BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: James Ward Russell, Jr.

James Ward Russell, Jr. was born March 19, 1917 in Hilo, Hawai‘i. He attended public schools in Hilo, but when both parents died, he moved to Honolulu and lived with an aunt while attending Punahou School. He later continued his education by taking electronic engineering courses through International Correspondence Schools and studying business at the Alexander Hamilton Institute.

In 1933, Russell began his forty-six year career with the Mutual Telephone Company (currently Hawaiian Telephone Company) as a radio-telephone technician. He held various positions with the company and retired as the director of community and government relations. From 1966 to 1973, Russell was the vice president and consultant for Pacific Network, Inc.

Russell began his political career when he was elected as a Republican to the territorial house in 1950. He was elected again in 1952, 1956, and 1958. He then served in the state senate from 1959 to 1962.
Joy Chong: The following is an interview with J. [James] Ward Russell [Jr.]. The interviewers were Dan Tuttle and Larry Meacham. Interview date was October 10, 1989, at the Russell residence. This is videotape number one.

DT: Well, we're sitting here chatting with J. Ward Russell a little bit about his antique clock, but I think we better shift and see where you were born. Hilo, I believe, is that right?

JR: Born in Hilo, Hawai‘i, correct.

DT: And that was when?

JR: March 19, 1917. That makes me seventy-two.

LM: So what’d your dad do?

JR: My father [James Ward Russell, Sr.] was an attorney. He practiced in Hilo. He was also a member of the territorial senate in those days. He served in, oh, I think he was first elected in (1918). Served for (three) terms in the territorial senate, was defeated (when he) ran for reelection in 1930, (losing) by four votes. And he died the year after. Died a few months after the election.

DT: I bet he didn’t ask for a recount either.

JR: No, as a matter a fact, he was prevailed upon (by his supporters) to ask for a recount. (The) person (whom) he trailed by four votes was Reverend Steven Desha. My father and Reverend Steven Desha were very close friends. And he did not want to have a recount (or in) any way interfere with Reverend Desha’s election. 'Cause actually, he had teamed up with Reverend Desha to beat, hopefully, to beat Robbie [Robert] Hind. Senator Robbie Hind from Kona. (My father was the attorney for Parker Ranch managed by his close friend A. W. Carter who had a strong influence on how the ranch employees would vote. When he asked my father how the employees should be instructed to cast their two votes my father said, “Desha and Russell.” If those instructions had been different—my dad would have won. Hind had indicated that it would be his last campaign and received a strong sympathy vote.)
(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

JC: Okay, Dan. Anytime.

DT: Well, politics were very personal, were they not, back in those days when your father was running?

JR: Oh indeed. Oh indeed. And there's some very close and lasting friendships [that] were made even with members of the Democratic party. They became very close friends. An interesting sidelight on that. My father's (law) partner was Delbert E. Metzger, who later became territorial attorney general (and a Supreme Court justice). Judge Metzger used to write my father's campaign speeches.

DT: The Judge Metzger of left-wing fame. Is that it?

JR: That's the one, that's the one.

DT: (Chuckles) Writing your father's speeches.

JR: Not only did he write my father's speeches, but when I campaigned for office, he used to surreptitiously send a message over to me to send him 500 cards that we used to pass out, you know, (to prospective voters—particularly on election day). He was a very close friend of the family. Very, very close friend of my father's.

LM: Do you remember anything of your father's campaigns?

JR: Well, I was only, let's see, (1930), the last campaign, I was (thirteen) years old. Oh, I can remember vividly the groups (that) used to come to the house and serenade him. And they'd have meetings (on) the front lanai with all his campaigners and supporters. And off they'd go. I never did actually go on any campaign foray with him, but I did go to some of the rallies where he spoke. Very proud of him.

DT: Your father tied in with the infamous Big Five [C. Brewer & Co., Ltd.; Castle & Cooke Ltd.; American Factors Ltd.; Alexander & Baldwin, Ltd.; Theo. H. Davies & Company Ltd.] in those days or was he separate, or . . .

JR: Not at all, not at all. As a matter of fact, he was kind of (an) anathema to the Big Five. He was with the rebel group. Now the rebel group used to consist of the, oh, I would say, the faction that would—headed by Harold Rice (from Maui), Charlie [Charles] Rice from Kaua'ī, Bob [Robert] Shingle from (O'ahu), Reverend Desha (and the) Akinas, [Ernest] (from Hawai'i). They were the ones who were against (or) you might say, anti-Big Five. My father was—he antagonized, or incurred the wrath of the Big Five by being a champion for the forty-eight hour [work] week. And as a matter of fact, he was denied the privilege of speaking on plantation property, because he was in opposition of the Big Five in trying to get improvements for labor. In particular, the championing of the forty-eight hour week.

And that reminds me of an episode which (was amusing). He and (Ernest) Akina, (were) scheduled to speak (to plantation employees) at the Honomū Plantation Clubhouse. No, it was an old theater in Honomū. Somehow, halfway through his speech the lights went off. It was
inadvertent, I think the power failed. (Anyway,) the lights went off. My father immediately got to his (feet) and said, “See what the plantations are doing. They won’t even let me speak (to you).” Well, of course, that helped win the East Hawai'i votes for him. And that was something. He was elected the first (three) times he ran. Sort of the champion for East Hawai'i.

DT: Was this the Akina family? Arthur Akina, who was later civil service commissioner?

JR: Beg your pardon?

DT: Family of Arthur Akina who was civil service commissioner in the . . .

JR: Yes, yes.


JR: Yes.

DT: I thought it might well have been.

JR: Yes. Yeah, it was Ernest Akina.

LM: So were they a minority in the legislature? Or were they . . .

JR: Well, they were a group, they were a minority group of Republicans, yes. Of course, there was a Republican-controlled legislature. In those days, you had Republicans and Republicans. (DT chuckles.) Those who control and those who . . . It’s something like what happens in the Democratic party today, I guess.

DT: Not very many Democrats.

(Laughter)

LM: So . . .

JR: No, there were very few Democrats in those days.

LM: So, how did the politics go then if they were in such a small minority? How did . . .

JR: Well, my father was successful in getting a good group supporting him in the [territorial] senate, and also a good group supporting him in the [territorial] house. And in that regard, he was instrumental in getting (his close friend) “Doc” [William] Hill to run for the legislature (territorial house), who later became, Senator Hill. And not only Doc Hill, but my father’s (former) office boy, (“Tommy” Thomas Sakakihara) who became—he originally started out as office boy, but became (an associate) to my father. He called Tommy in one day, and Doc, and said, “I want you two to run for the house of representatives from East Hawai'i.” The reason was (that his group in the senate) wanted to get (more) votes in the house to support their position in the senate. And as a consequence, that election—I guess that was the (1928) election, Doc Hill and Tommy Sakakihara were elected. Tommy had been elected before, but
Doc was elected in ('28) for the first time. [William Hill was elected to the 1929 territorial house.]

LM: So did they succeed in getting the forty-eight hour week?

JR: They did, (eventually).

LM: Oh.

JR: Yes, yes.

LM: Were there any other . . .

JR: There were repercussions from that. My father was one of those who was instrumental in founding the People's Bank [Ltd. of Hilo]. That was established around 1920. And all of a sudden, out of (a) clear blue sky, bank examiners arrived and closed the bank down, on the basis that there were unsecured loans made, inappropriate loans, (insufficient) security on the loans. The bank was closed and (eventually) paid back ninety cents on the dollar. It should have never been closed. Never been closed. I remember T. D. [Desmond] Collins, who was a very prominent CPA [certified public accountant], years later reiterating the fact that that bank should never've been closed down.

DT: Was Tommy Sakakihara really one of the first AJAs [Americans of Japanese Ancestry] to be elected to the legislature? Or was he the first, do you recall?

JR: There was one—no, he was not the first. I think there (were others) who had been elected to the house of representatives before Tommy. (I'm not sure.) Tommy started out as my father's office boy when he was going to Hilo High School. And worked in my father's office for quite a number of years, and then went away to California to the University of San Francisco, to get his law training. He never did become—got a law degree. He became a district court practitioner, and then later became a district court judge. When he returned from college, he did set up office in my father's law firm, and became the manager of my father's political campaigns, and a very close (friend) of the family. He was just like a member of the family. That certainly stood me in good stead in later years, because he turned out to be my mentor when I first entered into politics—first was elected.

DT: And he, in turn, backed Hiram Fong, too. I think they were close people later on.

JR: Yes, they were very close. They were very close. And that was a boon to my political career, because when I was first elected to the house, Tommy saw to it that I got (many of) the committee assignments that I wanted.

DT: (Laughs) I think . . .

LM: Okay . . .

DT: . . . we ought to get into education . . .

LM: How did you move to Honolulu?
JR: Let's see. The election was in November of 1930, and just a few days after the election my mother died. That would be November (15th), I think, if I remember the correct date. And then two months later on January 14th, my father died. So I was an orphan at, I was, I guess I was thirteen. Thirteen, that's right. I was brought to Honolulu, (to live with) my aunt (who) became my guardian. I lived here with my aunt, until I graduated from high school and went to work.

LM: Where did you go to high school?

JR: I went to Punahou [School]. I had been going to Hilo High [School], I was a sophomore at Hilo High. My folks died. I came (to Honolulu) and my aunt went around to try to determine which school I was going to go to. She went to the old Roosevelt [High] School and McKinley High School, and she decided, no, that I was going to go to Punahou, and saw to it that I entered Punahou. And that was quite an experience.

LM: Did you meet a lot of people there?

JR: My first reaction, I think, after coming from Hilo, was I never saw so many Haoles in my life. (DT laughs.) I'll never forget my first day. It was really quite a traumatic experience for a youngster.

LM: Who did you know there? I was curious.

JR: Well, my cousin had gone to Punahou and had a lot of friends who lived in the immediate vicinity of—and who later became my classmates. I had known none before I first went to Punahou. And two or three of them sort of came to my rescue when I went to Punahou. Saw to it that I met the right people. And very fortunately, my father's associates in Honolulu—the Hodgins, Doctor [Arthur] Hodgins' family, (the Shingles) and a number of others—sort of took me under their wing and saw that I was introduced around, became acclimated to school life at Punahou.

I don't know if this [would be] interesting, but I took four entrance examinations to see if I could be accepted to Punahou. I flunked three and only passed one subject, which was English, a subject I didn't particularly like. And so they decided, well, they would give me a chance. They put me on six weeks probation and sent me to a tutor associated with St. Clement's [Episcopal] Church. He tutored me for about two or three weeks and finally said to my aunt, nothing wrong with me, that I was just scared. And I was. I was scared of the big city. Anyway, I ended up on the honor roll at the end of six weeks and stayed on the honor roll for the rest of the time I was in high school.

LM: Who else was a student there when you were there?

JR: Oh, one of my classmates was General "Swede" Larsen, who was Stanley Larsen. Fred Winsteadt, Jack [John] Dyer, Judge Dyer, (Judge Sam King), oh, if you'd ask me earlier I could have come prepared to (give) you (a better) answer. A great many that later became prominent people in . . .

LM: In those days, was Punahou all Haole?
JR: Oh no, no. This was, you know, sort of a misconception on a lot of people's part. I think by that time, by the [19]30s, there were a considerable number of people of other nationalities, Orientals. Matter of fact, there had been Chinese in Punahou, back (at) the turn of the century (and in my mother's class of 1905). And Japanese. There weren't as many as there are today. But we had in my class of eighty-three, I would say, there must have been (at least fifteen who) were Oriental. Some very good friends, some very close friends (such as Dr. Randal Atsushi Nishijima, Dr. Albert Ho, George Yamamoto, Ichiro Takahashi).

LM: So when you graduated, what then?

JR: I graduated in '33, class of '33.

LM: And there you are, graduating high school in the middle of the depression, what'd you do?

JR: Sixteen years old. I was too young. Well, the first month after I got out of high school, I went down to the waterfront and was a stevedore. And then I got a job offered to me by the Honolulu Advertiser to be copy boy. This was about July the 1st. My job was to ride around the city of Honolulu (on a bicycle) delivering copy to advertisers. And then in early August, I got an offer from the telephone company. There had been people working on my behalf to try to get me jobs. These were tough days, depression days. As a matter of fact, I had three offers for jobs. One with the telephone company, one with Hawaiian Pineapple Company [Ltd.], and one with Hawaiian Cane Products [Ltd.] in Hilo. Frank West, (first president of Hawaiian Cane Products and) a close friend of the family, offered me a job as office boy, go back to Hilo. Forty dollars a month. And Hawaiian Pineapple Company offered me an opportunity to get into the accounting department at (forty-five) dollars a month. But the telephone company came through with an offer of sixty dollars a month! (DT laughs.) So guess where I went?

DT: Now this must have been the old Mutual Telephone Company, right?

JR: Mutual Telephone Company, right.

DT: Independent operation, right?

JR: I went in as an apprentice in the radio telephone department. And my first job was up (at) the interisland radio telephone station [Pu'umanawahua Radio Station] at [Pu'u]manawahua, up in the Wai'anae Mountains, near Pālehua, a place called Pālehua today. It's the [Pu'u]manawahua ridge. We had our first interisland station based there.

DT: And you were to go on and stay with that company. You were "Mr. Telephone," I know, here for many, many years.

JR: Well, my first wish, of course, was to become a lawyer like my father. I didn't have any money. My father, unfortunately, died right after the stock market crash. He had been a man of means for a number of years. The crash left him in pretty bad shape. There was no money forthcoming for my education, and so I had to go to work. I did hope to work a year. I planned to work a year, try to get enough money to go on to college. And I became interested in the telephone business at the end of the year, and I decided to continue on. They were good to me, they permitted—provided means to further my education by correspondence
school courses, going to courses at the—classes at the University of Hawai‘i, (University of Michigan), and things of that nature.

DT: And you stayed with them from ’33. When did you retire then?


DT: Forty-six years.

JR: I always tell people I started work when I was (ten).

(Laughter)

DT: The saying goes, you must have liked them.

LM: So how’d you get into politics?

JR: Well, I guess that was in 1948. There were two openings in the old fourth district, fourth representative district.

LM: Where was the fourth district at that time?

JR: The fourth district at that time was the eastern half of the island of O‘ahu. Nu‘uanu Avenue, right up (to) the Pali, right down the Kokokahi ridge (to the ocean). Everything to the east of that (line) was the fourth representative district, and everything to the west of the (line), it was in the fifth representative district. There were six candidates—six representatives from each district. In the fourth district two (house members) had—well, one, Jimmy [James] Glover, had decided to run for [territorial] senate, and the other was Walter Dillingham—not the old man Dillingham, but his nephew, Walter Dillingham, who’s still alive today. He decided to run for delegate to [U.S.] Congress. So there were two seats open. And Charlie [Charles] Hogg was living at the Pacific Club, where I happened to be living at the time. Close friend of the family, Charlie was an old newspaper man. He had opened the Associated Press and the United Press [International] in Tokyo many years before. A very close friend of the family, and he said to me one day, “Why don’t you run for political office? You’ve been in sports, you’ve been in (community activities), you’re pretty well known in the community.”

I said, “(No), if I ever decide to run for political office, I would do so (from) the island of Hawai‘i where my father and my family were better known.”

And he said, “Oh, you mean, you want to run on your father’s coattails?”

That did it. So I talked to the boss, got his permission to file for—run for the legislature, had his blessing, filed. Next day after (I) filed, I found that there were sixteen of us who were running for six seats.

DT: (Chuckles) Popular office.

JR: It was a popular office.
DT: So you were ready for your first political campaign, which we'll talk about as soon as we change tape.

JR: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: This is continuation of J. Ward Russell interview. This is videotape number two.

LM: This is tape number two. So how did your first campaign go?

JR: I was defeated. I came in number ten in a field of sixteen. But, evidently (my effort was sufficient enough to) encourage those people who backed me to have them come around (in) 1950, and ask me to run again. So I ran in 1950, and was elected in '50, and reelected in '52, and then defeated in the upheaval of 1954. Then reelected in '56 and '58 and so on.

DT: Let's talk a little bit about how you campaigned in those days. You must have learned something between the first and the second campaign.

JR: Oh my. Well, the first campaign was particularly interesting because eight days after I announced my candidacy, (employees of) the telephone company went out on strike. Second time in the history of the telephone company (they'd) ever been on strike. It lasted a period of—I think was something like twenty days. Twenty or twenty-two days. I couldn't campaign for office. I had to, being a supervisor of the company, I had to go to work and man switchboards, do all the things that the union people did. So my friends campaigned for me. So I didn't see much of campaigning in 1948, but 1950 and other times I ran, it was house-to-house. This was the principle thing. And, of course, those days, I think you may recall, we used campaign cards. We used to have them printed up by the thousands and get them distributed by the mail boys, bread and milkmen, and whoever you could think of. Friends to go around from house to house in the neighborhood and say, "He's my friend, (please) vote for (him)."

DT: People would actually carry those cards into the booths with them, did they not?

JR: Yes, yes. Oh, we used to (have workers) line up before the precinct booths and as people went in to vote, they would be given these cards. The idea was to, you know, you be sure to get the person—that the last card that he gets [is your campaign card]. There was always a big gathering of kids usually. They’re passing out cards trying to get prospective voters their candidate’s card.

DT: In other words, they didn’t have the thousand feet, or the thousand yards . . .

JR: No.

DT: . . . prohibition in those days. [Electioneering within 200 feet of polling booths is prohibited.]

JR: No.

LM: So how would you convince people to give out your cards?
JR: Friends, friends. And you'd be surprised. One of the persons who used to give out my cards, believe it or not, was Walter Dods, chairman of the board of the First Hawaiian Bank.

(Laughter)

JR: He reminisces about that, he kids me about that. He says, "You know, I used to pass out your cards." Dan ["Danny"] Kaleikini was (another) one of those who passed out my cards. I had quite a number of prominent people. Judge [Delbert] Metzger, surreptitiously.

(Laughter)

LM: Do you remember how much a campaign would cost in those days?

JR: I remember. My first successful campaign cost me $900.

LM: That's a lot in those days.

JR: That was a lot. I think my first campaign (in 1948) was around ($400). And then the first (successful) time, the 1950 campaign, was $900. That was quite a bit of money.

LM: How'd you get it?

JR: Letters of solicitation (to) friends. And one of the things I put down as a sort of a rule (was) that I would never (ask for or accept) a contribution in excess of $100. I didn't want to be beholden to any (person or) group. But I did receive contributions in excess of $100 that were nonsolicited (by me). I mean, (there'd) be, say, a group of attorneys, or it'd be a company. Castle & Cooke [Ltd.], Alexander & Baldwin [Ltd.], and some of the banks. So, all (of a) sudden you'd get a check for [$]150, $200, which all helped. Just my father's friends, my friends, acquaintances, or just people (who believed in me and wanted to help).

LM: So you didn't have fund-raising dinners or stuff like that?

JR: Never had—no. I couldn't afford it. One of the things I learnt in those days was that if you couldn't afford to throw a rather substantial campaign party to raise funds, get someone to throw it for you. Because you're always going to overlook someone. And the person that you overlooked is going to be an enemy. And so I just made it a rule. I did not personally ever sponsor a campaign fund-raising dinner. I've had (friends and supporters) sponsor functions for me, (to) which I would go and speak, and they would solicit funds for me. But personally, no. I made that a rule all during my campaign, my career.

LM: So when you got in the 1950 territorial legislature, were you in the Republican rebels?

JR: I was an independent, very much independent. I was a member of (a) public utility, I was not beholden to any Big Five interest. I was not beholden by virtue of any substantial contribution. I was completely independent. And I think that was one of the reasons why I made so many friends from the opposite side of the aisle, so to speak.

DT: There was quite a factional core going on in the house at that time, between the [Hiram] Fong faction—right?—and [Elwell] Percy Lydgate.
Oh, yes, yes. The 1953 session was a case in point. Hiram Fong wanted to be Speaker [of the territorial house of representatives]. As I remember, (a majority of) the Republicans wanted to elect (either Percy or) Hebden Porteus. (Hebden got the nod.) I'm glad you asked that question, because it leads into something I'm sure is going to come (up) later on. Hiram couldn't garner enough votes to get himself elected Speaker from within the Republican party. And Vince [Vincent] Esposito saw an opportunity to form a coalition. And so Vince got a group of Democrats together, and they joined with (the) Hiram Fong (Republicans) to elect Hiram Speaker of the house. And this was a true coalition, because out of that coalition, those people who had supported Fong for speakership, were given the important committees as their reward. They became chairmen of (all) the major committees.

So that helped you too?

We didn't become chairmen of any (major) committees.

Oh?

Not a one.

So you were, oh, you mean the Democrats [who supported Fong] got it instead of the Republicans.

That's right. Well, those Republicans who went over (and) those Democrats that sided with Hiram, were rewarded with committee chairmanships, that's right. I didn't get any of it. No, I didn't.

But you had sided with Hiram.

In '53—I take it back now. I correct myself on that. I had some friends. I was friendly with Fong and Tommy Sakakihara. I got what I wanted. I got my chairmanships, the committees that I wanted, which were specifically the education committee and public utilities committee.

(Early in the negotiations between the two Republican factions I had informed Hiram I could not support him. One reason being that in the last election I had been the lowest vote getter in the fourth district which was pro-Porteus. Hiram understood my position. As a result I became the messenger between the two factions. I did not approve of the coalition and did everything I could to prevent it.)

What were the main issues, would you say, in those pre-1954 legislatures? Do you remember any particular battles in '51, '53?

(The Operating Budget and the Capital Improvement Program bills were always controversial as they are now. My main interest was education and I'll always remember the battle to lower the teacher-pupil ratio to thirty-two to one—far higher than what exists today. As I recall, we established the first remedial reading program in the public school system and also the first appropriations ever for the mentally retarded, $46,000! That was my bill and I had a tough time getting the senate to approve it.) There were some legislative battles over (tax reform and bonuses for government employees). I remember (there) was quite a fiasco in 1954, with that. (As I recall, the house ended up by overriding Governor King's veto.) And then there
was, oh, I can remember when the (bill to establish a new insurance code was defeated by a filibuster in the final minutes of the legislative session).

DT: Right. That was when, I guess Sakae Takahashi was sort of head of . . .

JR: Yes.

DT: . . . one of the departments [Honolulu Board of Supervisors, 1950] in this period just before '54. And so that entered in. I think schools were quite a factor then.

JR: Oh, education was always an issue.

DT: And . . .

JR: The University of Hawai'i was a particular issue. I remember working very closely with (President) Gregg Sinclair, being chairman of (the) education committee. And I was in complete accord with the proposition of giving a lump-sum appropriation to the (university) rather than a line-by-line appropriation, which had been the practice prior to 1954-'53. The university appropriation was always line by line. And, see you had to, you know, had to query them in hearings before the house (education) committee and the finance committee. Almost every item in (their) budget. And so we were successful, I guess that was in '54, in getting a lump-sum appropriation to the University of Hawai'i for the first time.

DT: Apropos of that, I guess we could say—you remember, I think—you suffered something of a setback though, because Ben [Benjamin] Dillingham [II] made one of his classic remarks about people quit having children like rabbits, they wouldn't need new libraries at the university.

JR: Yes, I remember that. I remember.

DT: And he was a Republican. How did you react to that, Senator?

JR: He was a Republican. He was in the senate and he, I remember, he certainly. . . . He incurred the enmity of HGEA [Hawai'i Government Employees Association]. I remember that. They were all after him, some of the statements he made, (and) the University of Hawai'i group.

LM: What exactly did he say?

JR: Oh, I think Dan has got a better answer to it than I.

LM: We want you to say it, though.

JR: I can't remember word by word, but actually, Ben said. . . .

LM: Okay . . .

DT: Well, as I recall, and you can confirm it or deny if you don't remember it. "If people would quit having children like rabbits, they wouldn't need libraries at the university."
JR: Yes, that's it.

DT: When it was matter of funding what became the Sinclair Library on campus. But there was also another big issue, I think, it came up every two years. And that was bonuses for public employees.

JR: That's right. The bonus (for) public employees, I think, was (the) issue in the 1954 session of the legislature. That was one of the factors that contributed to the defeat of the Republican party.

LM: Could you explain what happened on that issue?

JR: Oh, there were (a number of) things that happened. One, of course, was the junket to Washington. The 1954 junket to Washington when the entire legislature went back to lobby for statehood. Remember the caricatures, the cartoons that appeared in the newspaper? One of Governor [Samuel Wilder] King setting forth in a sailboat with all of the members of the legislature on to Washington. There were cartoons, there were editorials against the “inappropriate expenditure of public funds” for this junket to Washington. It was a taxpayer bonanza. It was just not the thing to do. That was a big factor. The other was the HGEA. I think (it was) the bonus that they didn't get. But anyway, they turned out with the HGEA, UPW [United Public Workers], ILWU [International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union] all against the Republicans. They served notice that they weren't going to support the Republicans. Those were two of the big factors which contributed to the defeat of the Republicans. Plus, of course, that the Democrats had a very articulate group of (new and young) candidates, nice slate of candidates.

LM: Was there a problem with the tax bill in that session too?

JR: There was, yes. I don't remember specifically what the issue was. You know, that's in 1954.

LM: Okay.

JR: That's thirty-six years ago. Thirty-five years ago.

DT: Well, that erupted, I think, in '55. Right after the election.

JR: Yeah, (but)... 

DT: Because the Democrats had their tax reform bill which became very controversial and ended up, as I recall, with the [Governor Samuel Wilder] King veto, right?

JR: (I did not serve in the '55 session but I do recall the veto. It occurred in the 1954 session.) The veto was overridden (with the help of) two Republicans (who) defected to the Democrats. One was Marquis Calmes, as I recall. If I think...

LM: So what was the Democratic party like in those pre-'54 days?

JR: It was fun being in the legislature.
LM: No, I said the Democratic party. Was it any strength at all?

JR: I was just going to go on.

LM: Oh, okay.

JR: When I said it was fun, (I meant) in that there was not a rebellious attitude as far as the Democrats were concerned (prior to the 1954 elections). We got along together much better than we did after they came into power in '54. There was more camaraderie in the legislature. There was (always) a substantial (number) of Democrats. (I don't believe they ever constituted a majority but if you remember), I think it was in (1946, when) the house was (equally) divided. There was a contest for (the) speakership and [Manuel] Paschoal from Maui, was elected Speaker (when a Democrat defected on—as I recall—the third ballot). [Paschoal was Speaker of the house in 1947.] Anyway, that's when the house was fifteen–fifteen with the Democrats and the Republicans. In the early [19]50s they were (never) a majority. But there were far more Democrats than there are Republicans now. I assure you (of) that. And it was much more a congenial relationship with the Democrat(s). After '54 (a) militancy (set) in, and I think (the) '55 session contributed to that. I think [Charles] Charlie Kauhane ran (the) house with an iron hand (which antagonized both Republicans and Democrats). The attitude, when I got back into the legislature, had changed. You didn't have the. . . . It wasn't as pleasant working with the Democrats as it had been before.

LM: Why didn't the Republicans recruit the AJAs themselves?

JR: Well, you're getting into an interesting situation there. They tried to recruit them. (There was an element within the party which made) every effort to recruit these young returning GIs into the Republican party. But you must remember Jack [John] Burns had really gone out to rejuvenate and revive the Democrat party. You've got to give him credit for the job he did. He did a beautiful job. He went from precinct to precinct throughout the (islands) and (really) organized the Democrats. (He was able to demonstrate there was a future in politics, business and industry for these AJAs if they joined the Democratic party.)

The Republicans, on the other hand, were complacent. I think they figured that they could remain in power indefinitely. They weren't too concerned, with the exception of one segment of the Republican party. And that was the group that was headed by the remnants of the Vitousek machine, Roy Vitousek, when Roy had been Speaker of the house. Roy had died, but his organization had continued on. Roy could see the handwriting on the wall. He could see that this younger group of (AJAs and their supporters) had to be recruited and encouraged to participate in politics, and hopefully join the Republican party. And his successor was O. P. Soares, who became chairman of the party, and Mary Noonan, (Roy's secretary, who became chairman of the) O'ahu county committee. And they formed, you may recall, the Republican Club. You (remember) that, Dan, the Republican Club?

DT: All right, this was when Mary Noonan, Joe [Joseph] Itagaki . . .

JR: Joe Itagaki, that's (right. Membership in the club was open to anyone with the assumption they would join the party.) Every precinct in the state—every Republican precinct, every precinct—had representation (on) the board of directors of the Republican club. As a consequence, we had people of all nationalities. And a great many Japanese, Chinese,
(Hawaiians and) Portuguese (in the club). (Many) Japanese were on the board of directors of the Republican club. (The club ceased to exist when) O. P. Soares and Mary Noonan and that group were deposed from power. The financing for the Republican club was taken from them. The Republican club folded in (1951 or 1952 I believe).

LM: Who deposed them? Why was the funding taken away?

JR: Well, I think the people who controlled the purse strings. It was Merchant Street, to be honestly candid with you. It was. It was (principally the) Merchant Street people who had funded the Republican party. Not all of Merchant Street. There were some enlightened (leaders) in our business community (who) could see (that that) was the wrong thing to do. Pete Faye from AMFAC was a strong champion of O. P. Soares and Mary Noonan (and the Republican Club). But there were some others (who) were apprehensive about what might happen to the Republican party—to the old Republican party. And (much of) the opposition, as I recall, stemmed from (a) Hawaiian element within the Republican party. (Not all the Hawaiians.) It was a group of Hawaiians, part-Hawaiians (and Haoles) in the Republican party (who) did not want to see the leadership of the party taken away from them (by AJAs). And there were (others) who were sympathetic to their point of view. (They apparently felt the party) could retain control (of the legislature) with those (Republicans who) were running for office, and so they took the support away from O. P. Soares and Mary Noonan. Deposed them, actually. They were unsuccessful in their bid to retain their positions in the Republican party. (In my judgement this position was an affront to the many Japanese and other ethnic groups who were Republicans. It only served to encourage the WWII AJA veterans to join the Democratic Party.)

LM: What else did the Republican club do besides have meetings?

JR: Oh, (it) sponsored the "Republican Forum of the Air." It was a broadcast every Friday night, as I recall. (Often there were a series of debates.) I appeared on the "Republican Forum of the Air" a number of times. (It was an excellent) opportunity for exposure (for the Republican candidates for office). It was radio, not television, (and) I appeared on (their) radio programs a number of times. And so ...

DT: And your favorite meeting place was the Kewalo Inn, Kewalo Basin, right?

JR: (No. The principal meeting place for the members of the Republican Club was at the O'ahu party headquarters located on the second floor of a two-story building across Richards Street from the U.S. Post Office, old federal building. This was Mary Noonan's office. After O. P. and Mary were replaced a number of their supporters often met at the Kewalo Inn.)

DT: Kewalo Inn which was the Joe Itagaki restaurant.

JR: The Kewalo Inn. Joe Itagaki ran the Kewalo Inn. Joe and Mary [Noonan] ran the Kewalo Inn. (It became a meeting place for many Republicans after the club folded. Mary and Joe had a lot of supporters within the party and the community.)

LM: And did the radio program continue after Noonan had ...

JR: No, once the money was taken away from the support of the Republican club, the
“Republican Forum of the Air” went off the air.

LM: So efforts stopped to recruit new Japanese candidates?

JR: No. I don’t know if the efforts (ever) stopped to recruit. What we can say (is that) the efforts were unsuccessful. The Democrats had rallying points. One, that the Republicans (seemed reluctant) to permit them to—this new generation from becoming prominent; taking prominent positions in the party. Second, here was a golden opportunity for them to join a party which would be (receptive) to their needs and would contribute to making them part and parcel of the political spectrum. And I think it was here, an opportunity, you know, it’s always the party power, those people (were) challenged. I think these young Democrats, young GIs coming out (after WWII) beautifully educated, articulate, saw an opportunity to get into a body and achieve the objectives which Jack Burns espoused, which really weren’t contrary to many of the things that the Republicans espoused. Jack Burns and I got along beautifully, because we both believed in (many of) the same thing(s).

LM: Okay, let’s take a break.

DT: President . . .

LM: We’re out of tape, so you can ask the next one.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: This is a continuation of the interview with J. Ward Russell. This is videotape number three.

JR: It would be [David Dwight] Eisenhower and it was supported by one group and . . .

DT: Yeah, we’ll get into that in just a moment. This is tape number three, and we were just discussing the implications of the 1952 presidential campaign for the nomination in the Republican party, and its implications for the Hawai‘i [Republican] party. You might want to pick it up from there, Mr. Russell.

JR: I can’t be too specific on that, simply because I’d just been elected to office, and I was not embroiled in the party politics as much as I was in elective politics, and lot of things that were affecting the legislature. But I do definitely recall that there was quite a schism (in) the delegation that went back to the presidential primary, for the convention. And they were charged—they were split between Eisenhower and . . .


JR: . . . Taft, that’s right. Taft was a very close friend of Joe Farrington’s. But Eisenhower . . . It was interesting. I remember the group, they would say—they were an enlightened group. They could see what was happening and so they pledged themselves to Eisenhower. That created quite a rift within the Republican party, which continued on to the point—to the
DT: Well, the Eisenhower forces really gave the Hawai‘i governorship, did they not, to the Taft forces?

JR: That’s right.

DT: Sort of deferences for making peace.

JR: (I’m not sure. I really don’t think so. As I recall there was no problem whatsoever with the original appointment of Sam King.)

DT: And that led to your having Samuel Wilder King as the successor to the Democrat Oren Long.

JR: (Well, it was now a Republican administration and naturally a Republican would be appointed to succeed Long. As I remember King was the prime candidate at that time.)

DT: But, I think you recognize it as a factor in the Republican . . .

JR: Oh absolutely.

DT: . . . decline. I think, also, another factor I mentioned is the McCarran-Walter Act [a 1952 federal act allowing immigrants to become naturalized citizens with full voting rights]. I don’t think you, as Republicans, really signed up very many people as a result of that. Whereas the Democrats were busy on the hustings, so to speak.

JR: (First, I don’t think the appointment of Sam King was any factor in the Republican decline. But I do agree that) Jack Burns took advantage of (the McCarran Act) and made certain that there was a tremendous registration of Democrats. There was no question about that. That was a tremendous factor.

LM: Okay, so what happened to you in the ’54 election?

JR: Well, I was defeated in ’54. It was an interesting election. As I said, this group of very articulate, young (AIA) GIs returning. . . . Plus Anna [F.] Kahanamoku. Of course, I’m speaking of the fourth district alone. But as far as the whole ticket was concerned, there was only one (fourth district) Republican that survived. That was Heb[den] Porteus. All the other five of us went down the tubes, so to speak. I can remember very much when I was campaigning for office, I knew which precincts were bellwethers of how the election was going to go. And I remember after the polls closed, I went down to—this was in particularly Kaka‘ako, Mō‘ili‘ili, McCully (and ‘Iolani Palace). If there (was) such and such a percentage in favor of the Democrat party, I knew the Republicans were going to be defeated. About seven o’clock that night I came back to campaign headquarters, I said, “The Republicans are out.” The ‘Iolani (precinct) had polling (only) about 20 percent (for the Republicans). And with that particular percentage, the Republican party was doomed to defeat. And we went down the tube.

I can remember other contributing factors were, as I mentioned earlier, the junket to
Washington; the money bills, HGEA, ILWU, UPW opposition; (and the vets). They went out, fought against us bitterly. And you have to add to that the capabilities of this group of opponents that we had, all very articulate (and) well educated. I'll just comment on that, if I may. You know, prior to that campaign (the Japanese were always accused of plunking. Actually the greatest plunk voters were Haoles. There were far more Japanese voting for Haoles than Haoles voting for Japanese. One reason—there were not too many attractive Oriental candidates. The 1954 election was different. Japanese were again accused of plunking—and they did. They had every right to because they had an excellent slate of candidates with a good platform.) And in the fourth district, for example, I don't believe that there had been (an outstanding) Japanese candidate for years. And all of a sudden along came this group of young people who were well educated, articulate, well qualified. And so naturally they would be supported by their own ethnic group. And they should have been supported by their own ethnic group because here, for (possibly) the first time, were some well-qualified candidates. And on the basis of the campaign that they conducted, they deserve(d) to be elected. They did a beautiful job. Excellent campaign. And this thing, I think, sort of prevailed upon the whole party. That all of a sudden (the electorate) began seeing they have an entirely new, different breed of individuals that are running for politics.

LM: What sort of issues did they run on?

JR: Well, you know, the land reform was beginning to rear its head at that time. Oh, tax issues, (economic growth, job opportunities, government reform), education. The same issues you might say they run on today. That the Republicans were (inept and) vulnerable. People were (not) listening to them.

LM: So, but you were reelected to the legislature . . .

JR: In '56.

LM: . . . later on.

JR: I ran for reelection (to the house from the fourth district) in '56. Heb Porteus led the ticket; I was number two. I always get a kick (out) of that election. It was the first time I beat Heb Porteus in Kaka'ako. (Laughs) (I also beat Dan [Inouye] and Sparky [Matsunaga].)

DT: A little bit of competition intra-party, huh? (Laughs) I think you also developed an interest, too, in statehood about this time. I think interest was picking up, and as I recall, you had a few things to do with it.

JR: Yes.

DT: You might like to talk about some of those.

JR: I had always been an advocate of statehood. I'd been a strong advocate of statehood. Rather than get into my philosophy of statehood, let's just say that I believed in it and I campaigned for it. My interest was heightened when I went (to Washington, D.C.) in 1954, with the entire members of the legislature. It was my first exposure to lobbying in the Congress. And I did a lot of lobbying. I was very active. I made a point of calling on as many people as I could. And Joe Farrington, (our delegate to Congress, helped us tremendously). Also, he did
a marvelous job in entertaining and taking care of the delegation. He's a very hospitable host. I made it a point to go to his office (every day) and ask him who I should see, and ask him to arrange appointments to call on the various people who were opposed to statehood. I spent most of my time lobbying when I was there.

That, (I guess), stood me in good stead in the 1957 session of the legislature when we were asked to send representatives back to testify before Congress, in the 1957 session of Congress for statehood. I was selected by the Democrat-controlled house. Vince Esposito was Speaker. I guess Dan [Daniel Inouye] was majority floor leader. Anyway, the leadership of the house selected me, a Republican, to go back to represent the house of representatives in the hearings before the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee in Washington [D.C.], in Congress. And the senate sent (Democrat) Oren Long. Senator Long. He represented the house. We went back to Washington together with the members of the statehood commission. Four members of the statehood commission. There was Bill [William] Quinn, Jack Fox, Lorrin Thurston—who was chairman—and Kats [Katsuro] Miho. (Again) I lobbied very extensively. And then I (testified) before the Congress. Can we talk about that?

Well, our first appointment was to appear before the [U.S. (Senate) Committee on] Interior and Insular Affairs. And we did, all six of us were permitted to present and read our statements, (after which we were) asked questions by the members of the committee. A couple of days later we were scheduled to appear before the [U.S.] House (Committee). And much to our consternation, we were informed that the only witnesses that were going to be permitted to testify before the committee to present their views, would be government witnesses; that (our delegation could only submit our written) statements (for the) record, but we would not be (permitted to speak to or) to be interviewed by the members of the committee. And that upset us no end. So I went to Jack Burns, who I had gone to every day. I made it a point to go to him every morning when I was there. And I (would say), “Boss, now where do you want me to go?” And whoever he asked me to call upon, he would set up the appointments, I would plead the cause of statehood. So I went to Jack Burns (for help. I told him that) Congressman [James] Haley from Florida had the floor (on the first day of our hearings) when the [U.S.] House Committee [on Interior and Insular Affairs] (heard) the government witnesses present their testimony, Haley had the floor. And they adjourned at the end of the day with—to resume with the government witnesses the next day, (and Haley announced) we were to be excluded. And so I said to Jack, “Is there any way I can get to Jim Haley?”

And he said, “Let me work on it.”

So (when) I checked in the next morning, (at) about 8:30 he said, “I (have) arranged for you to meet with Haley in the (library of the House of Representatives) at the first session, first recess (of) the House.” So I met Haley in the (library) and we had a good hour together. And we reminisced about his experiences in Hawai‘i, the people that he (had met and befriended. One of whom was Bill [William] Nobriga, senator from Hawai‘i who had entertained him quite royally). I pleaded my cause, I told him that Oren Long and I were members of the (Hawai‘i) legislature (and) had to get back to Honolulu because our legislature was in session. “Please, could we have the opportunity to speak?”

He said, “You deserve statehood (but I can’t vote for it),” and added, “I’m a Southern senator and it (involves the issue) of civil rights. How can I face my constituency (if I vote)
for statehood (for Hawai‘i)?”

So I said, “Well, at least give us the opportunity to present our position.”

He said, “Well, I’ll see what I can do.”

The next morning we showed up before the committee and he had the floor. He started off by saying words to the effect that he had had an opportunity to talk with Representative Russell from Hawai‘i, and (was) very much impressed by (my presentation). He (then) moved that the committee allow Representative Russell and Senator Long to make their presentation(s) before the committee. So we made our presentation(s). (Only Oren and I were permitted to speak.) I’d spoken (also the previous day to) Representative [Harold] Collier from Illinois, who was the Republican leader on the committee. And he made a very nice testimonial (to me) after my presentation. It was one of (the) highlights (of) my legislative career, making that presentation before Congress. And I think it was a pretty good presentation. At least it won me some good friends amongst the Democrats back home.

LM: What was your basic pitch?

JR: It was who I was, what I represented, who my friends were, where I had grown up. You know, my own personal experiences as a youngster growing up. (The background of the people of Hawai‘i I had gone to school with, worked with and played with.) And I had. When I was growing up in Hilo, I had gone to school (and worked and played) with (many) who later became prominent figures in (labor, business and government). This was the thrust of my presentation. And that, of course, that they were (all) first-class American citizens. They deserved statehood.

DT: Well, certainly, I think everybody, Republicans and Democrats, it seemed, had a chance to participate in—one way or another—the statehood drive.

JR: Oh, yes.

DT: But the fact remains that the Republicans were still a minority in the legislature. However, they got into a bit of a problem after the '58 election in organizing the house in '59. The Democrats sort of stubbed their toe and, I think, some of you Republicans had a hand in what happened thereafter. (Laughs)

JR: That’s been one of my pet peeves over the years, Dan. My peeve is the fact that I was never interviewed (in depth by the media) during the entire so-called coalition. (I was never) given any prominence of leadership. (The press) never did get the full story from me. Despite the overtures that I made to the press to give them an opportunity to present (to their readers) the Republican’s side from the standpoint of the person who was in (the) position of leadership, which I was. I’d like to tell my story. I don’t think it’s really been told before.

Right after the (1958 general) election, right after early November, I got a phone call. The phone call was from Tommy Sakakihara. He and Hiram Fong were over in the Young Hotel. Would I come over and talk to them? So I went over and with them was Charlie Kauhane. And Charlie Kauhane said, “I have a proposition to submit to you Republicans. I have eight Democrat votes. We are a disillusioned group of Democrats, consisting of ILWU members,
five ILWU members (and three others). We'd like to talk to you about the possibility of coalitioning with the Republicans, (making) you Speaker of the house, and (dividing) the chairmanships of the committees between our group of Democrats and (you) Republicans."

LM: How many were there total in the house at that time?

JR: Fifty-one, fifty-one. In the Democrat, dissident Democrat faction, there were eight. Charlie Kauhane was the leader. Remember the other ones . . .

LM: And how many were Republicans?

JR: There were eighteen Republicans, twenty-five Democrats who were called the [Vincent] Esposito faction (and Charlie's group of eight). Now in the Esposito faction there was a solid core of about twenty, twenty-two. But then there were some (members) within the Esposito faction that were in opposition to Esposito's and [Thomas] Gill's leadership, who finally broke away from them, but stayed with them (at the beginning). They stayed pretty tight for a long period. Anyway, I told Charlie right at the outset. I said, "Charlie, you"—oh, he wanted to be Speaker. That was the first proposal. (DT chuckles) He wanted to be Speaker. I said "Charlie, you'll never get a Republican (to) vote for you as Speaker. I'm sorry, but forget that." Then his next position . . .

LM: Why?

JR: Well, he represented the head of the ILWU group, and no way the Republicans were going to support a ILWU man, Speaker of the house of representatives. And also, Charlie had given the Republicans short shrift in the '55 session. He hadn't been really kind to the Republicans. So the Republicans were not about to turn around and say—welcome Charlie into their fold and say, "You can [be] Speaker of the house of representatives." So Charlie said, "All right, you can [be] Speaker." Me. He suggested I be Speaker. We (would) still divide up all the committee chairmanships. My position, right from the outset, from the very outset, and I told Charlie, "I'll take (your proposal) back to my group, and we'll discuss it, but I can tell you right now. I will not be Speaker. I feel the Democrats were elected—they are the majority in the legislature. It is up to them to get their act together to settle their differences and to elect a (Democrat) Speaker, and run the legislature. We will not assume any positions of leadership." But we were after three things. And those three things had been articulated to Vince Esposito months before I was ever called by Tommy Sakakihara. I had told (Vince what we wanted) during the campaign when he saw that I was going to be—he was pretty sure I was going to be elected and would be (a) minority leader. He called me. And we were (good) friends. I was fond of Vince. He was a brilliant man. And so we had lunch together (and also) met in his office. I said, "Vince, (here are) the three things we want: We want (proportionate) representation on committees, all committees. We want the right to assign our own committee members. And we don't want the Speaker and the vice Speaker to be ex officio members of all committees with a vote." You see, what had happened even before I got this call from Tommy Sakakihara, was the slate of the Democrats, of the committee (chairmen and members), had been (released). And they were controlled—every committee was controlled by Vince Esposito's group. (Charlie's group of dissidents and the Republicans had only one or two members on each committee and thus were) in no position to influence the decisions of any (of the) committees. Those two ex officio votes (which had been provided for in the 1957 house rules) were in a position where, if things were going against their committee, against
(the) Vince Esposito('s program), he and Tom Gill could walk into any committee, add two more votes to their position, get whatever they wanted out of the committee.

There was also another thing which I don't think came to light until later. (At that time under the house rules a bill could be passed) by approval of the committee report on third reading. There was no disassociation between the committee report and the bill. (This was changed eventually I believe to provide) the bill had to [be] disassociated from the committee report and (be) in a position to be amended on the floor (on) the third reading. But anyway, I took (Charlie's proposal) back to my Republicans. We had a caucus (in) my apartment (which) became the headquarters of the (house) Republicans. And I was thrust into position of leadership in this whole shenanigans. And we agreed that we would stick by those three things alone. And we agreed (further) that none of the ILWU members were going to have positions of leadership, (as) the Speaker, vice Speaker (or) chairman of any of the major committees. No way.

And (I) went back to Charlie and (told him that if we could depend on his group of eight votes to support our) conditions, then we (would) go ahead. We will (join him to) elect the Speaker. If Vince Esposito (did) not come through and give us those three things, then (we were with him.)

He said, "Okay, I'll go along." And so he knew (our position) right from the beginning. But we kept after Vince, hoping, kept hoping, that Vince would capitulate and give us (three) those things.

As I remember, I think it was (on) December 29th, Sam King wrote a letter to (Vince). Sam was (one) of my mentor(s). Yasutaka Fukushima and Sam were with me all the time as my advisors [to determine] how we should maneuver all these things. And so Sam took it upon himself, because he wanted to be on the land committee, to write to Vince and ask Vince if he would respond to those three things. Because . . .

DT: Okay, let's pick it up from here . . .

LM: If we could just switch tapes.

DT: We have to switch tapes.

JR: Oh, okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the J. Ward Russell interview. This is videotape number four.

LM: This is tape four. All right, so Sam King sent a letter?

JR: Oh, yeah, Sam sent a letter to Vince Esposito asking him to give us the three things we wanted. That (was proportionate) representation (on all committees), the right to assign our own committee members, and no ex officio vote for the Speaker and vice Speaker. That was on the twenty-ninth of December, if I remember correctly.
(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

LM: So Sam King wrote a letter?

JR: Sam wrote (a) letter to Vince Esposito asking for those three things that we wanted. Setting them forth in (his) letter, asking for a response. (He) never heard from Vince. He never responded. But that didn't stop us. I still continued to meet periodically with Vince to convince him that we were going to coalesce with the Democratic group unless he capitulated (on) those three things. He kept (delaying, saying), "Well, I want to talk it over. We want to talk. We'll let you know." I think they had no---they couldn't believe. There were so many people who couldn't believe that we would ever go into a coalition with this group of Democrats, the Charlie Kauhane group, ILWU group. But, you must remember that this was not (a) true coalition. And this is the thing that disturbed me right from the very beginning. I did not---I was against the coalition. I would not agree to a (true) coalition, you know, to the victor belonged the spoils. I said, "No way, we don't want anything but those three things which we feel we are justified in supporting." And that's one reason why we said to Charlie, "Your group will have no positions of leadership in the legislature at all." The only concession we did make was, later on, when David Trask, from Maui, wanted to be chairman of the county committee. That was the only major committee they got, the ILWU got, Trask, (as) the chairman of the county committee, which I think he would have gotten anyway. I think he was slated to get that committee. (Incidentally, Charlie wanted to make deals on other matters such as the City Charter bill. His group, some of whom were against the charter, would all vote for it. He knew my boss Ballard Atherton was chairman of the City Charter Commission and thought I would go for such a proposal. I told him, "No deals." Interestingly, his group voted for the bill in the House but voted against it on final reading when it was amended by the Senate and returned to the House.)

LM: So what did they get out of it then? Why would they benefit from it?

JR: Well, what (we) wanted was (to break Esposito's control of all the committees). It was—that control was so (unfair) to them (and actually to the entire house) began—one of things that they said was a factor was—let me go on to—I'd like to talk [about] what happened. The things that actually happened. So we kept persuading, with Vince, the possibility of capitulating to our request. We did not come to any final decision until the night before we convened. We were meeting in my room, my apartment, which was (our) headquarters where we (had) all our meetings. I called Vince early in the day on Tuesday and I said, "We will be meeting until ten o'clock tonight. I want your answer before ten o'clock, by ten o'clock tonight. (If we don't hear from you by 10:00 P.M. we go with Charlie's group.")

In the meantime, we had had to come to some decision as (to) who was going to be our candidate for Speaker. We were in a quandary. And this is one of things that I don't know why Vince and Tom (apparently didn't consider as being important). Who were we going to select? We had ruled out any member of Kauhane's group. So it had to be from within Esposito's group or it had to be from the (three) members of Kauhane's group who were not ILWU members. One (we considered was) Hiroshi Kato, the other was John Lanham. So we offered it to Hiroshi Kato, he turned it down. But before we offered it to Hiroshi Kato, I offered it to—I didn't make the overtures myself. And this is something I want you to understand. I did not—the Republicans did not come into the picture in any way, making
overtures, going to the Democrats. We called on Charlie. He was at our beck and call. We
said, "Charlie, you do this, you do that. You go and see if Dan (Inouye) will be willing to be
Speaker." Dan turned it down. We thought Sparky [Spark Matsunaga]. Sparky seemed to be
inclined, but then he was too loyal to Vince, so he turned it down. So we then asked Hiroshi
Kato if he would be Speaker. Hiroshi had just been elected. It was his first term.

He didn't feel sufficiently assured of himself that he could do the job. So he in turn turned us
down.

I don't know where the suggestion for Elmer [Cravalho] came from. I think, if I remember
correctly, it was Art [Arthur] Woolaway's suggestion. Now, Art sat in, as chairman of the
Republican party, he sat in (on all our group meetings. He can) confirm all of this. He'll
confirm it, everything I say. He sat in with all of our meetings, because I wanted the
Republican party, the head of the Republican party, to know exactly what we were doing. So
I said, "Art, you can sit in, but you keep your mouth shut. You are not to say one word
(without permission or without being asked). You listen. You're not an elected official. You
listen so that the party people will know just what's going on."

I do think he finally cornered me, Yasutaka Fukushima (and) Sam King, "How about Elmer
Cravalho?" So we passed the word on to Charlie Kauhane. I think it was Charlie that
approached Elmer. Elmer saw the opportunity. And I remember, I think it was (in) the 1954
session of the legislature, in the Democratic caucus, Elmer had lost out by two or three votes
to Vince Esposito for the speakership. Elmer had been rewarded by being chairman of the
finance committee. (He was a member of Vince's group.) But he was ambitious, he saw an
opportunity where he could become Speaker, and he grabbed at it. That solved our problem.
So we had a candidate. But we told Charlie, even the weekend before we convened, we were
all lined up, we had made this commitment. We had committed ourselves to Elmer, providing
that Vince Esposito did not come through, and acquiesce to our demands by ten o'clock on
Tuesday night. I told (that to Vince in) the morning (and in) the afternoon when (our group
was) meeting at my place. (Charlie was aware of this.) So we stayed. That whole group. We
stayed all (afternoon and) evening (until) ten o'clock, Vince had not called. So I said, "Okay
gang, you're going to stick with me? We all stick together on this? Hang solid?"

"Okay," (they) said, "okay."

"Good night. Meet tomorrow morning, we're going to session."

About eleven o'clock [P.M.] the phone rang. It was Vince. I had talked to him (several) times
during the course of the (day and) evening. There was, you know, talking about—back and
forth (before the 10:00 P.M. deadline). About eleven o'clock he called me. He said, "We're
willing to give you what you want, with the exception of the"—I think it was with the
exception of (Sam King being on the Land Committee).

I said, "Vince, you're too late. We (have) made up our minds. The group (has) gone (home).
We're going to go into session tomorrow, and (we are) going to fight it out on the floor of
the house."

He still didn't believe (me). (At) about 1:00 [A.M.] I got another call. Called me about 1:00,
1:30 I think it was. And he said, "You have what you want. We'll give you (everything) you
I said, "Vince, it's too late."

There was a pause, and he said, "Will you do me one favor?"

I said, "What?"

He said, "Will you permit Howard Miyake to be the temporary chairman?"

I didn't see anything wrong with that. So I said, "Okay. I'll go along with Howard Miyake as temporary chairman."

I couldn't sleep. Finally about five o'clock in the morning I called Yasutaka Fukushima, I told him what had happened, the calls I'd gotten (and my decisions regarding Miyake).

He said, "Oh, bad, bad, bad. Bad mistake." Because (we had decided) to put up David Trask as the temporary Speaker. (I think Fuku was concerned because we had no control over Miyake.)

I said, "Sorry, Fuku, I gave my word to Vince. I'm not going to go back on my word."

I called (a) caucus that morning at 8:30 because I wanted the rest of the Republicans to know what had happened. And I said, "Now, we agreed at ten o'clock last night, we're going to stand fast, are you standing fast? We made a commitment to Charlie Kauhane and his group (with respect to the 10:00 P.M. deadline) and we should honor that commitment." (Everyone agreed.)

Now, the papers portrayed it as I (had) said that (there were no) further negotiations with Vince Esposito's group (for weeks prior to the convening of the Legislature). That was completely erroneous. (We were in contact with Vince up to 10:00 P.M. the night before we convened.) I called the caucus to let them know what had happened about the telephone calls. We again (agreed we were) committed. And so we went into the session.

Well the first thing that happened, of course, was that [Robert] Won Bae Chang, when we convened, [Won] Bae Chang moved for the adoption of the rules of the previous session, the 1958 session of the legislature. The house. And I asked if the rules provided for the three things (we wanted). They did not. I moved to table the motion to approve the rules. And we got a 29-22 vote. We (had) picked up three votes. We picked up Sidney Hashimoto and Ray Adams. And, of course, Elmer, he was the (third) vote. So we had twenty-nine votes. The reason Adams voted (with us) was because he had to support his fellow Maui representative Elmer Cravalho. (Sidney was one of those who was unhappy with the way Vince and Tom wanted to control all committees.)

Later (during the day we convened briefly and then recessed. Finally at) about eight o'clock that night, (we) reconvened (and, as) I remember, Sparky made a motion to accept the (rules of the) 1957 session. The rules of 1957 session. They were delaying for time. We defeated that and the 28-23 vote—the reason I bring this up is because that 28-23 vote was that hard-core vote which prevailed through the rest of the organization procedure. That was on
Tuesday, Tuesday night. (For the next three days we convened briefly and then recessed.) And finally at 8:30 Friday night, we had the final blow, the showdown. And it lasted for almost three hours (with much oration on their part), but they gave up. About 11:30 they saw we had the votes, and so they capitulated and we elected Elmer Cravalho as Speaker.

LM: What did they get out of that? What did . . .

JR: Well . . .

LM: What did Charlie Kauhane and the ILWU get out of it?

JR: This is interesting. We got (the three things) we wanted. We got (proportionate) representation, and the right to assign our own committee members, which was the first time this had ever happened in the legislature. And that, incidentally, prevailed for years. And we got that (almost) immediately, the same position, same rules, were (adopted by) the senate, and prevailed in (both houses of the legislature) for the next, oh, I don't know how many years. Until such time as the Republicans became so weak, and their representation (in) both houses such that there was no way you could give them (proportionate) representation, unless you would have [each] Republican serving on (every committee and maybe not even then). And so it fell by the wayside, but not until that point. Up until then, they followed (proportionate) representation.

On the floor of the house when we were having our final debates, Esposito and Gill (had) said they would accept no positions of leadership. None whatsoever. And it wasn't long, however, that Elmer was very successful in getting them all together again. And as a consequence, sixteen of the Esposito faction became chairmen of committees, even though they said they would not accept chairmanships. Sixteen of them did. Vince did not accept any (leadership) position. He served on committees, but he did not—he abided by his pledge not to accept any position of leadership. Hiram Kamaka was elected [1959, territorial house] vice Speaker. Sparky was elected [1959, territorial house] floor leader, majority floor leader. Tom (after much persuasion, I understand), did take majority leader [1959–1962]. (I don't believe any of the ILWU groups were offered chairmanships of any committees.)

LM: So why did Charlie them want to make this deal with you? What did they get out of it?

JR: Oh, they got this out of it. Every committee (had proportionate) representation from Charlie's group. (With proportionate representation the Democrats still were in the majority on all committees. They were still responsible for the legislation emanating from committees if they stood together. This would require support from Charlie's group. With their two ex officio votes this was more easily achievable by the Esposito group to control committees and pass its program, particularly if they still controlled the assignment of all committee members including Republicans. Only if (the) minority Democrats and the Republicans got together could they control committees. As a consequence, the absolute control by the Esposito group of all committees was broken. But it didn't have much effect on major legislation with the possible exception of land reform. Vince and Tom wanted to have their bill reported out of the land committee unscathed before the senate could act on its companion bill. On the floor of the) house in the last part of the session, Vince tried to charge (that the coalition was conceived to kill) land reform. Well, I think the record pretty much shows that that was (not so. The senate made changes in their companion bill and sent it to the house which referred it
to a special ad hoc committee which recommended passage of the senate bill. As I mentioned earlier, we had the right to assign committee members. Vince and Tom didn't want Sam King on the house land committee.) I said, "No way. We want the right to put whoever we want on any committee." So that was part and parcel of the negotiations. I was stubborn in saying that I would not give in on Sam King. Sam King was going to serve on that land committee. (So, the right to assign committee members was important.)

DT: Now this was Samuel Wilder King, who at the same time, was on the Bishop Estate, right?

JR: Yes.

DT: So he had quite a . . .

JR: Yes.

DT: This was a matter of some controversy.

JR: Yeah.

DT: May I interject here?

JR: Yeah.

DT: Maybe I'm wrong, but I think you got a lot more than just control of anything in the house. If I remember correctly, you created complete consternation in Democratic ranks. As a Republican, you had succeeded in teaming up, whatever the reasons, whatever you got out of it, with the ILWU, Charlie Kauhane, and in essence, Jack Burns, albeit he was in Washington [D.C.]. As over against, Esposito, and Gill, and most of the AJAs, right?

JR: Well, I don't know . . .

DT: So this . . .

JR: . . . if I agree with what you're saying.

DT: So this became quite mind-boggling. As I say, mentioned off camera, here, I'm not sure I have it figured out to this day.

JR: It was a traumatic experience for the Democrats. There's no question about it.

DT: That's the point. That's the main point.

JR: Well . . .

DT: And you got yourself a governor a few months later.

JR: You mean with Bill [William] Quinn?

DT: With Bill Quinn, yeah.
JR: Oh.

DT: Wasn't that a big . . .

JR: I don't . . .

DT: . . . plus for you?

JR: I don't know if that was an outcome of the coalition, though.

DT: Well, it certainly shook up Burns.

JR: Oh, it shook him---well, (maybe).

DT: Burns base support, you see, . . .

JR: All right.

DT: . . . as became . . .

JR: The papers made quite ado and the Democrats quite ado that, I guess it was the press at that time, that Burns . . . Oh, incidentally, (in) Catch a Wave, his book [a book by Tom Coffman about Hawai'i politics], (contained) a passage in there, giving him, Jack Burns, credit for the coalition, and for his influence on the Kauhane group. Jack Burns did not have anything to do with the coalition. He never contacted us, he never contacted me and I was the leader of the Republicans. If he contacted Charlie Kauhane, I didn't know about it. And actually, he was interviewed at that time, and he denied any complicity whatsoever with the coalition.

DT: I would agree. I think he let it play, because, after all, he was back in Washington.

JR: He was too interested in statehood.

DT: At any rate he was . . .

JR: You know what the Democrats got out of it? They got, I think, they got the right to protect (minorities).

DT: Plus the governorship. And also, control of the senate where you went next, right?

JR: We didn't get control of the senate.

DT: Oh, you did in '59, right? The '59 . . .

JR: Oh, but that had nothing to do with the coalition though. I don't see where you could claim the coalition had anything to do with that.

DT: Oh, I suppose it's debatable. But the coalition caused dissension, enough dissension in the Democratic ranks that in the resulting election, the statehood elections, they lost control of the senate and of the governorship.
I don't if---well, they did. There's no question about that. (DT laughs) The record speaks for itself.

Okay.

Whether that was a result of the coalition, I don't . . .

That's why I say it was debatable. Yeah.

(In retrospect it was very obvious that Vince wanted someday to be governor and I agree the coalition pretty much killed his chances. However, it definitely was not the reason for our participation in the coalition. Had it been we would have joined Charlie's group right at the beginning and terminated all further negotiations with Vince. Our primary intent was to break what we considered to be an insidious and unfair effort to control all committees by a minority group of house members. I will agree that, come statehood, it would enhance Jack Burns chances of being elected governor. He wouldn't have to face Vince in a Democrat primary. As far as the Republicans are concerned I will agree that it enhanced their chances, come statehood, to elect a Republican governor but not necessarily Bill Quinn. You must remember that Sam King wanted to regain the governorship and had he lived to see statehood, he definitely would have been a candidate.)

All right, so in 1959 you ran for?

Oh, 1959 was a traumatic year for me. I really wanted to run for [U.S.] Congress. I was being touted as the Republican candidate for Congress by—my supporters wanted me to run and a number of people in the Republican party wanted me to run. Dan [Daniel Inouye] and I were very good friends. At the outset, Dan (told me) he was going to run for the (U.S.) senate, and he said he didn't know who was going to be the Democratic standard-bearer for the (U.S.) house [of representatives]. But he said, I remember Dan saying that there'd be pressure on (him) to run for the [U.S.] House [of Representatives] instead of the (U.S.) senate. (The Democrat leadership) wanted Oren Long to run for the [U.S.] Senate. (And Dan) said, "If I change my mind, I'll be the first to let you know."

And so a few days before the deadline for filing, I got a call from Dan saying that he was going to run for the U.S. House. And he (said), I remember him saying, "Come on in, (the water's fine). Let's go." (Incidentally), Dan's father-in-law, Maggie's [Margaret Inouye's] father, (had) campaigned for me during (the) days when I (first) ran. (He had once said to me), "You (ever) run against Dan (I can't support you. If you are not) running against Dan, (I will) support (you)."

But I had made, also, good friends, in the (so-called) coalition, with Elmer Cravalho. After all, I was Elmer's—I was (somewhat) responsible for making Elmer Speaker of the house. (Both) Elmer and Dave Trask, and they (had) said to me, "If you decide to run for Congress, (we will) help you."

And so I had two sets of papers. (I guess it was around eight o'clock.) I was sitting on the floor of—the steps of 'Iolani Palace, waiting (for the) midnight deadline to file my candidacy. I had (a) set of papers for the (U.S.) House. I had a set of papers for the state senate. Ben Dillingham was chairman of the [Republican] party at that time. (He) wanted me to run for
the state senate, to get control of the state senate. Hopefully to get control of (the) state senate because we (would have) the power of confirmation of all the judges that were slated (for appointment). But I wanted to run for the Congress. (I was sitting there trying to make up my mind whether to run for Congress or the state senate.)

(I think it was around ten o'clock) when Elmer and David Trask arrived and said, “We have a message for you.”

John Miki was also in that group, and Francis Kelekolio, HGEA, (They too had indicated they would help me. Francis was an old friend. His family had lived next door to my grandparents in Hilo. His father had been one of my father’s strongest supporters. They said, “We’ve got bad news for you. The old man) wants (us to support Dan) for the U.S. Congress, for the House.” The old man being Jack Burns.

(They said), “We can’t support you.”

(I understood their position and appreciated the fact they had come to me.) So I decided. I could see my support in certain circles vanishing which I thought were very important areas of support. So. And also the pressure was being put on me by the Republican party not to run for the Congress. I wasn’t going to get any—I could see I (probably) wasn’t even going to get the support within the Republican party, that I (needed) to run for Congress. And so I elected to run for the state senate.

DT: All right. We’ll go on with those statehood elections after we change tapes.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-28-1-89; SIDE ONE

JC: This is a continuation of the J. Ward Russell interview. This is videotape number five.

LM: Number five.

JR: You asked me what was . . .

LM: Just repeat what you just were saying. What the Republicans—how the Republicans screwed up.

JR: Well, well. Why the Republicans went into a demise, following the year when they were in control of the senate? I think the beginning of the end (was) in the first state elections, when I wanted to run for Congress. They didn’t support me and I didn’t run. Instead they put up Charlie (Silva). Charlie was an old-time Republican who was no match for Dan on the stump. He told good stories, (did the hula) and everything else, but he was of the old school. He wasn’t really of the new generation of politicians. He was a great guy, (but no match for Dan. Also I feel he didn’t receive adequate support. As a result Dan) clobbered him. It was a runaway election. Then came 1960, and Ben Dillingham, who had promised me if I would run for the senate in Hawai‘i in 1959, that if I wanted to run for the House in 1960, he would
back me, was nowhere to be seen.


JR: For the U.S. House in 1960. He was nowhere to be seen. He didn't (make any effort to) fulfill his commitment. (I wanted to run.) I tried to get the party interested in supporting me. Well, they weren't too much interested. (With the exception of George Sumner, president of Amfac, for one, the party leaders felt it was more important that I remain in the Hawai'i state senate. They made the fatal error of assuming our electorate was attaching more importance to our state elections than to our Congressional elections. As a result they made only a feeble effort to find someone to run against Dan. Finally, they selected [Frederick] Titcomb. He'd never been in political office. (Fred was a good candidate and campaigned hard but he had no political background and was not widely known.) He was soundly defeated. That was number two. (By this time Dan had achieved an aura of invincibility.) Then the next election, they put up Al Evensen and [Richard] "Ike" Sutton against Tom Gill and Patsy [Mink]. (LM laughs) Well, that was no—this was no contest at all. (This was) in the 1962 election, when the Republicans were soundly defeated. And that was one of the reasons for the defeat of the Republican party, in that Congressional election, when Ben (Dillingham) ran against Dan (for the U.S. Senate and) Ike Sutton and Al Evensen ran against Tom Gill and Patsy. Well, the Congressional ticket was strong as far as the Democratic party was concerned, the Republican party weak. That was part of it. Then, of course, there'd been the split in the Republican party between "Jimmie" [James] Kealoha and Bill Quinn. (That didn't help at all.)

DT: The Second Mahele came back to haunt your man . . .

JR: The Mahele came back to haunt Bill Quinn. That . . .

LM: What was the Second Mahele?

JR: The Second Mahele? It was (an unfortunate slogan) on the part of Bill Quinn. Bill Quinn had a real good land reform package. It was put together thoughtfully and I think it was a very supportable package on both sides of the aisle. Unfortunately, somewhere during the course of the campaign—I don't [know] whether it was on the part of his advisors, campaign advisors, (or his own decision—) he decided to call it the great—the Second Mahele. And, of course, that was fodder for the Democrats. They related it to the Great Mahele of 1842, under Kamehameha (III, which never came up to expectations).

DT: Well, this was in '59 when he introduced it, you see.

JR: Oh, '59.

DT: [Nineteen] fifty-nine.

JR: That's when he was campaigning, that's right.

DT: Aku [Hal Lewis, popular radio personality] said that elected him, but people would disagree with that. But in '62, the Democrats really zeroed in on this.

JR: (That's right), they zeroed in on that in '62. There were a lot of factors in (their) '62
successful election (which led further to the demise of the Republican party). One was the completely inept campaign that the Republicans put on. The Democrats were, oh, they were so smart. One of the things that they did, and I could see what was happening, they signed up for (specific) TV time. They bought time (for the) entire campaign (right at the beginning), as you (may) remember, (for) both radio and TV. (On the other hand) the Republicans figured the (best) time to buy both on radio and TV was in the prime hours of the night. Eight o’clock (and later). But people were driving home from work listening (every day on radio) to the Democrats (between 5:00 and 6:00 P.M. Then they knew the Democrats would be on TV) between 6:00 and 7:00 (P.M.) Democrats bought these (TV times) between six and seven through the entire campaign. So the public, the voting public, knew every night that if they wanted to listen (to) or see the Democrats, they could hear them between five and six on radio. They could see them between six and seven on television. It was solid. (For) the Republicans, they’d have to look in the (daily newspaper) to find out what time they were going to have (radio and TV) broadcast(s). That was another big faux pas on the part of the Republicans. The debates between Dan and Ben were . . .

DT: And there was one debate between Quinn and Burns.

JR: A debate, yes, that’s right. The debate . . .

DT: And, of course, I think, even as you say the Democrats really put on a campaign. This was a result of Gill, and the Burns, and the (Bill Heen) factions, all really burying hatchet . . .

JR: That’s right.

DT: . . . and coming at the Republicans.

JR: Well, the Republicans, of course, by this time, their representation (in) the legislature began to diminish. But the Democrats got their act together. No question about it.

DT: And you mentioned the [James] Kealoha factor.

JR: That was a big factor.

LM: What happened? How did that split occur?

JR: If memory serves me correctly, in the campaign of 1959, when Bill Quinn and Jimmie Kealoha first ran for the governorship and lieutenant governorship, a commitment had been made. Now, I don’t know if it was on the part of Bill Quinn, or whether it was on the part of the leadership of the Republican party, to the effect that come the ’62 election Jimmie Kealoha would be supported to become governor. (I believe Quinn was to step aside. Anyway, Jimmie) contended that that commitment was not followed through. That (the Republican leaders) reneged on that commitment. And so he broke away in the primary. He ran for the—against Bill Quinn in the primary.

DT: He ran in the primary and . . .

JR: Yeah, in other words, instead of staying with Bill Quinn and running for lieutenant governor, he broke away from Bill in 196(2), and ran (in) the primary, ran for the governorship. That
fight between Quinn and Kealoha was a bad, bad, bad mistake. Bad mistake. (I believe it) polarized the Hawaiian community.

DT: And at the same time, that meant the end of your political career, I guess, so far as elected public office was concerned.

JR: Oh yeah, well, I can also remember that. That was one of the greatest debacles in the history of the Republican party. In that election, in the '62 election, every incumbent Republican was defeated. Only one Republican was elected and he was not an incumbent. And that was Clinton Shiraishi from the island of Kaua‘i. You remember that?

DT: Yeah.

JR: Every other incumbent was dumped. And I remember that. I saw it coming. I saw it coming. I could tell by my feeling, my gut feeling. And I remember going to (mayor) Neal Blaisdell. And I said, “Neal, I need help. Can I get some of your workers to go out and do some house-to-house work for me?” I’d been doing house-to-house all during the campaign, but I needed (help in) certain weak districts.

And I remember Neal saying, “You don’t have to worry. You’re a shoo-in.” I’d led the ticket before (in those) particular (districts) he says, “You don’t have to worry. You’re a shoo-in.”

I said, “I’ve got plenty to worry about.”

Well, he turned out (about a) hundred fellas to work for me. It was too little and too late. I can remember, as I said, I could tell those bellwether districts. I remember seven o’clock on the night of the election, I went down, I checked those key precincts to see how I was doing. And I went home, went to bed at nine o’clock. I knew I was defeated. Of course, those days, the polls, you didn’t have the [official] results until the next morning. (I was encouraged to run again for the senate several times and for Mayor in 1976. I declined, principally because the party was so weak.)

LM: When you were in the legislature, though, you were in on the government reorganization weren’t you?

JR: Oh, yeah. That was a very interesting experience. The house had passed, I guess was House Bill 1. No, House Bill 1 was a money bill. That’s to run the house. I can’t remember (the number of the reorganization bills). I always remember the land reform bill was House Bill 7, Senate Bill 7. I could always remember that because that was quite a bone of contention in the '59 session of the legislature. I might just comment on that because it ties in with Tom Gill’s accusation that the coalition was part and parcel of land reform. (As I remember), the bill that was introduced in the house, House Bill [7], (by Vince, I believe, was referred to the land committee which in turn referred it to the house finance committee. In the meantime), the companion bill, Senate Bill 7, which (was) the same as House Bill 7, was (changed) considerably in the senate. It came over to the house. Now, it was not referred to the land committee. It was referred to a special committee consisting, an ad hoc committee, consisting of Tom Gill, Esposito and Joe Garcia (as I recall. Henriques may also have been in the committee). And they had an opportunity (to recommend restoring the changes which the senate had made but they did not. They recommended passage of the senate bill). So, you
cannot say the land reform was—the coalition defeated land reform. It was the senate that (changed) the bill. Not the house. (The amended senate bill) passed the house, this final version. And it passed with substantial support. (It) passed the house with the exception of about four votes. And (interestingly) when Vince Esposito, who had been on this ad hoc committee, when the bill was on the floor for final vote, got up and tore into it. And it was part and parcel his own handiwork, but he had his reasons. He was still hurting, hurting very badly from that coalition. And I don’t blame him. Oh, now getting back to your question.

LM: Government reorganization.

JR: Oh, the reorganization. The house had passed the bill (and it went) over to the senate. When the bill passed the house it provided for sixteen departments. Now under the new constitution, the constitution provided (for) twenty operating departments. The house passed the bill providing for only sixteen. (The house bill provided for a single department on) economic development and planning. (The senate changed the bill. It) made separate (departments, one) for planning, (another for) economic development. (An additional department was established. I don’t remember what it was. The) senate version came up with eighteen committees.

DT: You’re talking about departments now?

LM: Eighteen departments.

JR: Yeah, yeah, departments. Departments. Came up with twenty operating departments. (As I recall either) Heb Porteus (or) Yasutaka Fukushima (were originally) supposed to have been head of the conference committee. (Apparently) there was some dissension (among) the Republicans (regarding the selection. Doc Hill), president of the senate [president of the senate, 1959–1962] (resolved the matter by appointing me as chairman of the senate conference) committee on government reorganization. We met for seven days and seven nights or eight days and eight nights, I can’t remember, in the old Board of Water Supply meeting room. You remember the board room?

DT: That was the old place, all right . . .

JR: That place, we used to have all our . . .

DT: Nobody else could get in there, though. (laughs) Just you fellows.

JR: That’s right. And we met there.

LM: Who was there from the house side?

JR: Pardon?

LM: Who was the head?

JR: Tom Gill. Tom Gill was the—he was my counterpart from the house. He was head of the house conferees, (and) I was head of the senate conferees. (Interestingly, all eight house conferees were Democrats. The senate committee had five Republicans and three Democrats according to proportionate representation. The Democrats I selected were George Ariyoshi,
Nadao Yoshinaga and Kazuhisa Abe.) And we came up with a (conference) bill that was pretty much what the senate had wanted. And I was very proud of it. Unfortunately, (when) it was (received in) the Republican (caucus) there was some (opposition to and criticism of the changes that the senate conferees had accepted). Maybe some noses out of joint with the fact that I had been made chairman of the conference committee. But anyway, (the leadership) did not support my position. And they sent me back to the Democrats with (a number of) proposed changes they wanted. I was very chagrined. I was so disappointed that the report of the conferees was not upheld by the senate leadership.

(Anyway), the house (conferees) did not capitulate (to the requested changes. As I recall, only one change was made and the final committee report was referred to the senate for approval. However, before it could be considered, the legislature adjourned) without passing the government reorganization bill. They had to call a special session. In the meantime, (in the) interim between the regular and the special session, the leadership had gotten together, we had gotten together with the house and agreed to pass the senate version (with a few changes). One of the bones of contention was the schedule of implementation. We had (as I recall, provided a whole year for the) implementation of government reorganization. The leadership of the senate said that was not enough. They wanted more time. I think there were some concessions made. Some of the reorganization was to be completed in the 1960 session of the legislature. That which was not completed, could be held over until the 1961 session. So (for the most part) the (original) conference committee position, which (we) had worked out in conference with the Democrats, prevailed. And so I always felt pretty proud of that. I was very disappointed with the senate leadership that they hadn't gone along with my (original) report.

LM: How did the actual reorganization go? I mean, how many did you start out with?

JR: We started out with eighteen.

LM: Where did they all go?

JR: Oh.

LM: No, I mean, in numbers of the original.

JR: Well, there were over 100 different boards and commissions that had to be taken and put into (a maximum of twenty) operating departments. (The senate decided on eighteen departments.) And we were able to get the major departments pretty well taken care of, but then we had all these little sundry boards and commissions, so we created the department of regulatory agencies. And we put all of these various boards and commissions into the department of regulatory agencies for housekeeping purposes. (This was the eighteenth department.) And also, (some were) put into the governor's office. Those that were fitted logically into the department of regulatory agencies went into it, (such as) the public utilities commission, (the) cosmetology board and things of that sort went in there. Some of them that we didn't quite know what to do with, we put under the governor. And so the governor had (a number of) these various boards and commissions under his purview for administrative purposes, housekeeping purposes. (We ended up with eighteen departments. The reason twenty departments were not created was that both houses agreed there should be two departments reserved for future growth.)
LM: So the governor ended up with a lot of power?

JR: He ended up with a lot of power.

LM: At the time were you . . .

JR: Dan, am I correct in that?

DT: Oh yes. I was going to say that Booz-Allen & Hamilton [Inc.] had been used. Is that the firm . . .

JR: Oh, that's right. It was Booz-Allen & Hamilton.

DT: Been utilized as consultants for you.

JR: Right.

DT: And if you look at that in broad retrospect, that may be the last major thing, I suppose, that the Republican party can take credit for, in a way, because given the split nature of Hawai'i government right after statehood, reorganization came fairly easily.

JR: Yes. Yes.

DT: In the broad sweep.

JR: Yes.

DT: There were problems and pitfalls, but on balance, it worked pretty well . . .

JR: As I recall, one of the first things they did, and I have to give credit to the 1959 session of the legislature, (for doing so, was to establish) a committee to study (government) reorganization in the event that we did have statehood. We have to give credit to 1959 session of the (territorial) legislature for doing that. Then, of course, in the 1959 session of the (state) legislature, we came out with the revisions that were made. In retrospect, looking back, I'm sort of glad that the senate (Republican) leadership did not agree with the (first) conference committee report, because when we did go back, and work out the details of implementation, we did see . . . Oh, yes, I do recall, there was one (other) thing. The president of the University of Hawai'i [Laurence Synder], and Mary Noonan, I think, as the head [director] of the [state] Department of (Social) Services, because of qualifications, and two other department heads would have lost their jobs. Three because of the residency requirements, one because of the personnel qualification requirements. And so, we sort of grandfathered those four positions, (otherwise) they would have lost their jobs. And also (we) provided for the implementation of reorganization in '60 and if failing 1960, over into 1961.

LM: Did you . . .

DT: Go ahead.

LM: Did you intend to make the governor that powerful? I mean, that's—was that a major
consequence?

JR: I don't know if that even entered into our considerations. You know, I think we said, “Where are we going to put these departments?” (Chuckles) “Where are we going to put these boards and commissions?” rather. I don’t know if there was any concern expressed at the time.

DT: Actually it was the constitution itself that made the governor powerful.

JR: Yes, oh yes.

DT: Rather, I think, than anything in the legislature did. And quickly, because we’re going to have to change tapes. Who’s [Booz-]Allen and Hamilton? They were the consultants, weren’t they?

JR: Yes, yes.

DT: I wasn’t sure in my mind.

JR: Yes, I’m pretty sure you’re right. (Booz-)Allen and Hamilton were the consultants.

LM: I wonder if this Mary Noonan is related to—the tape’s running out; it doesn’t matter—I wonder if she’s related to the Bush’s . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the J. Ward Russell interview. This is videotape number six and the final tape of the interview.

DT: We’re into tape six now, are we not?

LM: Tape six, yeah. We’re trying to---of course, the coalition is a confusing business. . . . Let me, let me---let’s take it serially, okay? What would you say each person’s attitude was toward the coalition, you know, and what they would get out of it, or lose from it, okay?

JR: Mm hmm.

LM: Let’s take [Charles] Kauhane first of all.

JR: Oh, Kauhane had always been a pretty strong leader. He had, by virtue of his own political acumen, made himself Speaker in the (1955) session as a result of the (1954) campaign. He had marshalled the support of (a majority of the Democrats, including I believe, most of the newly elected AJAs. But, I gather, he became somewhat of a tyrant during the session, antagonizing both Democrats and Republicans. As a result he lost the speakership in (1957) session. In the ’57 session he was, I (believe) a committee chairman. In ’58 session he was committee chairman, but he never, he never regained the speakership. And I think he wanted to get (that) back. I think he was, well, he wanted to bask in his former glory. He had been a leader, and I think he wanted to return to position of leadership. I give Charlie Kauhane full credit for seeing an opportunity to get some power, in that he had a group of five dissidents, ILWU people which stood fast with him (and the other three who opposed the control sought
by Esposito and Gill. So) he was able to get eight votes which we knew we could count on. And I said right from the beginning, “Charlie, you promise those eight votes, on (our) conditions, we stay with you. But don’t desert us.” (So, you might say Charlie got a second chance to be a leader.)

LM: How about Jack Hall?

JR: Pardon?

LM: How about Jack Hall?

JR: This is . . .

LM: His attitude and role?

JR: I don’t know. I don’t think Jack Hall had any role whatsoever. He may have had some role in convincing the five ILWU members to stay with Charlie Kauhane. But I never had any dealings with Jack. He never once approached the Republican group.

LM: How about Gill?

JR: Tom Gill? Tom came out pretty much unscathed, I think. In a sense that he never did... I don’t think—he was never hurt to the extent that Vince Esposito was hurt. And it was a personal blow to Vince. Tom came out as—Tom’s an astute politician, a brilliant man. He regained his position of leadership by good forthright performances in subsequent sessions of the legislature. He came up with good legislative programs, well-thought-out legislative programs in the ‘59, ‘60, ‘61, ‘62 sessions, which were, I think, a very important factor in his election to the Congress.

Now Vince is a very capable man.

LM: How about Beppu?

JR: Tadao Beppu? He became Speaker. I don’t think the coalition had any affect on Beppu.

LM: How about Esposito?

JR: I don’t know. Vince took it quite hard. I just don’t know. As far as any future leadership positions were concerned, he never... I don’t—Dan, will you agree with me? He never really tried, I don’t believe, to regain any position of power.

LM: That discouraged him.

DT: Yeah, I think you already indicated that really, that was the end of his political career.

JR: Right. He had been defeated.

DT: I think you might want to add that Kauhane certainly didn’t achieve his objective of becoming Speaker.
JR: No.

DT: But what did he do right after this? Didn't he switch parties?

JR: Later on, yes.

DT: Yeah.

JR: Later on, yes. He switched parties. This is the thing, another bone of contention I (have). You know, I have to give Charlie due (credit for opposing the total control sought by Esposito and Gill). But the papers, the press, despite the articles which appeared during the course of the coalition, in which we explained our positions and everything else, kept giving Charlie Kauhane credit for the coalition. And when Charlie died and (his) obituary was written, (the media wrote a number of) articles about how he had masterminded this coalition with the Republicans. (Representative) Dorothy Devereux, (a member of our Republican group), was so infuriated about it, she called the editor of the paper, and she says, "That's absolutely not true. If you want to get the true story," to get (in) contact with me. So I called him, I can't remember who it was. Weir? Gerry Weir?

LM: There is a guy, yeah.

JR: I think it was . . .


JR: Keir, Keir. I called him and I said, "I'd (like very much) to sit down with you and give you the full story on the coalition." He said he'd (like) to get together some time. I never heard from him.

LM: Do you think there was a personal element on the Kauhane-ILWU side against Esposito, the Esposito-Gill group?

JR: Oh, I think so. I don't know. I think, yes, I think there was. Because, you see, it was Gill and Esposito, that faction, that put Kauhane out to pasture. It was the AJAs, and here was Kauhane's opportunity to get back at them. And he had justification to get back at them, because his group had absolutely no say whatsoever on (any) committee. When you looked at the makeup of (the) committees, the original makeup that was proposed by Vince Esposito, you saw the listing, they had token represent[ation]—one Republican, one member of the ILWU group. The rest were all (Esposito-Gill followers). Not only that, (they had) ex officio vote in case any of their people fled the flock. They had this other thing about the passage of bills on third reading, that they attached the committee report to the bill, if the committee report (was adopted) on third reading, it automatically passed the bill. They had . . .

LM: I don’t understand why is that significant, attaching the committee report?

JR: Well, okay. (Several reasons. First, the report indicates a majority of the committee supports the bill which would not be true without the benefit of the ex officio votes. This makes it easier to get supportive votes on the floor of the house. Secondly, if the committee report was opposed (on the floor) and failed to pass, Esposito and Gill could blame others for the failure
of the bill and at the same time take credit for the authorization of the bill.)

LM: I see. But after the coalition, Charlie and them at least got representation on the committees.

JR: (Yes, and) if I'm not mistaken, most of the legislative program was not affected at all by the coalition. (It probably did prevent Vince and Tom from getting their land bill to the floor of the house for action. Remember, Vince and Tom wanted to have their entire program passed intact.) He and Tom really wanted to take credit for (their version of) land reform. And they would have loved nothing better (than) to have their bill come out of (the land) committee (intact) and be passed to the senate. And if the (house or) senate emasculated it, at least they got it out of the house (land committee). But they weren't able to get it out of the house, and the senate took (their companion) bill and emasculated it anyway. Not emasculated it, but amended it, and sent it over to the house. And Gill and Esposito had (another) chance to get (their) views incorporated into the bill. (They didn't make an effort to do so because they knew they didn't have the votes. At this point I'd like to say one more thing about the coalition. It had no impact whatsoever on land reform. The actions of the legislature confirms this. It did not involve Jack Burns at all. If it had, Vince would have met our 10:00 P.M. deadline on February 18. He certainly was smart enough to know that if he did not he would lose the opportunity to be governor. I don't know why he didn't. Something or someone must have dissuaded him from doing so. I don't know who was calling the shots in Vince's group on February 18 although I could hear Tom Gill's voice in the background during my telephone conversations with Vince. If it was Tom who convinced Vince not to meet the 10:00 P.M. (deadline), he's the one who dropped the ball. I'm inclined to believe it was Tom. If it was, he is the one who is really responsible for the coalition. He too, was ambitious and the coalition didn't seem to adversely affect his future. As far as I am concerned Tom's statements that the coalition defeated land reform were nothing more than a masquerade to hide the truth.)

LM: What would you say the Demo—how would you characterize the Democratic party, say, before 1950?

JR: Before 1950? The Democratic party? It was—it had strength in the fifth senatorial, (and) fifth representative district. It had strength in some of the neighbor islands where ILWU nooks, they were getting stronger. But during the [19]50s, early [19]50s, my first sessions in the legislature, they were not too strong. They weren't too strong. But you could hear things going on. You knew what was going on. I knew how strongly Jack Burns was working to build the party. And I was very concerned about what the leadership of the Republicans were doing when they dumped Mary Noonan and O.P. Soares. That disturbed me no end. Because, you see, a lot of my support, my personal support came from the members of the Republican club (in) the fourth district.

LM: Did some Republicans defect as the result of the party's turning away from that? Did some Republicans defect or withdraw . . .

JR: Yes.

LM: . . . from politics?

JR: Yes. I think the significant group that withdrew, were some of the old party stalwarts, that
were members of the Soares faction, the holdover from (Vitousek), that had positions of leadership in the Republican club. All of a sudden (they) were forgotten. And a new leadership group came in to control the party, and they were not aware of some of these old-timers, and made no effort to get them back into the party fold. And I can name, you know, some of the—the Hironaka family, for example. They were staunch, rabid Republicans. And Kiichi Hironaka who was as strong a Republican as you could possibly imagine was never—he was gone. And there were a number of his ilk that were just forgotten.

LM: Not too smart, not too smart. How would you comment on the state of the legislature and party politics today?

JR: I don’t think you’re asking the right person at this time to comment. I’ve been out of politics for so many years that . . .

LM: Oh, but you read the newspapers and see TV.

JR: Just as an onlooker?

LM: As an onlooker.

JR: I think we have some very able people in the legislature. I really do.

LM: But I hear a big “but.”

JR: I think, you know, when you make comparisons, you make a comparison of the constituency of the legislature with the house and senate today with the people, the constituency of the legislature of twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five years ago, you would find that twenty-five, thirty, forty years ago it was the leaders in the community. It was the brilliant brains of the community. It was the industrial leaders, it was the business leaders, it was the (established) attorneys who were brilliant people who were members of the legislature. Today, unfortunately, if you decide as a representative of a big business to get into the legislature—oh, terrible. “The big business is going to control the legislature.” And what do you have? You have lots of young neophytes. And it’s a—we have been fortunate, I think, that despite the fact that we’ve had so many young, new people in the legislature, we have had some good leadership. But they—it’s not the caliber of the legislatures that we had a long time ago. That’s my personal opinion.

LM: Do you thing the Republican party stands a chance of rejuvenating?

JR: Sure.

LM: What would it need to do?

JR: Take a page out of Jack Burns’ book and go back into the precincts. Organize every precinct. Put a candidate up for every office that there is. You cannot expect to control the house, or control the senate, if you don’t even put up a candidate. Why should anybody vote for a party that cannot control the legislature? Pure and simple as that. It’s as simple as that. If you had a chance to get in control of one house or the other, well then, you deserve to be supported. But if you haven’t, the party doesn’t deserve to be supported. That’s my personal feeling.
LM: How should I put this? Is it possible at this point? Can it be done?

JR: Oh, I think so. Sure it could be done. I think that the pendulum always swings, and there’s always that challenge that those out have to get back in. And it’s going to be difficult, but I think it can be done. It was done by the Democrats. If it was done by the Democrats, no reason why it can’t be done by the Republicans. But it’s going to take some real strong leadership. And Andy Anderson is making a pretty good effort. I don’t know how successful he’s going to be. But they—I think, I hope they don’t make the continual mistake that they’ve made over the years, and put up their best vote getters for offices which they have no chance of getting elected to. They get their good, strong candidates defeated, and it’s a disillusionment to anybody else to try to get into the elective process. They’ve got to organize right from the bottom. They’ve got to be able to go to every precinct to have a candidate who has a chance of getting elected.

And furthermore, they ought take a page out of the Democrats, they should have contested elections in every precinct. And not just put up one person. They should put up two or three people. The Democrats have thrived on controversy. And the Republicans should do (the same). I’m all for it. I can remember when I was running, and as I said, there were sixteen of us that were running for (six) seats the first time out, you know. I can remember the leadership then saying the more the merrier. Of course, it always helped the incumbents, you know, to have a lot more people coming out. But, what it does do, it attracts the interest of the voters. A contest is the only thing that’s going to attract the interest of the voters. If there’s no contest, they get concerned and interested in the contest on the other side of the fence.

And they get interested in the Democrat controversies of which there are a great many. And so, once they get involved in the Democrat controversy, they have a tendency to continue to vote Democrat. And they should.

LM: I see Dan has several . . .

JR: Dan, I notice you’re jotting notes like mad on some of the things I said.

LM: Whip it on us, Dan. What you got there?

DT: Well, I believe, I’m just about pau.

LM: Okay.

DT: There’s some things I would like to go back and pick up, but I don’t think it would be pertinent now. But I do know that we both want to thank . . .

LM: Yeah, fascinating stuff, Mr. Russell.

DT: . . . J. Ward Russell for being with us today.

JR: It was interesting.

DT: It’s been a long workout on a balmy afternoon . . .
LM: We should call you "Senator Russell."

JR: It's a warm afternoon.

DT: Thank you, Senator.

JR: Well, I want to thank you. (It was) an opportunity for me to tell the story that I've wanted to tell for many years.

LM: Well, it's good to have it . . .

END OF INTERVIEW
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