

THE RADIO DEBATE
Thursday, April 27, 1972

Graves began by saying that kind of person needed for job was one "totally controlled by the community," "someone who cares about the problems in the district"--housing, zoning, health. Needs a "super-congressman" to "really service people who have not gotten services." Emphasized "speaking up to bring in maximum of federal participation." Need "a person with guts, who will speak up and not someone whose voice has been compromised at every corner." Most of his opening statement was an attack on Barbara.

BJ began by describing the district as having "extremes of poverty and affluence," "having a composite of urban problems." "It's a core district, the core of the city, the pulse of the city. If you are looking for diversity, it's there. It's all there. This district represents a concentration of all the problems of America localized in one spot. The voters need to think through their problems and not be overwhelmed by them. The people who operate downtown Houston don't live in the district. The people who do live there need a voice that can span the diversity of the 18th District." She said the district contained people who had the best of philosophy and the worst of philosophy in America. Election will be "a real first for Texas and eyes will be focused on it. It's very important

that the person elected express the problems and work for their solution."

Graves went back on the attack. Question is "Who will control the voice and the votes and the actions of the first black congressman? Either they can choose a person who has been compromised and who has accepted money from the conservative wing of the party. Or they can choose....a free voice"... (not someone) who has a track record of running in diverse circles and doing things detrimental to black people." "I have no hang up about the Democratic party. First of all, I'm a black man...I don't think that can be said of the person the establishment has decided they want to run in this race."

Barbara chose to reply to his charge that she was getting money from conservatives and started to say tha you need money to reach 80-100,000 people and that contribution doesn't mean that she is "bought" and that nobody buys her and Graves interrupted....

Graves - "There's a history. When you carry Ben Barnes' signs through supermarkets, that's a history of selling out the black community. People are tacking up your signs and Ben Barnes' signs. The same folks. What's cooking?"

BT Bonner came in here before Barbara could reply and repeated his theme that there had been no equal opportunity to be heard.

That real issue in race is whether media will respond so that people will hear what the candidates say. "People have been programmed in the 18th district." "Money has been used to establish the front runner." No presentation to the voters etc. At beginning of meeting before the program started, candidates asked if they objected to a Post reporter being present. Bonner said "How can I object when I've been totally ignored. For the first time in my life I've thought of throwing a brick through somebody's window, just to get some attention." And this was his key theme throughout. A couple of times he took BJ off the hook by butting in. He also said before program that M. L. King, the 4th candidate had been put in the race "by one of the candidates and not her" pointing to BJ. He thought Graves did it--but this was before Graves came in and B.T.B did not repeat it in Graves' presence.

When moderator asked where funds were coming from, Graves said, "The vast majority of my money comes from black sources, black physicians, dentists and businessmen."

BJ said that "The largest portion of my money has come from organized labor." "Rest has come from a 'broad spectrum'"--takes 8 pages to list them, ordinary people giving as little as 50¢, church groups, etc.

Moderator asked Graves if he was rabble-rouser. Graves said he didn't know what that meant, but he answered by saying "If it

was rabble-rousing to (and he then would list something he did) then I want to be called a rabble-rouser." He repeated this statement four or five times with a different accomplishment each time. Then he said "When 'the man' couldn't think of anything to call Adam Clayton Powell, he called him flamboyant and controversial. I don't mind being called flamboyant and controversial."

BJ then countered by asking "Do you want someone who does the talk and stirs the pot and then, after the pot is stirred, leaves it; or do you want someone who gets in there to see what solution can be worked out, what legislative result can be produced." She described herself as "aggressive" and the campaign as "hard-fought" but said in answer to moderator's question, she was not "bitter."

Graves said "I'm not bitter; I just want the facts." "Everything in this town is cranked up, the conservative Democratic party, the corporations, the establishment are cranked up to elect Barbara Jordan. That's what's coming down and the black community should know that."

BJ said voters would decide in "quietude" ~~of~~ voting booths. That she sought endorsements and all candidates did, but that she didn't know how much they were really worth. Voters "will not be swayed by the endorsement bag." Tried to downgrade the endorsements Graves was using as evidence she was controlled.

When moderator asked, near end, what about white voters, Graves answered by saying that whites will have the balance of power in the district and that BJ was Vice Chairman of the redistricting committee and could have drawn on all black districts if she had wanted to. But she had deliberately drawn a district with big group of whites in it.

BJ said district was drawn in collaboration with Bob Eckhardt. "We were trying to draw a district in which a black could be elected. The district does not have the whites ^{as} ~~or~~ the balance of power. Mexican-Americans have 10-15% of the vote. It was planned to pass muster in the courts, to make sense in the federal courts." And there was elaboration of the court procedure it went through. "You've got to understand it was not something I drew up and said take it or leave it. It had to be passed by the Texas Senate and the Texas House."

Graves retorted that "17,000 black folk are not minor" and that's the number that would have been needed to give it a black majority.

Graves closed by returning to his theme: "Do the people of the 18th District want a congressman who is controlled from within the community or controlled from without?" Called self "a fighter" who will "do what is necessary to bring people the rights and services they deserve." He would "go up to Washington uncompromised."

BJ ticked off problems, ie. "Approximately 10% of the black people in Houston are unemployed compared with 3.5% of the white people."

Then, the issue is: "Which of the 4 candidates can represent the interest in the issues, who can get on a committee, help draft and redraft legislation, persuade, cajole and push forward the legislation.?" White people should ask themselves the same problem. We talk more about blacks, she said, because their problems are worse. But she ended by saying to both blacks and whites, "I can do a good job."

In elevator going down, BJ asked me "How did I do--a little too namby-pamby?" I said Bonner hogged it for publicity and she agreed. I then said she "did just fine." That if she was ahead, she was right not to get into charge and counter charge with Graves since it would give him publicity he needed. She agreed that her refusal to slug was "deliberate"--and she implied she did so because she did think she was ahead and was playing it that way.