented a trailer, got them up to New Jersey, got the fourteen hundred signatures to guarantee us eight hundred to get on the ballot. But in terms of—fifteen thousand of that was a contribution from Dr. Spock himself because he realized that there was no support forthcoming from any place else. We raised about five thousand before that. Spock circulated a letter among friends of his, who had paid for his—helped pay his legal fees for his trial and maybe it was more like twenty-three thousand cause I think the doll _____ gave us a thousand at one point. And Stanley Sheinbaun gave us five hundred at another point. But most of the contributions we got were for Ben Spock, in other words, people said, "Ben, you know, we think that this effort is probably not the best one, but you're a nice guy, so here's a hundred dollars. A lot of it—probably we received a thousand dollars in contributions of from two to twenty dollars thru our news letter. But, very, very small, and I'm convinced that I will never participate in an effort like this again unless its properly financed. I don't know—I don't know how many millionaire Socialists there are. But that, of course, is the bind with building a party. You need money, building a party that wants to change a system, the system, you don't get wealthy people often to contribute to a political effort which would make it impossible for them to have the kind of wealth and power they do. And this is what makes McGovern's effort suspicious. You know, he's for these tax reforms and then he runs an ad in the Wall Street Journal, Dear George, or whoever it was, "I never said this, I never said that, I never said we'd confiscate your wealth, I never said we'd plug all the loopholes." And that does make people cynical, and that's the kind of conviction (?) that McGovern will ultimately get his backing from — some form of the corporate interests is what puts a big question mark over whether we should support him or not. But, it was not a money making operation at all, and not having money limited to what we could do in terms of propaganda, pamphlets and what not. I think the biggest limitation was the almost complete blackout by the media nationally. Spock could go into a state as he did and get front page, or page two coverage. He got front page coverage in Florida during the primaries. Ben was unwilling though to really wage what I would call a serious media campaign. His philosophy was that I want to save it up for when I am the actual nominee, right now I'm the provisional nominee, I'll become passe if I'm on all the talk shows. And besides he was a presidential candidate, at least, provisional in a basic way. Since you're a candidate, you know, we can't let you on equal time. But, I think that whatever the cause, our failure to get nationwide media coverage was the biggest difficulty in our growth. There are people who will disagree with that, and say the time wasn't right, or the, you know, the historic function

of the Democratic Party has been to contain and absorb the _____ I did it rather well again, so don't blame yourselves. Don't blame your inability to get media coverage.

COOPER: Do you anticipate actual coverage for this convention?

BRIODY: Not a heck of a lot.

COOPER: Perhaps once Spock comes maybe, maybe not.

BRIODY: Right. Yea, he'll get some coverage and the wire services have been pretty good to us when we had something—when we had a story that related to the mainstream of politics. Trying to put our platform over the wire services, _____ platform, they're not interested?

COOPER: How are your delegates selected?

BRIODY: Our delegate selection process is even more open and perhaps more chaotic than the Democrats. Delegates to this convention will be anyone who in good faith attends any session and hooses to—chooses to vote on any of the matters. We do have state delegations and we have a formula of two delegates from each congressional district. But most of our meetings usually become one man, one vote affairs. And this is only practical when you're dealing with a group of say two hundred people or so. I would expect that we will proceed on that basis, too. I don't expect that there will be more than two—two hundred totwo hundred and fifty people here.

KATHKA: Oh, the Post said four hundred. There are so much _____ this afternoon that a rather small group.

BRIODY: Well, today is only platform workshops remember.

COOPER: You don't have any formal sessions today.

BRIODY: No, no. When people are coming from all over the country on small budgets—maybe we could shut that off for a while. I just feel like I'd like to take a break. (Interruption.)

KATHKA: I think we touched on this earlier, but one of the problems of the left has always been fights within its own ranks and I noticed in Grassroots (a party paper)—there seems to be some disagreement on Mr. Hague and Mr. Young. And I think there was an exchange of letters. What extent do you think you have this kind of dissension within your own Party?

BRIODY: Quite frankly, the Infighting is very intense, sometimes it's based on personality, sometimes on politics. One wing accusing the other of being opportunists, the other accusing that wing of being purist. There may be differences in terms of the national leadership, there may have been differences of background, I wouldn't say class background, cause that sounds sort of snooty and I don't mean it that way. But there are differences in background certainly, family background, regional...region of the country in which people were raised, perhaps life style, that turned out to be quite poisonous in terms of affecting the lives of people in the national office. Fortunately, however, the notion of grassroots control that we have in our party prevented any infection from spreading from the top to the grassroots

organizations. They went along doing their work and I always said that the national organization as structured could help, but could not hinder the growth of our Party. And I still think that that's true, that the National Chairman, the Treasurer, the Secretary, the Campaign—Speck's Campaign Manager could fight all they wanted to in that national office. And only insofar as it—well, not insofar as, that there was no way that it could really inhibit the growth of our party unless, as I think it was unfortunately true, some national officers took their personal gripes out and brought them to the grassroots and tried to turn them into political issues when they may have been personal. As a result of the way "I was treated", if you can put that in quotation marks, by the people that I was forced to work with, and ultimately was not able to work with, I have no intention of seeking a national office in this party, until the air is cleared. I'm not giving up on the People's Party or would I in any way want to dissuade what happened from the throwing together of three or four or five people in the national office without clear differences of strategy. And our arguments were never over goals, always over strategy. I wouldn't want anyone to think that those personal and political frictions in any way would make our party, not a cause worthy of support. Because as I said at the beginning of my talk, whether we get change thru the transformation of the major parties, or thru the growth of an independent party, unless that independent growth takes place, will be no motivation whatsoever for the two parties to do other than business as usual.

KATHKA: Just briefly, I was wanting to ask you how you were chosen National Chairman.

BRIODY: Oh, I was chosen by the other national officers at the Dallas Convention,

KATHKA; Dallas Convention. Right.

BRIODY: As my successor will be chosen.

KATHKA; At this Convention?

BRIODY: Right.

KATHKA: And then you are not a candidate?

BRIODY: No. They won't have Charlie Briody to kick around any more.

KATHKA: Good note!