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# Bustin, David W. oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

# Interview with David W. Bustin by Andrea L'Hommedieu

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

**Interviewee**
Bustin, David W.

**Interviewer**
L'Hommedieu, Andrea

**Date**
March 13, 2000

**Place**
Augusta, Maine

**ID Number**
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## Biographical Note

David W. Bustin was born in Portland, Maine in 1938 and grew up in Standish, Maine with his mother and grandmother. He attended Colby College, graduating in 1961 and completed his master's degree at the University of Maine, Orono. He became a teacher in Portland and active in the teacher's union. He ran for the state legislature in 1968, was unsuccessful, and ran successfully in 1970, serving until 1978. He moved to Hallowell and worked for Governor Joe Brennan in the 1980s. He was mayor of Hallowell at the time of this interview.

## Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1954 Maine gubernatorial campaign; Sinclair Act; restructuring education as part of Muskie's legacy; Maine Legislature 1970-1978; government reorganization; Standish, Maine history; labor issues; political interests of labor; Colby politics; campaigning for Kennedy in 1960; Brennan campaign of 1978; comparison of Curtis, Longley, and Brennan; Muskie's golf game; political party decomposition; and a comparison of Mitchell and Muskie.

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**Transcript**

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview on March 13th, the year 2000, at Central Maine Power in Augusta, Maine with Mr. David Bustin. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. I'd like to start just by asking you to state your full name and spelling it.

**David Bustin:** My name is David W. Bustin, B-U-S-T-I-N.

**AL:** And where and when were you born?

**DB:** I was born in 1938, and I was born in Portland, Maine. I grew up in, essentially in Sebago Lake, Standish area from the time I was twelve to high school.

**AL:** And what was that community like growing up?

**DB:** Well, Standish today is a pretty big suburb of Portland, but in those days there were less than two thousand people. In fact the school I went to, Standish High School, no longer exists. And I was third in my class. I like to tell people I was third in my class but I drop my voice when I say there were only twenty-six people there.

**AL:** So what was the community like, being small, religiously, what?

**DB:** Religiously? I'd say it's primarily Protestant. In fact I don't remember that they had a Catholic church there at that time. I was, I grew up in the Congregationalist church and most of the people I knew went there.

**AL:** And economically, what was it that kept the economy going in that area?

**DB:** In that area, probably it was tourism because where Sebago Lake was the big tourist spot, and all of the summer camps and fishing and all the activities surrounding Sebago Lake were a big thing in those days. Of course there was also agricultural. I worked on my uncle's farm all the years of my early childhood and did haying, you know, after that. So there wasn't a lot of action going on.

**AL:** What did your parents do?

**DB:** My mother never worked, and I lived with my mother and grandmother. And my mother's husband, whom she married when I was seven, was a laborer and like many Maine people did not usually work in the winter time. He worked construction in the summer and fall and then laid off during the winter.

**AL:** Was there any or much ethnic diversity in your town growing up?

**DB:** I wouldn't say there was a lot. I think when I left that town and moved on, I was much more aware of the large Franco-American population in Maine. I didn't really see that when I was growing up. Had a friend who was an Italian, but most people were Wasps, generally speaking.

**AL:** And politically, what was the makeup of the town, were they more Republican or Democrat?

**DB:** It would be much heavier Republican, yes. Most of the people I knew who talked about it, and not everybody did, were Republicans. In fact, I can't remember anyone in my family who admitted to doing anything closer than voting for FDR. They might admit that, but they were Republicans mostly.

**AL:** And, just to go back for a minute, what was your mother's name?

**DB:** My mother's name, first and last? Eva Bustin.

**AL:** And did she come from Maine as well?

**DB:** She was born in Portland, yes.

**AL:** And she and her mother, your grandmother, raised you?

**DB:** Yes. And she was from Nova Scotia and came down in the nineteen hundreds. A lot of the people from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick came down into the Portland area. And she married my grandfather, Thomas Bustin, there.

**AL:** Did either of them have an influence on shaping your political beliefs?

**DB:** None.

**AL:** Now, at what point did you form your political beliefs?

**DB:** Well, I guess I really became interested in junior high school. I for some reason thought it was fun to go to the Standish town meeting, and I would go and watch them debate and vote on things. And I also was president of my class straight through school, and there was a little politics in that. And I paid attention to the 1952 [***sic*** 1954] elections and can say that Ed Muskie was my first great political hero as a boy of, what, when you're in junior high school, how old are you, thirteen?

**AL:** Thirteen, fourteen.

**DB:** Yeah, right in there.

**AL:** What was it about him that struck you as?

**DB:** Well, of course we also got our first television sets about that time. I think we got a television set around 1950. So you had the chance to see him on TV, and some of the other people that you had heard about in the newspapers, Governor Cross, people of that nature. But I actually got a chance to meet him when he was campaigning for governor. Was '52 the first year?

**AL:** He was elected in '54 for governor.

**DB:** Fifty-four. Okay, so in 1954 I actually met him when he was running. I was a, I would have been a sophomore in high school at that point, and that was a big thrill for me just to meet him.

**AL:** What was your initial impression?

**DB:** Oh, extremely favorable. You know, tall, strong, good speaking voice, and saying things

that I liked. I'm not sure I can remember them all at this time, but.

**AL:** You met him at a political gathering?

**DB:** I don't know whether it was a gathering or what it was. It was in the school that I attended, and he was there. And I remember it was the evening, and he was there for a supper or something, as usual, you know, you'd come in, shake hands and leave, that kind of thing. Then I was elected a delegate to Boy's State in my junior year, or appointed a delegate to Boy's State, and he spoke there, and I remember that. He was governor then.

**AL:** He was governor then, yeah, okay.

**DB:** So I would have to say he influenced my choice of being a Democrat. He was a hero for me. He was someone I wanted to be like.

**AL:** What was it about the Democratic Party that attracted you over the Republican Party seeing as how you were, you grew up in a community that was very Republican? Do you have recollections of an event or an incident or a person that really?

**DB:** Oh, I'm sure Muskie was the person. What issue? I can't come up with an issue at that time. I remember reading a lot of negativity about the current administration. Whether there was any scandal involved in it I can't recall at this time with Governor Cross' administration. But, you know, I just liked what I was hearing and I can't remember specifics today. But he certainly was the key reason, there's no question about it, that I was a Democrat. Of course I didn't become one until I was, I don't even know if I could have at eighteen in those years, could I?

**AL:** Oh, registered to vote?

**DB:** Yeah.

**AL:** I don't remember what year it changed from twenty-one to eighteen.

**DB:** I have a feeling it was still twenty-one.

**AL:** Yeah, it may very well have been.

**DB:** Because I think my first, I cast my first ballot when John Kennedy was first elected president.

**AL:** Okay. So, then Muskie ran for governor again in '56. Were you aware enough at that point that you went out to help his re-election or, you were still really an, just half way through high school.

**DB:** Well, '56 I would have been graduating.

**AL:** You would have been graduating.

**DB:** Yes, and I know I never indulged in any political activity until I, late in my college years.

**AL:** And what political activity was that, in your college years?

**DB:** In my college years, late, I guess I founded the, became president of the Young Democrats at Colby College.

**AL:** Colby College?

**DB:** Yes. And of course up there I met Mr. Fullam. In fact his son [David Fullam] was a good friend of mine, and of course I met a lot more people who were Democrats of course at Colby. And he and I and a couple of other fellows activated the Young Democrats, and at that time when we did that, it was the election of John Kennedy that we were active in. Or, active, I was active I mean with writing and talking and doing things.

**AL:** So this was probably 1959, '60.

**DB:** Sixty.

**AL:** Now, Professor Fullam was still living?

**DB:** I can't tell you he was living at that time.

**AL:** But he was living when you started at Colby.

**DB:** Yeah, his son, his name is going to -

**AL:** David?

**DB:** It was David, that was his name, was the one that I was friendly with. Now whether his father died in the middle of that or after I graduated I can't remember. I never took a course or anything like that.

**AL:** No, so you weren't close to Paul Fullam.

**DB:** No.

**AL:** No. And what was your experience like at Colby?

**DB:** What do you mean by that?

**AL:** Well, I suppose you could take that from a lot of different ways. Sort of, what did the college- did the college have an influence on you? Were there certain teachers that, maybe, touched you and. . . . ?

**DB:** Yes, I would think that I became more entrenched as a Democrat there under the influence of various and sundry, you know, I had not known grown adults who were Democrats before, you know, in my experience. Thinking people, and there were people who, you know, could make good arguments and all that kind of thing, as strange as that may seem. I think primarily David Bridgeman was an influence on me.

**AL:** What did he teach?

**DB:** He taught American civilization, history, that kind of thing. Well there were a lot of people that I had courses with who were active.

**AL:** So the Young Democrats at Colby was a group you belonged to, and primarily it focused on the Kennedy election?

**DB:** Well, I think it was almost moribund until we got a hold of it. It had been organized, but it hadn't been doing anything, and I think, but we got a hold of it and breathed some life into it for a year or so and did what we wanted to do. We all hated Nixon and that kind of thing, you know. And of course there was more, I mean when you were dealing with Colby you were dealing with a community that knew Muskie, I mean personally. You would go to people's homes, and they knew him personally. So that was something I hadn't experienced before.

**AL:** Like whose homes?

**DB:** Oh, Dr. Hill, that was one. I think David Bridgeman knew him, or had been where he was, Professor McKay, and of course Dr. Bixler. I was there when Bixler was there and Snyder came in, Stryder came in, so they both were, they both knew him of course.

**AL:** Did you ever meet or know of Harold Dubord or Dick Dubord?

**DB:** I met Dick Dubord when he ran for governor, but that's all. I mean I just met him and I never went to his house or anything like that, no.

**AL:** Could you sort of give me a history of your political involvement after you got out of college? What did you do once you left college?

**DB:** When I left college I went to being a school teacher in Portland, Maine and immediately jumped into Democratic Party politics there and worked with the local party in terms of phone calls and leaflet drops and the usual kind of thing and went to meetings and became fairly active. I'm not sure which year I finally went to the first convention, but it would have been in the early sixties. And so I did that.

But at the same time I was elected the president of the Portland Teacher's Association, which was a local union. It was just starting. It was at the time when the teachers were just getting ready to bargain. And so I was involved in that, and I was the president of that, and I finally left Portland. I think that's about the extent of my political activity; I never ran for office or

anything. I came up to Augusta to work for the State Teacher's Union, called at that time the Maine Teacher's Association, and -

**AL:** Which later changed to the Maine Education Association?

**DB:** That's correct. And I came up here in 1967 or '68, and that year the city Democrats, I immediately got involved with people and, you know, introduced myself around and started working in politics. And they asked if I would put my name up for legislature, and I said, "I've only been here," you know, "a year, less than a year." And I came within two hundred votes of winning. And then the next year, 1970, ran and won. So that started my elected political career so to speak, but all during that time I was still involved in the nitty-gritty of the party politics, got elected to the state committee and things of that nature; county committees and all of that.

**AL:** The first time that you ran and lost, was that against Charles Moreshead?

**DB:** The way it worked, Andrea, was the city of Augusta had six people running for three seats, so I wasn't really running against Moreshead, but he was one of the three Republicans; I was one of the three Democrats. Those three Republicans that year won. Nineteen-seventy, two Republicans and me won, and I won. So, yes, he was in the same race; he was my next door neighbor.

**AL:** He was your next door neighbor at the time?

**DB:** That's correct.

**AL:** And when did, you became closer friends later, or?

**DB:** No, we were friends -

**AL:** Oh, you were already.

**DB:** We were friends from the beginning, when I moved there we became friends. And it worked out so that in the mid-seventies he was chairman of the state Republican Party and I was chairperson in the state Democratic Party.

**AL:** And how did that work, how did you, did it, were you, how did you maintain the friendship and also have very differing political ideals?

**DB:** Oh, it didn't seem to be a problem.

**AL:** I mean, were you good at discussing things together?

**DB:** Yeah, we would have our political arguments and a lot of funny things happened. His youngest son was sitting on the doorstep when candidate James Erwin came over to Charlie's house for a fund raiser or some kind of a party. And Erwin said to David Moreshead, "Are you going to vote for me for governor?" And he said, "No, I'm going to vote for Mr. Bustin next

door." He was like four or five years old, five years old. There are all kinds of stories about that. We would put signs on each other's lawns and that kind of thing. But we never had a real argument to tell you the truth.

**AL:** So keep going with your political, you went to the legislature in 1970.

**DB:** That's correct.

**AL:** And you were there for eight years?

**DB:** Eight years.

**AL:** And during those years what were some of the issues that were prevalent that you worked on?

**DB:** I worked a lot on election law changes. And I think that was because I picked up quite a bit of knowledge of the nitty-gritty through Democratic politics, so that was one thing I spent time on. I was also on the labor committee and always was involved in all kinds of labor legislation. I sponsored a bill for the presidential primary; it never passed until after I left. Those years there were a lot of environmental laws that were passed. It's hard to remember all of the specifics that were going on.

**AL:** Do you remember in general who some of the people were that you worked closely with? This was during the what, the Curtis and Longley years?

**DB:** I was there for both. I came in at the end of Curtis' term and I was there all through the Longley era. In fact he considered me a thorn in his side, Governor Longley did. At the beginning, we were in the minority and we didn't have a whole lot to say about what was going on, Democrats. That was under- I think that was under all of Governor Curtis' term. Well, of course the other big thing I was involved in was reorganization of state government. I was on the select committee that did that, forgot about that. So, people I knew were of course Allen Pease, who was one of Curtis' right hand men, and Linwood Ross. And in the legislature, of course, in the House, I knew John Martin and Louis Jalbert and Ed Kelleher, and, you know, you can go down the. . . . I don't know what picture that is on the wall, I think that's one of my last terms. Kathy Goodwin.

**AL:** John Martin, what was your experience like working with him? Was he, he was speaker then?

**DB:** He was minority leader.

**AL:** Minority leader, yeah, because, yeah.

**DB:** John was, he had a close group of friends, and I was not one of those. It doesn't mean he didn't like me or he ignored me, but I was not on the inner circle of John Martin's cadre, so to speak. And I worked with him, he was minority leader and then speaker, became speaker. And I

served under him for, as, when he was speaker as well. And he's very intelligent. He knew the program; he knew what he wanted out of it, didn't always share what he really wanted out of it. I guess you could say he, in some of those days, was fairly arrogant and autocratic. And it may have been that he was trying to model speaker Kennedy, the way he used to run the program. But he certainly was a strong and effective leader.

**AL:** Do you think the length of time that he stayed in the legislature as speaker was a positive or a negative one for Democratic politics, or politics in general in Maine? Do you have a feeling on that?

**DB:** I don't think it helped the Democratic Party at all. And then of course you had the unfortunate business of- that took him down. And there was never any indication that he had any personal knowledge or gave any instruction or anything else. And I think had his personality been different, he would have not had to resign because his aide and some other drunken friend pulled that stunt. But it was his previous years as speaker and his attitude and the way he treated people that probably brought him down. It's like any policeman can catch one person for speeding and let him go and catch another one and give him a ticket, you know. Everybody gave John a ticket. When they finally got him speeding, they gave him a ticket.

**AL:** Louis Jalbert, you mentioned him. Do you have any recollections or stories of your times in the legislature with Louis?

**DB:** Very vivid. In fact, even in that picture we sit on the aisle directly opposite each other, so we talked all the time. I knew him fairly well. With Louis you were a friend if you went with him that day on a particular piece of legislation, and you were a son-of-a-bitch if you went against him, you know. It depended on what you were doing that day. But we got along.

**AL:** So after your time in the legislature, what did you do after that?

**DB:** Well, you remember during this time in the legislature I'm still working for the Teacher's Association for a living, so I really came to a crossroads in 1978. I could have the year wrong, but anyway, Longley was getting done, and nobody believed that he wasn't going to run again. Nobody knew he had cancer, of course, at that point. And I was getting through at the Teacher's Association, so I needed to either go out of state or, I didn't think there was anything I was going to be able to do to stay in Maine. And this guy named Brennan came around and wanted to know if I would support his bid for governor. He was going to run against Longley if Longley ran, he was going to run anyway, he said, so. And of course I knew him a little bit and I had supported George Mitchell over him at the previous time. And so he was glad to have me in the fold, and that was early on. And so when he won, he asked me to join his cabinet, which I did in the capacity of Manpower Affairs, now called the Department of Labor, and then a couple years after that, the Department of Personnel and Labor Relations. [I] can't get away from this labor relations stuff. And I worked with him for his eight years as governor.

**AL:** And what did your responsibilities include? Did you write labor legislation? Did you work on policies, labor policies, or?

**DB:** No, that job involved running the unemployment insurance program, safety issues, the old SETA public works, not public works, but public training for people out of work; the whole mass of labor administration. Well, I did that but that wasn't really what I did. I mean I, yes, I did that. But I, in that administration I was much more on the inside and I traveled with the governor, I wrote speeches for the governor, I played golf with the governor, I had a good time. And we had a state employee strike, the only one that there's ever been, which was really a holdover from the Longley years. This was right at the beginning of the administration. So he appointed me to resolve that, which, me and two other people, which we did. And that's why he wanted me to switch to Personnel and Labor Relations after that, so.

**AL:** So what was it like working with Joe Brennan?

**DB:** It was fun.

**AL:** What kind of a person is he?

**DB:** Oh, he's fairly reserved. He's, he is very guarded, has a tremendous sense of humor that he doesn't let a whole lot of people see. Awfully bright, good writer in his own right, and excellent politician, I mean he was a really good Irish politician.

**AL:** Does he have a good memory for faces as well?

**DB:** I think he does. I think he does. Although, you know, we would go into some rooms and he would ask me who the people were. He knew, he saw the face, and he would say, "Now, who is that?" I mean, on occasion. And I might know and I might not know, but he had a pretty good memory.

**AL:** Did you see the other, the way the other administrations worked, basically Longley, Curtis a little bit -

**DB:** I did.

**AL:** - and how they were different from Brennan's administration?

**DB:** Yes. Some major differences was Curtis was really hamstrung by the old government reorganiza-, the old government organization. And it was one of his goals and I was involved in it, in changing things so that the governor really had more power in terms of what was happening in the bureaucracy. I would say Curtis wanted to govern but couldn't. Longley had the apparatus to govern, but he didn't really seem to care about governing. He was more interested in the fight of the moment, and what was happening in the bureaucracy was irrelevant. And I think Joe made it a real point to govern through his commissioners. He expected us to do the work and to come forward with the problems and to try to resolve them, and he didn't let government drift.

I think Longley let government drift because he didn't like government in the first place. And I don't think he did much to try to improve it. He thought what you were supposed to do with

government was to cut it, and he did. He left us quite a mess. And Joe's rule at the very beginning of that administration is, "We're not going to talk about that. We're not going to, when you have a news conference you don't say, 'well, look at this mess I've got here that was left to me by the Longley administration and now we have to. . . .' we're not going to do that. We're just going to say, 'these are our goals. This is what we plan to do to meet those goals.'" And for the most part that was, it worked out all right.

**AL:** Was he an accessible governor?

**DB:** Who?

**AL:** Brennan.

**DB:** He was for me. Now, I don't know what anybody else would say. It's my, my thought would be any time a legislator wanted to get in to see him, he certainly could. And it always looked like, you know, from standing back and looking at it, it looked like he was accessible. So was Curtis, very accessible as far as I was concerned anyway. And Longley used to drag me in.

**AL:** Now, did you say earlier that you ran for governor, or that was a joke that the neighbor boy?

**DB:** No, that was a joke that the neighbor boy.

**AL:** Okay. In the time that you spent on the issue of collective bargaining, was that the time when you were at the Maine Teacher's Association? When was it you did all the work on collective bargaining?

**DB:** It was when I was there from- I went there in 1967 or '68 and worked there right through until I went to work for Joe Brennan.

**AL:** Okay. And exactly what, what was it that you did, you researched and wrote laws?

**DB:** No, I was out in the field negotiating contracts between school boards and teachers, local teacher's associations. I traveled all over the state.

**AL:** Sort of a mediator?

**DB:** No, negotiator, an advocate for the teachers.

**AL:** Advocate for the teachers.

**DB:** Yes, yes.

**AL:** When did you meet Charlie Micoleau?

**DB:** I met Charlie in 1970, I'm going to say '70, through a, what was called at that time a

newcomer's club of people who were not raised in Augusta, who had moved here, Augusta being a fairly closed community, pretty tight Republican community. And a lot of the people coming in were younger and Democratic, so we met socially first through that mechanism. And then Charlie was doing something with the state party. I'm not sure I remember whether he was fund raising or, was he executive director for a short time? I don't seem to remember that he was. But he was involved in the state party apparatus, and he was really the one who got me involved to that extent of running for state committee. And I was the platform committee chairman at the state convention in '72 and '74 I think, I think I was. So that's how I met him.

And then we, our friendship continued, and his wife always worked on my local campaigns, and he used to give me advice on running and politics. I know what he was doing with the state party; it was the first time they tried to get a coordinated campaign for the legislature going. And he was in charge of that, getting common materials and common themes and raising some money to do that kind of thing. And then he went down of course on the senator's staff.

**AL:** Was that shortly after, or, it must have been.

**DB:** I was work-, still working for the teacher's. I used to see, I'd see him a lot, I mean I, because the NEA is centered in Washington. And I would see Charlie when I went down, and we'd have lunch or dinner together or something over a number of years. Did he ultimately go to work for George? I think he did, didn't he?

**AL:** I don't know.

**DB:** I was- I knew him when he was going to law school at night down there; working for Muskie and going to law school.

**AL:** And you said his wife worked on your campaigns?

**DB:** Yeah, for the legislature.

**AL:** Did you ever have issues that you would talk to him about, going through Senator Muskie's office that related to the work you were doing?

**DB:** No, I was not part of the NEA lobby effort at all. It was usually social and friendship and national politics and what's going on and what's Muskie doing and all this kind of thing.

**AL:** Did you continue to have any contact with Muskie over the years?

**DB:** It would have been at functions, political functions. I have particularly at state conventions. I remember moving speeches that he would give. He was probably, I shouldn't say this, but he was probably the last great orator in Maine politics in my opinion. I guess it takes something different to connect on TV now, and public speaking and those kinds of things are not important anymore. But he was one hell of a speaker.

And I remember his big one in Portland on the, at the turning point of the Democratic Party on

the Vietnam War, when he spoke on that issue. And I remember him giving the peace sign which was the first time I think he'd ever done it, and the place went crazy of course. I don't know what year that would have been. It was '72-ish, right in there.

But the other real vivid memory is that when I became chairman of the Democratic Party, we were at a, what, I don't even think they have it any more, it was called a midterm conference, and I'm pretty sure it was in Kansas City. And there on the floor or, it's a convention between conventions, you know, the convention, and that was in seventy-, it was probably '76. The election was '78. When was the Humphrey?

**AL:** Humphrey-Muskie? Was '72 [*sic*] ['68].

**DB:** Yeah, '72, so we're talking '76, and this, we were there probably in '75. And here I was, the chairman of the Democratic Party sitting right next to himself [Muskie] for about an hour, chitchatting with himself. I mean, even though at that time I was in my thirties, it was still, wow, you know. And I'll never forget the conversation, because what was going on out there is Carter was building his organization. And I said to Muskie, I said, "What do you think about this guy?" He said, "Oh, he said, this doesn't, it doesn't really matter because when we get to '76, no matter who's running in the preliminaries, the convention will turn to somebody that they believe can lead their party to victory." And I said, which took all the courage I could get, "I don't think so, Senator, because of the," and you weren't supposed to contradict Ed Muskie. I said, "The way the rules work now," of course I was deeply involved in all the rules because I was chairman of the party; I said, "If they win those primaries, they can't lose those delegates. And the way the system works now is they are absolutely committed, and not only are they committed legally, they're committed emotionally. And if somebody comes into that convention with enough, they're going to have the nomination."

"Well, I don't think that's going to work that way," he says, I think, you know, he really kind of brushed me off. Because what I was really wanted him, I wanted him to get out there and do it because this would have been his time.

And of course he wasn't going to do that, nor was it my place to tell him whether he should or shouldn't. But I felt that way, and so I told him, and I said, "I think you ought to do it."

"No," he said, that wouldn't be necessary he didn't think. He didn't say he could get it without doing that, but I think he thought he would be the one that the party would turn to, former vice presidential nominee; big stature in the U.S. Senate, nobody else on the horizon. I mean, who is this peanut farmer from Georgia? And Carter won by knowing the rules, making the rules work.

**AL:** I'm going to stop and turn this over.

*End of Side A*
*Side B*

**AL:** We are now on side B of the interview with Mr. David Bustin on March 13th, the year 2000. And we were just talking about Muskie and some of your recollections of having met him.

In telling that story and having sat with him then and having met him so many years ago, did you have a different impression of him, or did you see him change in any way over those years?

**DB:** Well, I guess he just rose in stature and reputation. And, of course, he had all the great legislation going at the time, the Clean Air and the Clean Water and the, he became the budget man. And he just kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger, the vice presidential nominee and all of that. I had heard that he had a very bad temper; I had never seen that until I played golf with him one day at a, it was one of those 500-Club things. He got pretty mad. Not at anyone else, at himself.

**AL:** At his golf game?

**DB:** Yes. Other than that, I had not seen anything of that nature.

**AL:** Who else was playing with you that day?

**DB:** I think Marvin Rosenblum was. I can't remember, though. That would have been when I was party chairman as well.

**AL:** Regarding the environmental issues that you spoke of earlier as having been some of the issues that you dealt with in the state legislature, did those, when you were dealing with that legislation, when those things were coming forth, was there a sense that Muskie was a part of what was happening with environmental law and legislation?

**DB:** Yes, I think so. It was clear that, at least to us young Democratic legislators, that our U.S. senator was on the forefront of environmental change, of changes in environmental laws that would produce cleaner air, cleaner water. And as we dealt with environmental issues we all thought that we were all, you know, as Democrats, we were leading the way, doing the right thing, fighting the paper companies and the public utilities. The dreaded public utilities, you know, where I now work.

**AL:** I wasn't going to mention that. Now, did you see a change in the environment at all from the time you were growing up until after this legislation started taking effect?

**DB:** With my own eyes?

**AL:** Yes, say, the rivers.

**DB:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, absolutely.

**AL:** Did the rivers smell better? Did they look better? Or could you fish or swim in them? I mean, was there a very noticeable change, and when did that really take place?

**DB:** First of all, I'd say all of the above that you mentioned I noticed. And it took place gradually in the seventies into the eighties. I remember the rivers being so bad you wouldn't even want to drive over them over a bridge and look at them. And that went to the point now

where, you know, you still have some smells near the paper companies, but by and large they look clean. I don't know how clean they are, to tell you the truth, but you don't have the foam coming down through Augusta or, you know, scum on the river banks. No one would ever think of going swimming in the Kennebec when I first moved there in 1968. And I think no one would have any hesitation doing that now. And they're fishing, they're catching fish. The fish were dying in some of those places.

**AL:** What have you seen in terms of developments in the Democratic Party in Maine since you first became involved with politics? Have you seen certain steps or certain ways in which the Maine Democratic Party has changed over the years?

**DB:** Yeah, yeah I have. I think it has evolved from a very major role in government to an almost irrelevant institution. And there are a lot of reasons for that. Primarily what we have now is we have candidate parties. In the democratic side you would have the Brennan party and the Mitchell party, and they might overlap and they might not. The Tom Allen party, the [John] Baldacci party, it's really -

**AL:** It's really divided?

**DB:** It's not divided as much as that's where the emphasis is, and the money that goes into it and the people who work in those campaigns really constitute that party.

And the reason for it happening, of course, is that it was discovered that the candidates could win irrespective of whether the state party was pushing for them or not. And that what counted was the money which they were raising, not through the party, by themselves. The party had no money to give the candidates; it had no hook on them. The legislature ignores the state party organization, practically. I mean, it's irrelevant to their elections. They can win themselves whether the party's there or not. The platform is ignored essentially. It's passed usually by our beloved left wing, and then the moderates and conservative Democrats ignore it when it comes to passing laws.

In fact I, I was naive at one point. This was in the seventies, where I decided as party chairman I was going to have a group of legislators that would meet with the legislative leadership and the party heads to make sure that there were bills in to cover every plank in our platform and to get commitments to support them. And they met with us once and essentially brushed us off after that. So, what is the function of the party? It is a, it's legal. It has roles defined in law.

**AL:** And it can amend those.

**DB:** But most people today, in terms of the candidates who run for major office with lots of money, the candi--, party doesn't mean much. And you hear people say, "Well, I vote for the person, not the party." That's becoming more and more true.

**AL:** Do you think that has something to do with the large number of independents, registered independents?

**DB:** Yeah, the number of independents, the people who see no purpose to the party, it can't be demonstrated to them, and the party has nothing to sell them, really. I mean, if they do, I don't know what it is. And we've proven in this state that you can get elected governor without being in the party at all. I think you could do it elsewhere too. It's just that nobody has yet, except Mr. Ventura.

**AL:** What are your feelings about, do you feel that this change within the Democratic Party, the state structure, whether it will have a lasting negative effect on the Democratic Party in Maine? Do you think it will swing back?

**DB:** I don't see a swing back unless the, unless there are laws passed that changes the flow of the money.

**AL:** Did the Clean elections have anything, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

**DB:** I'm not sure how that works.

**AL:** I know that, well, I think it's sort of like if you go out and get, you go to, you get fifty people to each give you five dollar checks, and you can get all that and their signatures, you bring them to the state, then you get five thousand dollars towards your campaign.

**DB:** For legislature?

**AL:** Yeah. I don't know all the details; I just know that part.

**DB:** Do you have to be a party member to do that, or can anybody do that?

**AL:** Anybody can contribute. I don't know if you, I guess that would be the question to know the answer to.

**DB:** Yeah, that would be an important aspect. If I wanted to run for the state senate as an independent and I could go get five thousand dollars that way, then I don't see it would affect the party system at all. By the way I want to say, I have a lot of friends on the Republican side who have been active in party organization. It's the same problem there.

**AL:** The same.

**DB:** We're not talking just about the demise of the Democratic Party; I'm talking about the demise of both. They may be even more irrelevant to what's happening to Susan [Collins] and Olympia [Snowe] than the Democrats are to Tom [Allen] and John Baldacci.

**AL:** So, we don't, are we not seeing our Maine delegation come back and support our Democratic or Republican state party structures?

**DB:** I don't think they have to support the party structures. I think they're, where party matters is right where they are, right now, is in Washington, D.C. It's probably the only place that it

really matters. It doesn't matter at the Maine legislature. I challenge you to name five major issues of major difference between the Democrats and the Republicans in the last legislature. Can you do that? I can't do that, and I pay attention. I can't do that. Some people say cynically, they're all the same. Well, it's pretty close. They pick out a couple issues and have a fight, but usually they're, those issues are irrelevant, and they have a good fight about whether you're going to save this hundred and fifty thousand or do something else with it, and that's it. I mean, nobody's pushing any envelopes. I think people, the goal more than ever, or maybe it always was, but I think more than ever the goal is to stay in office, and everything you do seems to be geared to staying in office.

**AL:** What do I decide on this issue to make me stay reelectable?

**DB:** Yeah, maybe it's always been that way. Now, if you compare this to the British system where the party is everything, yeah, you can get elected maybe without it, but you don't get anywhere or do anything. You know, the party puts forward the people and the party matters. It's quite a difference is, what's happened in America as what's happened there, for example. I'm talking too much about that.

**AL:** No, that's great. Do you think that in some ways it might be a positive thing that there's not so much discord between, or differences between the two parties? Does it makes them easier to work together and compromise?

**DB:** No, no, you wouldn't say that about the Maine legislature because they find all kinds of things to fight about. Three or four years ago, the issue was John Martin, and it was as vicious as anything you could possibly come up with. There's still a lot of antagonism. And I think it comes from the exercise of power at the capitol on the things that don't matter to Mr. and Mrs. Maine, the things that only matter to the chairperson of the Appropriations Committee and, or somebody like that. How appointments are made, who can go to which conferences, along those lines there's a lot of, there's a power apparatus. And I think the issues involving in that apparatus which people don't, normal people don't care about, they fight over those issues with vigor. And they get upset with each other, greatly I guess.

**AL:** You said you've worked with, in terms of labor, in different capacities throughout your career. How has the role of labor and politics changed in Maine?

**DB:** I'm not sure it's changed a whole lot.

**AL:** No? What is its role?

**DB:** Its role is to defend the working person at the state capitol and at the federal Capitol and to push for those benefits or laws which are good for labor. Now, if you go back to Muskie's day, I guess you could say that it's more, labor was far more important then because you had a couple of things operating: one was the big box, and working people were urged to check that big box so that you had a big block vote. Now, union members are just like everybody else, they've got a television set, they can read a newspaper, they can use the Internet; think for themselves. And the union may say, "We think you ought to do this and do that, vote for so-and-

so." But, I think the majority vote Democratic, but it's not as big a block as it used to be. I think that the impact of the labor vote is probably less now, now that I'm thinking about it, for that reason.

**AL:** What role do you think technology has played in changing politics? I'm thinking of, in terms of before we had the television and all the different media sources, you had a lot of your gatherings at grange halls and suppers. And it happens sometimes, but it certainly isn't, you know, the way the Washington politicians generally do it these days, on a large basis. So, I think that individuals are more likely to read and form their opinions by themselves more than in a group setting.

**DB:** I think you're right.

**AL:** Do you think that has any impact?

**DB:** I think it has a big impact. And the, and technology is being used to do things, like the push-pulling as well as the campaign advertisements, news. I mean, when Muskie was running for governor the first time, he probably couldn't have gotten half as many Maine people to see him and hear him except for television. Now, they say he was the first television candidate, and he probably was, but just think how easy it is now. You see these candidates any time you want on television. They're looking right at you and they're talking to you. I mean it's, they're right there. I think people are becoming more cynical, but still you're bombarded with so many images. The image, the issue, the- Tom Allen, you know what he looks like. You know he's for lowering prescription drugs for the elderly. You know he's from Portland. He used to be a former mayor. You know all these things where you'd never have known without all the media attention. So you don't have to go out to your local Democratic meeting, and if you did, there wouldn't be anybody there anyway except a few people with a slow social life.

**AL:** Is your position that you hold now, does that keep you from being politically active?

**DB:** No.

**AL:** Are you still politically active?

**DB:** Well, I've lost some interest in it. What I do now is, I do hold office now, I'm the mayor of Hallowell, but that's not elected on a partisan basis. That's elected by, you know, you have a petition and people sign your petition. If there is an election- I haven't had any by the way for three times- but it's you against me. It's got nothing to do with whether it's a Republican or a Democrat. Although I am known in the city as a Democrat, I mean I carry that from all my activity. All my political activity has been upriver in Augusta, so it's the same thing really. So I'm known as a Democrat.

I go to a caucus; I get elected to convention. I usually don't go anymore. I don't know, the people, if you say, "David, who's the chairman of the party right now?" I don't know the answer to that. I don't know, I do happen to know that Gwen [Phillips] is the executive director because I get this mail to send money in, which I never do anymore.

I support Tom Allen. I know Tom. I know his brother is in my own constituency, and we know each other. So I support Tom, and I throw a fund raiser for him every time, and I give him some money, but, my local rep I give some money to. I probably have three or four fund raisers at my home for Democratic candidates every year and, or every time they run, which is almost every year, but that's the extent of it, which is probably more than most people do, now that I start talking about it.

**AL:** But more you'll go for someone you know, or an individual that you're close to rather than just because of the party structure?

**DB:** Right, right, yeah, that's a difference. I don't throw a party for the Democratic candidate that I don't like because he's a Democrat, no.

**AL:** And what, is it because of what we've been talking about before, that you've decided the party isn't really something you want to continue to support?

**DB:** Right, right, I don't contribute to the State Democratic Party.

**AL:** Because you feel it's, it doesn't have any impact?

**DB:** Right.

**AL:** No impact. What do you think were some of Muskie's strengths?

**DB:** Oh, he was extremely intelligent, an excellent speaker, which I've already talked about. He certainly had the ability to get things accomplished from the Sinclair Act in his early governorship to environmental bills, the budget and all of those kind of things. He always was able to be effective. So those were probably his major strengths.

**AL:** And did you ever see that there were any weaknesses that stood out?

**DB:** Other than the one critical area where he didn't listen to me? Probably not. I told him one thing, and he didn't listen.

**AL:** What do you think Muskie's greatest accomplishment was for the state of Maine, and was his accomplishment that was so great for the state of Maine different from his largest contributions to the country as a whole?

**DB:** I don't think anything he did as governor had more impact than the Sinclair Act.

**AL:** Was that the consolidation of towns into school districts?

**DB:** Yes. It has probably benefited more Maine people than any other single thing, from high school educations like I got, which were really skimpy. I mean, I didn't know it when it was happening, but when I got to Colby, I knew it; major, major, major issue.

On the national level, I think the environmental legislation and his budget reconciliation work were probably the biggest things. There may have been others that I can't remember, but he was a, he became a national figure of course, and that's always good for a state like Maine to. . . . I mean wherever I travel, I traveled a lot on my jobs and, "oh, that's, you're from Muskie-land. You're up there where Muskie is." I mean, everybody, like they say about George now, you know, it was the same with Muskie then.

**AL:** Do you know George at all?

**DB:** I probably know George better than I know any of the major politicians with the exception of Joe Brennan.

**AL:** And did you ever observe him when he was in the Senate?

**DB:** Yes.

**AL:** On how, maybe how, what his style was, how was he different? I know, because Muskie was his mentor in many senses, did you get a sense of things that he learned from Muskie, or ways that he did things differently, or just a different type of personality?

**DB:** Well, of course the personality is different. I think the dedication is the same, the hard work was the same, the ability to get people to do things obviously the same, and the influence is obviously very telling. Differences, I think George probably is more temperate as they say. I don't think anybody's ever seen him get mad about anything. He might have had a moment or two in Ireland, I'm not sure, but probably not, knowing him. And George was the ultimate made-for-television candidate, not the orator. Good speaker, but not the orator that Muskie was. Both very genuine, as far as anybody knows, both scrupulously honest. Nobody's ever said that they weren't, you know, that I know of.

**AL:** Would you say that Mitchell was a partisan politician, very much for the Democrats?

**DB:** He's a partisan politician, but he knows what's going on, and he, he was able to work both sides of the aisles to get what he needed done, and you can't do that if you're strictly partisan. A lot of those people are, they box themselves in with their partisanism. George didn't do that, and I don't think Muskie did that either.

**AL:** Is there anything that I haven't mentioned or asked about that you feel is important to add to our discussion today?

**DB:** I can't think of anything. We seem to have covered anything I have to say. In fact I had more to say than I thought I was going to have to say.

**AL:** Well, thank you very much for your time.

**DB:** Thank you.

*End of Interview*