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Guest (s): Gov. John Patterson (AL)

Title: Southern Governors' Conference

Note: Questions were paraphrased and/or shortened by the transcriber. For the exact question, please consult the audiotapes.

Morphew: Introduction...in Jackson, scene of a recent meeting with 4 southern Governors and representatives from 4 other southern states to discuss mutual problems...you and Govs. Barnett, Faubus, and Hollings with representatives of other southern states have met to discuss mutual problems, why are such meetings necessary?

Patterson: Well, I think that our southern states are bound together by tradition and by economics and think there are many things that we can accomplish for our people by working together. Of course, throughout the years we have worked together and I think that now, particularly with the very serious problem of federal-state relations, a problem where the federal government is continually by executive order and judicial decree encroaching upon the rights of the people, I think it's important now more than ever that we work closely together, assist one another, support one another, and back up the people of the other states around us. And I think by a show of unity, by working shoulder to shoulder together, we can be more effective and do a better job of protecting the interests of our people and our citizens.

Morphew: Specifically, what can be done at these joint meetings?

Patterson: Well, of course, we have a lot of litigation in each state. We have cases where the federal government is coming in and trying to force integration upon, in the public schools in some communities, or the federal government in other areas are trying to encroach upon the rights of states in areas not related to civil rights but other things. I think that we can join together. Our legal departments, our attorney generals, can work together. They can join each other as interveners or as friends of the court in cases. We can exchange information and ideas. Many of the southern Governors have been through these fights before and we can give information to the Governors who have not been in the fights before and the same would apply to the attorney generals and their legal staff. A great deal can be accomplished by working together and exchanging information, and meeting frequently, too.

Morphew: At the recent meeting in Jackson, the representatives of the southern states formed a steering committee to arrange for a second meeting to be held within 60 days in your capital, Montgomery...do you believe more than eight states will be represented at the Montgomery meeting?

Patterson: Oh yes. I feel confident that practically all of the southern Governors will be delighted to come in and meet with us because it will be of mutual benefit to the Governors and their staffs of each state and we're looking forward, within 60 days, to setting this meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, and we're hopeful that we'll have all of the southern states represented at that meeting. I'm sure it'll be beneficial and I think it will certainly lend strength to our southern position.

Morphew: The southern mayors are beginning to form their own organization with a conference scheduled very shortly in Memphis. Do you believe this is a good sign, a healthy sign for the people of the South?

Patterson: It certainly is and I'm pleased to see that a lot of groups, a lot of organizations of public officials on all levels of government are beginning to get really alarmed at the attitude and the encroachments of the federal government, at the serious damage that's being done to our constitutional form of government in this country, and it's a good sign, and I feel like that by all of us working together, we will accomplish something, we'll be able to better protect ourselves and I think that the people who would do violence to our constitutional form of government ought to know that when they take one of us one, they take us all on and they're in for a real fight.

Morphew: One of the major problems that leaders of the south feel that we have is the lack of ability to communicate with our friends who would be in sympathy with us in other parts of the country. Do you believe this is because the people who favor big government have been successful in equating the South's problems with race problems?

Patterson: I think that's right. I think that every section of the country, no matter where it is today, has some very serious problems concerning federal-state relations and the encroachment of the federal government onto the powers of the states. In Pennsylvania and New Hampshire for instance, it was a fight between the federal government and the state government over the field of subversive activities. In the Northwest, it's public power. In the Southwest, it's a fight between the state and the federal government over water rights. Everybody is feeling the heel of the federal government. In the South it's reflected in the field of so-called civil rights, but all of us, no matter where we live, certainly have just cause to be alarmed at the trend of things and I think that we will all be better served when we get back to local self-determination and local self-government and ensure that we have a right to govern ourselves and to run those things locally which can best be run locally and should be run locally.

Morphew: And when you speak of local self-government, do you mean only for Alabama or the South or do you mean it for the entire nation?

Patterson: I'm speaking now of everybody in the whole United States, all fifty states. I think it's a, I think this business of government by executive order where the administration in Washington just issues an executive order and demands that you do something and if you don't do it they just put you down by force, that's the kind of thing that will destroy this nation and I think that's the thing that's got people alarmed and that's why you are seeing these meetings and that's why you are seeing the meetings of mayors throughout the South and I think it's a good sign.

Morphew: You have been through quite an experience lately with federal marshals being sent to your capital, did this serve to wake up the people of Alabama and the nation?

Patterson: The people of my state are certainly law-abiding people and hospitable people and we certainly hated to see these outsiders come into Alabama for the deliberate purpose of violating our laws and getting into fights and causing trouble. The most alarming thing was the attitude of the federal government in encouraging them to come into our state. Our people resented it and I have never seen the people so upset and alarmed over this arrogant move and actions on the part of the federal government and on the part of these agitators who were supported by the United States attorney general and I think that our people now are more alarmed than I have ever seen them and they are demanding that something be done to guarantee our constitutional form of government in this country and to guarantee to them the right to govern themselves and the right to local determination of their affairs.

Morphew: What are some of the positive things that can be accomplished if the states work together?

Patterson: Of course, we can exchange ideas, as I said a moment ago. We have a number of Governors who've been through these fights before that can give us good advice and guidance. Our attorney generals and their legal staffs can work together when we have a lawsuit in one state which is going to affect the, the decision is going to affect the way things are done in other states. Then we can all join together in one lawsuit and in that way, go to the rescue of other states that the federal government is after. What's been happening is the federal government has been knocking us off, so to speak, one at a time, and of course, each individual state having to fight its battles alone, of course is at a considerable disadvantage because the federal government is so powerful and has so much money and such means. And by states working together, particularly states that have mutual problems as we do here in the South, our hand will be strengthened and they will be less inclined to want to take us on when they know that when they take one of us on they're going to have to take on a lot more of us.

Morphew: Do you think it will have a morale effect on the people of the South?

Patterson: I think so. I think these meetings of southern Governors and attorney generals and other southern officials encourages the people and gives them hope and arouses them to the very serious problem that we have. And after all, if the people are not aroused and if they don't get together and rise up and demand that the federal government change its

policies and ensure that they have a democratic system in this country and ensure that the people of every community of this state will have a right to every voice in the laws and decrees and things that they have to live under, then it's going to be very bad in this country. And I think the people are really aroused and I think more so than I've ever seen it. And I think now is the time to do it.

Morphew: As you just said, there are serious problems confronting the country...is there an easy solution?

Patterson: Well, no, I don't think so. I think we live in very perilous times. I think we live in times when this country is threatened from without and being undermined to some extent from within, and I think that the policies of the federal government and the policies of all the state governments should be at this time to unify ourselves in this country and do those things that are necessary to get the people in this country to work together in a spirit of cooperation and friendliness so that we can withstand better these attacks and pressures that are being brought upon us from without.

Morphew: And from what you observed at the meeting, are the people of the South ready to work together?

Patterson: I think so. I think the people of the South are more conscious of constitutional government and the right of local self-government than any other section of the whole country.