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Interview with  
REPRESENTATIVE "GIB" LEWIS  
August 29, 1979

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Gib Lewis  
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection  
Representative Gib Lewis

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas                      Date: August 29, 1979

Dr. Marcello:        This is Ron Marcello interviewing Representative "Gib" Lewis for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on August 29, 1979, in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Lewis in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a member of the Texas House of Representatives during the 66th Legislative Session.

Mr. Lewis, since this is the first time that you've participated in our project, would you start by giving me a brief biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature.

Mr. Lewis:        Ron, I was born in 1936 in a small community of Oletha, Texas, which is down in Limestone County. My early childhood was spent around the Mexia area. I graduated from high school in Cleveland, Texas. I spent the last couple of years I had in high school in Cleveland. I went to Sam Houston State. Then I went into the service, spent a few years in service, went back to Sam Houston State,

in the meanwhile spending a little time at TCU, and coming back to Sam Houston.

I came back to Fort Worth, starting in business here where I was associated with a wholesale paper firm, selling to people in the graphic arts industry, for several years.

I started my business in 1964 and have been in it since then. We have, of course, ventured out into other endeavors, but that's primarily where we started.

Marcello: When did you enter politics on a serious basis, that is, as a candidate?

Lewis: I guess you can go back to the early 1960's. I was very active in civic activities, and I was very active in the local chapter of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. I served as president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce in '64 or '65. Also, I was very active in the Lion's Club. I served as president of the River Oaks Lion's Club, which is the suburban community that I lived in at that time. I served as chairman of the North Texas Lion's Presidents Council. I guess that was the endeavor I had, plus at the same time I was serving on the city council in River Oaks.

Like many people in public service, I was encouraged to run for the Legislature back in the '69 and '70 area. So I filed in 1970, ran in 1970, and was elected at that time.

Marcello: How would you describe your political philosophy? In other words, on the political spectrum, would you be a liberal,

conservative, or moderate? How would you describe yourself?

Lewis: I would say I would be a moderate-conservative. I'm very conservative in fiscal areas and fiscal matters. I'm probably a little more moderate and lenient, I guess, in, say, human rights and those areas.

Marcello: What sort of a district do you represent here in Fort Worth?

Lewis: Of course, I have the distinction, since I have been a member of the Legislature since 1970, as one of the only ones that still can remember when you ran county-wide. I have served probably in more districts than anyone in the state. I've held county-wide offices, running in a multi-member district. I am presently in the third single-member district that I've had to serve in and run from, which has certainly thrown all the personalities of the county at me.

To really give a true assessment of it, it's hard to do because it's kind of a catch-all district. It runs from the boundaries of the far northeast section of Tarrant County, the Lake Worth-Eagle Mountain Lake area on down through the more affluent part of Fort Worth, which is the Monticello-Crestwood area. It goes all the way down through downtown, which is the lower income, on out past the hospital district and on into near south Fort Worth. So it's really a more complex district than I'd like for it to really be because I don't think it truly, I guess, has a real close adhesiveness as far as the community feel or the community attitude.

I know the district that I had prior to this, before the court . . . this is presently a court-ordered redistricting plan. In the legislative redistricting plan, which we were under prior to then, I served thirteen incorporated small cities, which I thought was good because all the small incorporated cities, which had a population of anywhere from two or three thousand on up to maybe ten to thirteen thousand, all shared a community interest. That was that they were incorporated as a small community aside from Fort Worth, pretty much independent on their own. In fact, they even had what they called a Tarrant County Mayors Council, which was the large . . . in fact, I guess I served the large majority of those communities. It gave a degree of identification to the district in that they all had the same problems, primarily, and that they all were looking for the same goals and solutions. Of course, I felt, since I had a lot of expertise serving on the city council in a small community, that I served that district rather well, even though I feel I do still continue to serve that district because presently I have about six of the small communities.

Of course, again, I come back in and take up the bulk or the core of Fort Worth. I would describe the district from poor to rich, some degree of community interest, you know, as far as some segments of it having a common interest. It's probably a heavy labor area, since the White Settlement area,

General Dynamics, and that area do fall into my district-- some segment of labor. But I guess you'd say it's really just a hodgepodge-type district. You got everyone from the richest person in Fort Worth right on down to probably the poorest person in Fort Worth within my district.

Marcello: So if I may interpret what you're saying, then, your district really doesn't have a single issue that is of prime importance. It's a district that has a multitude of issues that interest it.

Lewis: That's correct. You're right, because every subject comes before the Legislature will probably have some direct concern on my district, whether it's welfare or whether it's grants or whatever it might be. It would affect my district one way or the other.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the 66th Legislative Session, and let's start with Speaker Clayton. What sort of a speaker has Bill Clayton been thus far, in your opinion?

Lewis: He's been a fair speaker; he's been a good speaker.

Marcello: The term "fair" keeps cropping up again and again and again in my interviews with state legislators. Evidently, it is a characteristic of Clayton that just about every representative seems to think of when they think of Clayton.

Lewis: Well, I think it's very important because, as speaker of the House, you're chosen by all the members of the House, and, of course, each member . . . like I was saying, my district is

complex, but some of the members' districts are not that complex. They represent a certain segment. In the black community, some of the black legislators out of Harris County and Dallas County represent a certain segment of our population. The same thing is true with the farmers on the High Plains or the representatives out of the Valley with a strong Mexican-American population. They represent that segment and that constituency. You have to be fair because Texas is so large and so complex that you have to have someone that has enough integrity to let his feelings be broad enough to realize that these problems are broad and complex and that each segment of this state has different problems.

You got a situation out in West Texas and the High Plains where water is a big problem, and, of course, a lot of areas are concerned with water and water legislation. What's the future of water? Where's it going to come from? How can they regulate it? Those are the big issues. However, the legislators on the Gulf Coast, they got too much of it. They want to know how to get rid of it. That's just a hypothetical example, but, I mean, that's just to make a point that he has been fair to the point that he realizes the complexity of this state.

He's been fair to the point that he respects people's philosophical ideals, and I think this is very important for a speaker candidate. Billy Clayton's basic philosophy

or political philosophy is conservative. He's a farmer-rancher-businessman from the High Plains. He represents his district and represents it well, and those people are conservative in their philosophical beliefs. Whereas, possibly some legislators in the urban areas are more liberal because they have a different constituency.

But he has been fair to the point that he takes into consideration a person's individual ability when he makes committee assignments, when he chooses his committee chairmen to chair those committees. He lets personalities and philosophical differences go by the wayside, and he tries to fulfill these posts by the best qualified people. Now I think that's why that he has served a third term and probably will serve four terms as speaker of the House, which I predict no one ever will do that again. No one ever has in the history of this state. He will do it because he has been fair, and people recognize that, even though he has his critics. You'll find those who criticize him and those . . . it's typical of anybody in government. Those on the "out's" will always criticize those on the "in's." I think, if you researched it, you'd find that's what most of his criticism comes from. Those who have not been selected by him to chair committees or receive what they considered a committee assignments that they want, well, there is a reason for that, because I'm sure that he didn't feel that they had the ability

to do it. Of course, no one likes to be confronted with the fact that they don't have the ability to fulfill some role in leadership, so therefore they . . . it's easy to criticize and makes a good press copy.

Marcello: I assume, then, from what you've said, that you had no qualms whatsoever about his decision to run for a third term, thus breaking precedent, or even running for a fourth term. It doesn't seem to bother you at all.

Lewis: It does not bother me, no, because as I just pointed out, I feel that everyone will be treated fair and equally. I don't believe anyone will be "run over." I think he exemplifies the type of leadership that the members of the House want. I guess once you got a good horse, you don't trade him in the second race, you know, if he's a winner. Just because he's won one, you don't put him out to pasture.

Of course, I, myself, have had some questions whether or not--it's like I mentioned earlier before the interview--you can stay too long in one place to where your ideas become stagnant and your productivity becomes stagnant. I think this is a fear that I have as far as someone wanting to run for the third and fourth term.

Marcello: I think this is a concern of Clayton's, also, in my conversations with him. Probably, after a fourth term, he's going to be looking at other areas or other avenues, so to speak.

Lewis: Yes, I think he'll have to. I think members of the House

realize that he probably has political ambitions to go possibly to a higher office, and I think the House has enough respect for him that they're going to try to help him do that. I think that's evident by them selecting him as a third-term speaker or a fourth-term speaker. It's to give him that benefit and that advantage to maintain a position of prominence in the government that he'll have a steppingstone or you could say a platform to come from. I think it's a credit to him that we members who have supported him feel that strongly for him.

Marcello: I again come back to that word "fairness." Evidently, that quality is very important to one in public office.

Lewis: Very important. Very important because everyone who serves in politics . . . I know I want to have the opportunity to "run" with my legislative program. I think this is a kind of a term that we use. Of course, the speaker has a great deal of power--it's awesome, the power that he can have--and I believe that we have seen examples over the years where speakers have used it, and used it to their own advantage. Whenever you see someone who does not use it for his political advantage . . . I know I've had the pleasure of serving under four speakers, and I've seen some of those four speakers where they have manipulated that power to the point that if you were their friend and on their side and voted the way they thought you ought to, then you would get a favorable

hearing on the bill. Otherwise, with their chosen people on the chosen committees, your bill would never be heard before that committee. Well, of course, if you never get your bill heard before that committee, your legislative program is at a standstill. If he can have people that use that to their own personal advantage, that's not being fair. I think this is where Billy Clayton has certainly come forward, and he has never done that. He's given everybody . . . he's let all the chips lay out on the table. He's never tried to . . .

I know I've served under him as chairman for two terms, and he has never once asked me to . . . well, he's asked me to give consideration to some members that have come to him and said, "Listen, I need this, and would you put a good word in for me." Now he has done this over the years. He has asked me to hold hearings for members, and, surprisingly, for members who did not hold the same political persuasion that he did. I know of three examples where he's said, "They're very concerned because they know it's not a popular issue, and they're not sure they'll get a hearing. Would you take consideration of where's it scheduled?" I said, "Well, I'll try to move it up ahead of schedule." But he has never asked me not to give anyone a hearing on any bill--never--in the years that I've known him.

What's unique about my relationship with Billy Clayton

is that in 1971 I served on a committee that he was chairman of at that time, and it was the Counties Committee. That was the year Gus Mutscher was speaker that year. Of course, in the meanwhile, during that term, well, Gus Mutscher stepped down, and Rayford Price was speaker for a period of time, and then Price Daniel was elected speaker. I served as chairman under Price Daniel of the Natural Resources Committee, and Billy Clayton was on my committee. He was assigned to my committee at that time, so I was the chairman and he was the member of the committee.

There's one thing I learned about Billy Clayton, I think, more so than I did when he was a chairman. I knew he was hard-working, but I worked him to death that year. He was the only fellow out of the twenty-one-man committee that we had that I would load up, and I knew the job would be done. Of course, in those days we had subcommittee chairmen, and I guess he was subcommittee chairman of more bills than--well, I know he was--of anyone there. The reason being . . . I've never seen a guy that was a workaholic, and he is a workaholic. He'd have committee meetings at two o'clock in the morning and make sure that every one of the committee members were there. A lot of times I'd walk out of my office at midnight or something like that, you know, some ridiculous time, and he'd still be meeting on some of our bills that we had had that day. The man is a workaholic.

He's got the interests of the state at hand. That's why I gained a great deal of respect for him, because he got the job done. A lot of the fellows, you know, if it was convenient, well, they'd hold a subcommittee hearing on that bill. But that year, he produced remarkably for me. He was a workaholic. It was uncanny, the way he can get people to show up, you know, because at one or two o'clock in the morning, it's extremely difficult to get enough to hold a quorum. But he was always able to do it, and he'd be holding testimony and hearings, and he'd work a bill over. He wouldn't take anything at face value. He looked at it, read it, researched it; and it was very knowledgeable legislation when it came back. When it came back before the full committee, he gave a very detailed, full report of that bill to where the committee had some knowledge and expertise in that bill. So his rise, I think, is based on his past performance. Somebody doesn't just surface at a moment's notice. I think his credentials and credibility was built long before he was speaker.

Marcello: So what you're saying, in effect, then, is that on the basis of your contacts with him in committee, he, in effect, "paid his dues."

Lewis: He did pay his dues. You're absolutely right--he did--because he has always had a reputation of really getting the job done. He's worked hard. A lot of people go to Austin for several

things. Some like to go down and have a good time and just do the minimum of whatever they are required to do; and there's some that go in and put in the full effort. I think Billy Clayton was one of those that put in the full effort. I think, of course, that people have confidence in people like that. They know that they've been doing it long before they were in a position of leadership, so what's going to make the change? A dog doesn't change his spots overnight, and I think that's one reason that he had a great deal of credibility with people who have had the opportunity to serve with him over the years.

Marcello: Again, when you use the term "fairness," then, what you were implying is that you want to be able to disagree with the speaker whenever you feel that you have a legitimate disagreement and at the same time know that your disagreements with the speaker aren't going to affect your legislative program or your committee assignments and things of that nature.

Lewis: Right. That's absolutely true because I think it's very evident. If you look at the committee chairmen this past year, you had some people that were chairmen of major committees that from time to time were in disagreement with . . . well, I don't know if they were in disagreement because the speaker has been in a position where he doesn't put himself in a situation of disagreement. In other words, he doesn't come out front and take sides on issues that have put him in a

position to where he has to come out and disagree with someone, even though he might be philosophically disagreeing with him. Someone might say, "Well, he doesn't disagree with that because of his district." He doesn't come out and vocally criticize and chastise anyone because he might be philosophically opposed to him. I never saw him in a situation where he's publicly had to express . . . of course, I mean, being a speaker, you don't have to vote on the issues a lot of times, so therefore you don't have to really make your point.

But I think he has expressed his fairness to the point that . . . well, look at the chairmanships--kind of getting back to what I originally said--like Craig Washington, who certainly doesn't share his political viewpoints. Nevertheless, he has a great amount of ability, as does Mrs. Delco. Certainly she doesn't share his political views, but yet she has a great amount of ability. I know probably that Ben Grant from Marshall, as an example, doesn't share his political views. Grant, I guess you would say, was a moderate-liberal. He is a very strong trial lawyer, plaintiff lawyer, who probably doesn't share the views of a businessman-rancher such as Billy Wayne. But he's there in a position of leadership. I think, if you look at it, he has gone across the board to get a fair sprinkling of representation from everyone's political viewpoint. He's got blacks, women, rural and urban members all sitting in a position of leadership, which gives a pretty

broad-based representation of what the House is made up of. Yet, he doesn't criticize, chastise, any of those members to my knowledge.

I know we'd always have meetings on Sunday evenings to outline what's going on during the week. Sometimes we'd have some pretty heated debates and discussion among the committee chairmen about it. But I never saw him trying to use the influence of his position to determine things one way or the other. He made sure that the only thing he did is what a speaker's supposed to be, and that's just to make sure you have an orderly flow of business through the House. I think that's the job he did, and he's done it well; and I think that's why he's gotten along as well as he has.

Marcello: Were you satisfied with your committee assignments or appointments during the 66th Session?

Lewis: Oh, yes, I definitely was because the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee is one of the key committees in the House. It's one of three committees where the chairman does not have to serve on any other committees. In other words, that's the only committee assignment I have, and that's the only responsibility that I have, the reason being because of the heavy legislative role we play. In fact, in the past two sessions, the State Affairs Committee and the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee has probably acted on more bills--those two committees--than all of the other committees combined. So, I mean, that just

kind of gives you the workload we have. We have a tremendous workload in those committees, and it's hard to give any time anywhere else. That's one reason that the chairman of Intergovernmental Affairs, chairman of the State Affairs, and chairman of the Appropriations do not serve on any other committees--because of the workload. The reason is, like I say again, that these two committees--one that I chaired and one that Tom Uher chaired--probably considered more bills than all the others combined.

I like it; I like the work; I like what it covers. Of course, it covers local government and state government and districts--hospital districts, water districts, etc. Of course, with my background as having been a member of the city council, in the city government, local government, well, of course, I can relate to it quite easily. It's challenging. You always get new problems.

Marcello: In your opinion, what was the most important bill that came before your committee during the 66th Session?

Lewis: Gee whiz! I don't know how you could really put a . . .

Marcello: Well, let me back up, then, and ask what were some of the most important bills that came before your committee.

Lewis: I think that would be more appropriate because (chuckle) one of the bills that came up was annexation, which is always a storm down in the Gulf Coast around the Harris County area.

Marcello: In terms of Houston always wanting to annex bordering areas

and so on?

Lewis: Right (chuckle). As far as one that gets a lot of attention, a lot of publicity, and a lot of participation, of course, that bill does. Now whether or not it was the most important . . . but for the people in Clear Lake City and in Houston, that bill has been before our committee the last two sessions and has gotten a great deal of activity and heated debate from both sides--the city council in Houston, and the mayor of Houston, and, of course, the people in Clear Lake and surrounding areas.

Marcello: In other words, Houston wants to annex, and Clear Lake City is against annexation.

Lewis: Right, yes. Of course, in Houston we have a situation which I think is a good law. It needs modification, probably, and, of course, that's what our committee's going to do during the interim, is probably try to come up with something that's going to try to appease both sides.

Marcello: What is the basic law now?

Lewis: Well, basically, what a city can annex . . . they now have what's called "extra-territorial jurisdiction," which is five miles beyond that. This means no one can incorporate or take any growth pattern in the ETJ area. Of course, if a city falls within that, that means that that small community cannot go out and expand because they're in the extra-territorial jurisdiction of Houston. Of course, Houston, being as large as

it is, has just got everything. It's just like a big octopus that's got everybody just engrossed out there.

Of course, you have the people, like, in Clear Lake as a good example where it's a city within itself, and they want to be independent, but yet they fall in that jurisdiction and they cannot do anything. They're pretty well stymied. They can't incorporate. They can't be governed by themselves, and that's what they want. They feel that Houston doesn't give them the service, won't give them the service. Of course, Houston has been notorious, I think, over the years in that they go out and they land-grab pretty rapidly and regularly, but they don't offer the services. Yet they get the tax revenue, and, of course, they got the territory. Of course, they have a goal, and it's a worthy goal of Houston. They want to be the largest city in the world (chuckle). They've got that objective.

In fact, in these last two sessions, we've passed it out of our committee, allowing Clear Lake to do it because Houston has not fallen on good terms, I think, with members of the committee. However, it's always had difficulty in the Senate. The City of Houston has had better influence in the Senate than they've had in the House, I guess you could say.

Marcello: In other words, any modification in the present law concerning annexation will not only affect Houston and Clear Lake City, for example, but it's going to affect all cities.

Lewis: State-wide, right. It's a state-wide problem, and, of course, in some of the other cities, they have similar problems. It's not of the magnitude that Harris County and Houston have, but that always has created a big storm.

Horseracing, para-mutual betting, for some reason has always come to my committee, the reason being because it's always on a local option basis. In other words, you establish it in each separate county. That's always drawn a huge, huge crowd.

Marcello: Did that come up before the committee during the 66th Session?

Lewis: It was introduced, but we didn't hold a hearing. The reason we didn't hold a hearing . . . I guess it's my fault . . . not my fault, but it was my decision to make because I polled the members individually and found that it would not stand a chance of getting out of the committee. Rather than burden the committee with hours and hours and hours of testimony, because that's what you got on that situation goes . . . we did hear that bill in the 65th Session, and it was about an eight-hour process to go through the hearings. Of course, it did not get out of the committee; it failed in committee. So I individually polled the members of the committee this year to see what their feeling was, and it was strongly defeated again. Rather than putting the members to that ordeal, rather than taking eight hours to handle one subject that was going to be defeated in the committee, well, I felt that what we

should do is spend our time on more bills and other areas that we needed to give attention to. At the same time, rather than inconveniencing the opponents and proponents, too, I mean, you look at the situation, and that's a judgment call on the chairman's side as to whether or not he wants to inconvenience people. That's all that was going to happen in that particular situation. When I polled them, I said, "Is there anything that could change your mind one way or the other?" And each member said, "No! My mind is made up!" As one said, "Don't confuse me with the facts. My mind is made up. I'm opposed to para-mutual betting, and I will not support it."

Marcello: Again, I suspect that this whole business of para-mutual betting is a very emotional issue.

Lewis: Oh, yes, it's very emotional. In fact, I know one of the members out of Houston, one of the black members, said, "I know my constituency passed it in the non-binding referendum, but, however, I have a great number of Baptist preachers that helped me get elected that I am not about to turn on, and that was one thing that they said to me before they ever came on board to help me: 'Are you for or against horseracing?'" At that time I had to make the stand that I am opposed to horseracing, and I'm going to continue to be opposed to it because I can't go back on my word." So it wasn't any gray area involved; I mean, it was completely a black and white

issue. Of course, we did not take that for consideration.

Marcello: What was the major thrust of the proposed legislation concerning para-mutual betting? In other words, what did the proponents want? And I'm sure it wasn't the proponents who were coming up with the basic legislation here.

Lewis: The proponents wanted horseracing in Texas, para-mutual betting in Texas, like New Mexico and Louisiana has. They had a sound argument of the economic benefits that could be brought into the state. We consider Texas kind of still having a rustic, Western motif, and they have a hard time understanding why Louisiana and New Mexico can have it. They believe that if you polled people from other areas of the country, nine out of ten of them would think there'd be para-mutual betting and horseracing in Texas, like it is in Florida, California, New York, other states. Too, they got some good basic statistics as far as there's more breeders and owners in Texas than there are in just about any other state in the nation. Surprisingly, like I say, we do not legalize it.

Of course, the opponents of it are strongly solid in their viewpoint. Like you said earlier, it's an emotional issue. Of course, the religious issue is at stake. You have those who remember when Texas did have para-mutual betting. Of course, it was during the Depression, so it's hard to say . . . well, everything was bad during the Depression. Whether or not para-mutual betting played a significant role

or not, I do not know because that was before my time. But I think the mob or gangster or that element was a concern.

I think probably, more or less, the State of Texas is still in the Bible Belt. If you don't believe it, you start running those programs talking about liquor and gambling. I tell you what: you see them start coming out, and you start seeing some fellows that you know like to drink a little bit and who would go to the horse races; and all of a sudden you start seeing them take a different, reverse stand (chuckle) when they start looking at their constituency back home; and they realize that that might be okay with them, but they're not representing their district when they represent pro-alcohol, pro-gambling, or such as that nature.

Too, we deal in county government, and I guess county government takes up a great deal of our committee's time.

Marcello: Are there a lot of local bills when you get into county government?

Lewis: Many. Many, many local bills. We have a great many hospital district bills, you know, creating hospital districts for different districts and counties--county hospital districts and some just small districts that find a common boundary somewhere that they'll establish a district, a hospital district, that will be supported by that geographical area.

At the same time, we had a kind of unique situation this year, as far as county government, where we started having

a little fight with the county auditors, the district judges, on whose jurisdiction is whose as far as running county government, whether the commissioner's court should have more power or less power. Of course, you have a check and balance in your county government to a great extent, where the district judges appoint and hire the county auditor and the county purchasing agent. Of course, you have a situation where the commissioner's court doesn't like that all like that because they feel that they are elected by the people and are responsible to the people, and therefore they're responsible for the budget and for the purchasing and the buying of the goods for that county government. We had some arguments about whether or not to do away with the auditors, do away with the county treasurers. We did have a situation here in Tarrant County, where a bill was introduced and passed out of our committee to abolish the office of county treasurer in Tarrant County. Of course, too, another issue was whether or not some counties could hire a budget director. Of course, that was strongly opposed by the district judges and county auditors, again. You have a little in-fighting to some extent. But primarily it's just to make local changes many times, somewhere.

Some of the bills introduced in our committee, that come before our committee, are just to allow certain counties to do something. In other words, they might have decreased or

they might have increased in population. A great many times, you'll have bills that are what they call "bracketed bills" that will only affect counties with a population of 25,000 or less or 30,000 or less. When you get into a situation where the county population fluctuates, well, they have to have legislation enacted to put them in their proper perspective. Sometimes they want to remain where they are, but their population increase or decrease prohibits them from doing certain things, according to the statutes already on the books, so they have to have some kind of enabling legislation. More or less, I guess, the majority of our business is just more or less housekeeping--routine county housekeeping projects.

Marcello: So in terms of lobby pressures, then, if we may use the term "lobby" in this case, you would be dealing with local and county governmental officials as opposed to the business lobby or the education lobby or whatever the case might be.

Lewis: Yes, definitely--city officials, like, the city manager, city councilmen. We have a close working relationship with them. Of course, I guess it's kind of a unique type of situation because none of us have got anything to gain or lose (chuckle). More or less, we don't fall in that business or something that would enhance monetary gain or loss. We do not fall into that. Maybe para-mutual betting was a kind of a unique type of situation. Of course, that was a unique bill that

just happened to . . . normally, that bill would probably go to State Affairs, but with the uniqueness of it being on a local county-wide basis, it made it fall in my committee. But primarily, that's just about it.

We sometimes run into some business interest to the point of maybe redefining some of the tax structure. We fall into that category to some minute extent sometimes, but that would be about the only time because, when you start creating special districts like a hospital district, for example, well, of course, that's going to have a tax burden here or there, and you might find some, but I can't recall maybe one or two instances where that's been a fact in the last four years.

Marcello: Let's get back to this problem of annexation again because, as you pointed out, it probably was the single most important type of legislation that came before your committee. I would assume that this whole problem of annexation has been magnified due to the fact that Texas is becoming much more urban in nature. As cities in Texas continue to grow, the whole problem of annexation becomes more important, does it not?

Lewis: You're absolutely right. The year 1983 will be really the big change as far as Texas government is concerned.

Marcello: Texas is going to have perhaps three of the ten largest cities in the United States by 1980 or 1981.

Lewis: Yes, that's true. So in 1983, for the first time in Texas

history, the make-up of the Texas House and Texas Senate will be of legislators from the urban areas. I think the complexity will change drastically. Whether it will be good or bad, I don't know at that point.

Of course, annexation again will be a problem. We had a small incident here in Tarrant County where--it wasn't as severe as people tried to make out like it was--the City of Fort Worth had made indication they were going to annex a certain area out south of Fort Worth. Gee whiz, those people just completely came unglued. They did not want annexed, and they didn't want to be any part of Fort Worth. Of course, this is a continuing fight state-wide, especially in Tarrant County, Dallas County . . . and particularly in Harris County because Harris County is so large and, of course, has such a large, spread-out ETJ zone.

Marcello: What is the ETJ zone that you talk about?

Lewis: That's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction. That's a five-mile soft area outside the hard-core city limits. In other words, when a city annexes, they can annex out to a certain point, and then they have a five-mile buffer on the other side of that that they have set aside or they feel they can set aside for future annexation. Of course, once they make that claim, I guess it's just kind of like land-grabbing or claim-staking, is what it really amounts to. They make that claim, and another city cannot come over in that boundary. They cannot

come out and annex in someone else's ETJ zone. So that's what I'm talking about there.

That's where the problem has been. Of course, once a city or community falls in, like, the Clear Lake situation . . . they fell in that five-mile boundary. Of course, they were wanting to incorporate, but the law prohibits them from incorporating because they fell in Houston's ETJ zone. So that's where that problem arises from. Of course, it's just the same old fight. A lot of people have moved out of the city, and all of a sudden the cities are growing to them. It's the fight where they say, "We moved out of the city because we didn't like the city. We do not like the city coming out here and putting taxes on us without giving us services." This is the big argument--whether or not some of the cities can offer the services. That is the argument. The basic argument is just how large can a city get before they lose their ability to service that area. That's the real debateable subject of this point.

I sometimes think you can become too large to where it's just unmanageable, and you can't give proper services. When a city annexes an area, in return for the taxes those citizens pay, they're supposed to receive services. The services should be police and fire protection, sewage and water, etc.--just what you would normally consider. In many, many cases, and particularly in Harris County and

Houston, this has not been the case because Houston has annexed areas, and the areas that they annexed are just like they were twenty years ago. They have not run water out to them; they've given very skimpy police and fire service. That's the big argument. That's where Houston has kind of fallen in a bad light with the members of the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee. We have gone to Houston, and we have looked at these things and have been very aware of them. Of course, you get Louie Welsh, who is the ex-mayor and . . .

Marcello: A real growth advocate.

Lewis: Yes, he's very much a growth advocate. There are really several very articulate people who'll sell you on growth. If you ever want a good interview, I'd say interview one of those fellows. I have to have a lot of admiration for those two people because they are responsible for the rapid growth that Houston's had. Boy, they stand solid behind Houston, in Houston's being the largest city in the world and most prestigious city in the world. They're very enthusiastic in their stand. So you got both sides fighting.

Marcello: I would assume that in the case of these towns and cities that are facing annexation by Houston, they would be very much concerned about the fact that Houston has no zoning ordinances.

Lewis: None whatsoever. It's the only city I know of in the state, probably, that has absolutely no zoning.

Marcello: This means, in effect, that you can have a \$150,000 house, and next door to it you can have a McDonald's hamburger stand, is that correct?

Lewis: That's right, or a junkyard, either one. That's the problem they have in Houston. They are making no attempt to change it; I mean, they like it like that. So they have absolutely no zoning. Of course, I think, personally, you have to have some zoning for orderly growth. I just cannot visualize a city as large as Houston without any kind of zoning whatsoever. Others might have some rapid growth, but they have an orderly, consistent, good, healthy growth. I don't believe they can have it without some type of zoning ordinances.

Marcello: So these outlying areas, then, are worried about the fact that a city like Houston has no zoning laws, plus there's this fear that they're not going to get their money's worth in terms of services because of Houston's past history along these lines.

Lewis: Right, that's absolutely right.

Marcello: What sort of a law would you personally like to see in terms of this problem of annexation and so on? Like you said awhile ago, this is going to be a major concern of your committee during the interim.

Lewis: We had a bill that I had spent a lot of time on drafting, myself, this past year that I felt was a fair approach to the solution. I don't feel that we should try to stifle growth.

I don't care what size the city is, I don't think we should try to stifle the growth pattern. The only thing that I had proposed was that if a city did annex an area, that they had to, within a three-year period of time, give full service to that community. I think what this will do, if you put a time limitation on it, is probably in some way stifle growth, but, I mean, at the same time they'd have an orderly growth. So that was primarily what we tried to do, is to say, "Fine! If you want to annex these areas, that's all well and good. But at the same time, when you bring this geographical area into the city limits and expect those homeowners and property owners to pay the city taxes to support the city government, at the same time the city government should give something in return." As I say, we want to require that within three years each one of those areas would be serviced by sewage, water, police, and fire, and all the government services that they're entitled to." That was the intent of our bill. I think we'll probably come again with a very similar bill in the next session.

Marcello: During the interim, then, what are you going to be doing?

Lewis: Primarily, just looking at the pros and cons, making sure this is the right approach, maybe adding and deleting, making sure what requirements can be easily acceptable and lived with for everyone. We don't want to get any city into a situation that they don't have the flexibility that . . . it might be

sometimes just physically impossible for them to do it. We'll try to find the loopholes, I guess you'd say. I'm sure there's got to be some flexibility, and there are some minute situations that can occur where a city could not just . . . what if they can't perform? What happens then? So we'll just be trying to work out the details of it.

Marcello: So what you're going to do, then, is run with a proposed piece of legislation that perhaps does include this three-year grace period, you might say, and discuss and work out the pros and cons concerning it.

Lewis: Right.

Marcello: It seems like a very reasonable approach, and it's hard for me to see why that couldn't be acceptable.

Lewis: Well, to me it's very reasonable, too (chuckle). That's the reason I could never find out why it was not acceptable.

Of course, you know, a good example was the DWI law that was passed. I don't know if you heard about it on the radio. Well, of course, there was no legislation introduced that required the surrender of one's driver's license for the conviction of a DWI. But what happened on that situation, when we came in with a miscellaneous probate code, some revision of that, well, a DWI conviction just happened to fall into that category.

So this is what we're trying to do, is look for the pitfalls, making sure that its requests are something that

everyone could live with, are not too demanding, because you don't want to get into a situation where no one can conform with the law that's written.

Many times, in the haste of the legislative session, you don't have that time, and this DWI business was a good example. We debated that bill in the House and the Senate debate, and even in the governor's office, whose job is to research and look for those pitfalls, let it go through without their knowledge. But all of a sudden, somewhere down the line, somebody just said, "Hey, you know, that thing reflects on here," because you found somebody that was an expert in DWI cases. "That probate code, I think, has something with DWI's," and, sure enough, it does.

I mean, that's the situation we're looking for. It's a simple approach, but sometimes the simplest approaches have some problems. Therefore, since we did not have the opportunity to pass the bill that we had last year, we want to find out what some of the objections are and try to work out these objections. I guess one of the good lobbies for the City of Austin and the City of Houston and the City of Fort Worth is probably Texas Municipal League, which has a lot of influence because they represent such a large constituency themselves.

Marcello: With the Texas Municipal League, you would be dealing with mayors and city managers and people of that nature?

Lewis: That's right; that's right. They have an office in Austin, and we're trying . . . we want to work with them and let them have some input on writing laws because they're going to know what the problems are. We want to try to work with them to the point that they can give us some of the problems, some of the pitfalls, some of the advantages, and some of their recommendations. Some of them we might take; all of them we might take; none of them we might take.

Marcello: We mentioned Houston in this regard. What are some of the other cities that are very much concerned about growth and annexation and so on? Obviously, all cities in Texas seem to be growing in size, but which specific ones besides Houston would fall in this category?

Lewis: I'd say Houston, Arlington . . . a good example is right here in Arlington. You've had some city governments that are more aggressive than others.

Marcello: Like, Houston had its Louie Welsh, and Arlington had its Tommy Vandergriff.

Lewis: Louie Welsh and Tommy Vandergriff. Tommy Vandergriff is a very good example. Louie Welsh and Tommy Vandergriff are probably the fathers of the Texas Annexation Code. They're the ones that wrote it; they're the ones that promoted it; and they're the ones that passed it back in the mid-1960's. Of course, they did it purposely for the growth of their own cities.

At that time--I don't know if you recall--they had strip zoning. What strip zoning was, you could zone out a highway and go fifty feet on each side of the highway, and you could go out for five miles. Of course, once you went out that five miles, all you did was just have to worry about servicing that area right along the highway. But you had an ETJ period all the way across, and, of course, that's the reason Arlington grew to the point that they did. Tommy Vandergriff came back, and he said, "Okay, we passed this law. Let's get out there and strip zone." So what they did, rather than just go out and just take in big, huge sectors, they just went down the highway, and they've strip-zoned twenty miles out of Arlington. Then, of course, that locked Fort Worth from coming in from the east over here, or from their west, blocked Dallas out on their side, and Grand Prairie. The first thing you know, Dallas and Fort Worth and Grand Prairie and some of those looked at that and said, "Hey, we got a situation where Arlington has got us boxed in. They've already annexed out here; they've got their ETJ zonings out here. They've got us." And they did.

Of course, the Legislature came back in their wisdom and passed a law that prohibited that because it had been done in Houston, Arlington, and two or three other cities, too.

Marcello: I would assume that some of your other rapid growth cities would be those such as Austin, San Antonio, and perhaps San Angelo.

Lewis: Yes.

Marcello: I don't know why I mentioned San Angelo, but it seems to me I've just read an article recently about the fact that it has been growing quite rapidly.

Lewis: Yes, I think San Angelo has been growing rapidly.

Marcello: This sort of thing perhaps might not be so much of a problem in Dallas or Fort Worth, both of which are growing, but the growth isn't necessarily rapid and phenomenal.

Lewis: Well, with the influx you have from the rural people coming into the urban areas, you have to be very concerned with your tax base because what's happening is, as more people come to the urban areas, more strain has been put on the urban areas as far as our tax base. Of course, they've got to look for a new tax base and new revenue. Presently, the federal government has been bailing some of the urban areas out with revenue sharing, etc., but that could quit tomorrow, I mean, there's no guarantee that that's going to continue. You've got a great many people that's fleeing the urban area for tax reasons, for whatever the reason might be. As one person said in Houston at one of our hearings we had, "We feel, and the City of Houston feels, that we offer a great deal for the people within a hundred-mile radius of

the city. We offer the culture; we have the museums, the zoos, the attractions that are paid at taxpayers' expense. Therefore, we feel that these people ought to pay for it in some way or another, and the only way we can do it is annex out to that point." I mean, this is some of their argument: "We consider ourselves as a cultural center, and everyone benefits from us."

So with those cities that have more demands made on them as far as more salaries for city employees, more benefits for city employees, you're falling more and more into a situation such as New York got themselves into. Whether it's good or bad, you're talking about a political climate where city employees, schoolteachers, or whatever it might be, those who depend upon the taxpayers for their salaries, are into a situation where they want to be in competition, I guess, with the private sector to some extent. Anyway, whatever it might be, the cities are compelled to keep the streets up, to make sure that they can offer the recreation facilities for those people in the inner-core areas, and it's expensive. It's getting more and more expensive everyday when, like, in New York where a guy on a garbage truck makes more than a schoolteacher. That's what you're talking about. Well, the reason he does is because that job is not as attractive as some others, and, therefore, it's going to pay more--just whatever the traffic will bear, I guess you'd say,

in some situations.

Marcello: Also, I would assume that a great deal of potential tax base for these cities lies out there in the surrounding towns and areas. In other words, the people who can perhaps afford to pay the taxes . . .

Lewis: That's right.

Marcello: . . .to run the city actually don't live in the city, although they enjoy many benefits like you mentioned awhile ago.

Lewis: That's right. They enjoy the benefits, and this represents the pros and cons of that argument.

Marcello: Basically, the urban dweller is the lower-income person who . . .

Lewis: That's right.

Marcello: . . . doesn't have very much of an income with which to pay taxes.

Lewis: What's happening, too, as I was saying, is that the financial demand on the cities is increasing daily. You'll have very affluent areas today, but twenty years from now they'll be slums, and so, therefore, that tax base is not as great. I mean, in other words, they decrease in value.

If you depend on industry, that will stay somewhat more stable than, I guess, a residential area. That's why cities have to depend on industry, but at the same time, industry is doing the same thing as the homeowner. They're moving outside of the city; they're trying to get away from the

tax requirements and demands on them.

Marcello: In other words, one of the arguments for those who favor annexation is that they need this tax base.

Lewis: They need that tax base. They need that tax base to continue the financing of the city, the running of the city, because the demands are becoming greater and greater and greater as the inner-core city decreases in its tax potential. When I say their tax potential, you're talking about lower-income groups who cannot afford to escape that burden. Well, not only can they not escape it, they cannot afford to pay it.

Marcello: This will show my ignorance to an extent about what we're talking, but why couldn't Dallas, to use an example, annex Garland or Richardson or Plano or someplace like that?

Lewis: Well, of course, they incorporated. They cannot infringe upon . . . no more than Dallas could come over and incorporate or annex Fort Worth. They are protected by law.

Marcello: The Garlands and the Richardsons and the Planos are incorporated, and, therefore, they cannot be annexed.

Lewis: They're incorporated, right. One city cannot come in and annex another incorporated city. They're protected by law as to their own individuality. But it's going to continue.

Marcello: This could be a real problem for Dallas, then, could it not?

Lewis: It certainly could. It's going to continue being a problem. The problem is going to worsen as Texas becomes very predominant in the Sun Belt, I guess you'd say. Well, gee whiz,

I think the growth rate in Harris County and Houston alone is just staggering. They have more people coming into Houston in a day than some of the cities I was raised in has total population. It's just staggering to see the amount of people that's coming out of the Northeast and the North and coming into Texas. We are very fortunate to the point that we are the "promised land" to some extent to a lot of people. I know, in particular, in the area I live in, I'd be willing to say that 75 percent of the people did not live in Texas ten years ago. I live out at the Eagle Mountain Lake area, and there's a new addition, and of the people who have come into this area and have bought homes in that addition out there, I'd say 75 percent of them have lived in Texas less than ten years. Of course, American Airlines was where a great many of them came from. In fact, I'd say a great many of the pilots of American Airlines live out in that area out there.

It's going to worsen as time goes by. The urban problem is going to be a more severe problem. How we handle it is going to be the big challenge, I think, in the future. It's the same old deal--trying to take from the have's and give to the have-not's, and where does one responsibility end and the other ones begin? How do we handle a situation where we know it's going to happen? I mean, it's just like time and history has proven to us. It's a serious, serious

problem, and it has to be dealt with in, we hope, an orderly manner and fashion. The constituency of state legislators will change.

Marcello: Where does redistricting come in? Does this fall within the jurisdiction of your committee?

Lewis: No.

Marcello: In other words, in 1980 they're going to be redistricting, obviously.

Lewis: That'll be in Regions and Compacts. That's a separate committee altogether. Of course, over the last two or three terms, it's been a rather inactive committee. Of course, their chore will begin this next year. That's when their big challenge will be as far as redistricting congressional seats and legislative seats.

Marcello: How about the Peveto Bill? Would that have fallen within the jurisdiction of your committee?

Lewis: No, no. The Peveto Bill came in the Revenue and Tax Bill, and it was not in my committee. That's been a hot issue, as you know, for several years. Of course, that's another situation where, as times progress along, you got to make some changes here or there; and whether or not it's going to work like it was intended to work, the scorecard's still out on it, and you just don't know.

Marcello: You mentioned that as chairman of your committee, you were on no other committees.

Lewis: Right.

Marcello: And this was basically due to the tremendous workload that your committee had. In a situation like this, how can you become knowledgeable about other important bills in the Legislature? I'm referring to appropriations bill or the Peveto Bill or tax relief, all of which were very, very important issues in this 66th Legislative Session. How can you become half-way knowledgeable in those bills in order to render an educated vote, let us say?

Lewis: Well, of course, on the other hand, I was probably more knowledgeable in more bills that came on the floor for debate than anyone else because I personally handled more of them than anyone else that came on for debate. Of course, when those key bills came up where one has more state-wide significance, you just take the time to do it. Again, as I said, I probably was more knowledgeable of legislation that came on the floor because more legislation came out of my committee that came on the floor for actual debate. Of the how many hundreds of bills that we passed, well, probably, I'd say, 30 percent of them came out of my personal committee. Some members might serve on two or three committees, and at the very most they might see and consider maybe fifty, sixty bills, where my committee considers around 350 to 400 bills. Some members who serve on two or three committees may be in a situation where those

committees do not consider any important bills because, with twenty committees, the odds are that you won't see any of those major, state-wide bills.

Marcello: A lot of times, do you have to simply rely upon the judgment of colleagues whose judgment you trust? In other words, let us say that a particular bill comes up for a vote, and you really haven't had time to study the bill. So do you perhaps go to a colleague and say, "Hey, how are you voting on this bill, and why?"

Lewis: To some extent, you do. You rely a great deal on your staff to look at those key bills. At the same time, you're absolutely right: you rely upon the integrity of your fellow members. That's a rule that you never break; or if you do, you pay the consequences. You don't lie to your colleagues. You don't lie to them on one-on-one, and you certainly don't lie to them on the front mike when presenting a bill. It's not as strong nowadays as it was ten years ago or eight years ago. I notice that we don't have that strong reliance on each other that we used to. I know when I first came to the Texas House, a rule that you never broke was that you never misrepresented your legislation on the floor, the reason being that the political future of each and every one of those people there hinged on how they voted on that particular bill. You can take a bad vote that was misrepresented to you, and it's extremely hard to explain back home because people don't

realize that three or four thousand bills are introduced, and you cannot digest each and every one of those bills.

As you earlier said, how do you stay informed? One thing you do, you rely on people's integrity, and once they destroy that integrity they . . . and we have several members right now that could not pass a bill. There're a lot of members, a great many members, in the Texas House . . . if you just go down the list and start looking for those who pass bills and those who don't, you will see the integrity of those individuals. There're some that people just don't trust because they've lied to them and . . . they've misrepresented the facts, I guess you'd say, in times gone by.

Marcello: Since you can close or restrict this interview, would you care to name any of those people?

Lewis: No, I don't think so (chuckle). But you have a situation that does exist like that. One thing you do learn over a period of time--I guess this is one plus for longevity--is that you understand after awhile, after you pass so many bills and you create so many laws, that those laws tend to lose importance to where you don't have to misrepresent them. They stand on their own merits.

I know I've gotten myself . . . I know the first two terms I served in the House, every bill was crucial (sarcastic). I had some little ol' bills, local bills, and, oh, I worked myself to death, and, boy, I had to pass those bills. Well,

today, if I had a bill of that nature and if it passed, well, that's good; but if it didn't, that's good, too, you know (chuckle). I think this is a good attitude to have because what happens then, and only then, at that point, well, things start standing on their individual merit, and you don't have to worry about misrepresenting any of those proposals. The fact whether or not it passes or fails is not a life-or-death-type of affair. Over a period of time, you've made your record, you know what you can do and what you can't do, your self-ego is fulfilled, and so they start losing their role of importance to the point that you've got to try to misrepresent something or lie to one of your colleagues for a vote or something like that. So you lose that feeling. I think that's a plus for longevity, I guess, one of the few pluses you can find for it.

Marcello: We haven't mentioned Governor Clements at this point. Let me ask you a very, very general question here. What was it like to be a member of the Legislature with Clements as governor in comparison or contrast to the time that you served in the Legislature under Dolph Briscoe, let's say? I guess what I'm asking you to do is to describe or assess the Clements style as opposed to the Briscoe style.

Lewis: Okay. Well, each governor has his own, I guess you'd say, personality. I've served under three governors--Preston

Smith, Dolph Briscoe, and then Bill Clements. I'd like to go back to Preston Smith . . .

Marcello: Yes, let's do that.

Lewis: . . . and compare those three because they're very interesting. All three have different personalities. Of course, Preston Smith was kind of unique within himself. I enjoyed serving when Preston Smith was governor because he had come through the ranks, I guess you'd say. He'd served in the House and the Senate and up the ranks. I guess he knew how to work because if anyone could "work" the Legislature, Preston Smith could.

Marcello: Is that right? In what way?

Lewis: Well, to the point he knew every member of the Legislature. He was on the House floor constantly, walking through, shaking hands, talking to each and every individual member. If anyone wanted his legislative program passed, Preston Smith probably could do it more so than any of the other governors. I know it used to just really blow my secretary's mind when Preston Smith would call, because he placed his own phone calls, and he'd call me and say, "This is Preston Smith. I want to talk to 'Gib' Lewis." My secretary would walk in . . . I never will forget this, when she walked in one day, and she says, "Some nut out here is saying that he is Preston Smith on the phone and wants to talk to you."

Marcello: In other words, the normal procedure is to have . . .

Lewis: A secretary . . .

Marcello: . . . a member of the governor's staff make the call.

Lewis: Yes, right. Sure enough, it was Preston. He would do that, and I do not know of any member that he did not call regularly. I don't know how he did it, but he just had the time that would permit him to do it. But he'd call on subjects that would be of concern in your area, which I personally appreciated. If he was going to make appointments in your area, he'd let you know ahead of time.

I've seen him many, many times, and he'd sit there in the rotunda of the Capitol and shake people's hands as they'd come in the Capitol.

Of course, Preston did not have an outgoing personality. I think that was his real problem. I mean, he had an outgoing personality, but as far as projecting it to strangers, he did not do it. My dad is a good example. When I first was elected . . . of course, my family had never had any real involvement in politics. He lives in Houston, and he's in the tire business in Houston. After I got elected, he got politically involved in the political activities of one of the associations down there . . . what's called, oh, the "something" trucking association or something. So he had met Preston Smith with me, and, of course, Preston always had the ability . . . he'd go out of his way and meet people and their families, especially during the first part of the

session, the first two or three days when there're a lot of people there, and he impressed my father to the point . . . and my father had only met him one time, and, of course, he saw him when he came down to speak in Houston to speak back in 1971. He came down to speak before the group in Houston. But he sees my father out in the audience, which my father would never expect him to remember who he was. Well, he gets down out of his seat and goes out and picks him out, and he says, "You're Jack Lewis, aren't you?" He says, "Yes." He says, "I thought you were. How's old 'Gib' doing? Have you talked to him this week?" or something like that. Well, I tell you what, I mean, you know, my father couldn't believe it. Of course, Preston Smith had the ability and the mind to remember names and places like no one I'd ever seen. He was just phenomenal; that was his strong suit. But he was a different type of personality. I mean, I think he was more government-oriented to working within the legislative process more so.

Marcello: And this probably stemmed from his experience in the Legislature.

Lewis: His experience in the Legislature, yes. He was a "legislator's governor," let's put it that way. I think that would be a more accurate way to put it.

Dolph Briscoe had served in the House many, many years ago. I believe Dolph Briscoe is a very honest man; he was

sincere in what he did. If he had any problems and any faults at all, he made the mistake, which could easily be made by anyone, of having some bad people who surrounded him. When I say "bad people surrounding him," I believe that the people he had, as far as his assistants and people who he was taking advice from, were not giving him good, sound, proper advice. I had no problems . . . I was always a very good friend of the governor's. I never had any problem seeing him. Anytime I'd have a problem, all I had to do was just call him up and ask him to see him.

I never will forget . . . I had a very important bill, oh, back, I think, during his first term, which was establishing a medical school here in Tarrant County. To me it was a very important bill; it was a key bill--one of my key legislative programs that I have had since I've served. He had people in both offices, and I said, "Governor, I need to talk to you very quickly. I've got a bill that's coming up, and I've had several people ask me, 'What's the governor's stand on this?' and I'd like to just kind of like to go over it and explain it to you." Well, he and I would go in the little restroom there, and we'd go over that bill. He's got some people in both offices that he's talking to, and I appreciated that he would take this time. He said, "Yes, I support your bill. I think it's a good program." Of course, that was only one of many instances where I had

direct access to the governor. I could pick up that phone and call him and always get him on the phone.

Of course, the media was always critical of him because he was not accessible. I think he had a great fear of the media. I think he didn't personally have it, but I think that some of the people around him had it. I know I talked to several of his aides and some of his assistants, and they kept him away from the media.

Marcello: What was their basic fear of the media, as you see it?

Lewis: I think just, number one, that very few of them had ever had any government experience. He had hired people outside the government that had no knowledge of how the media worked, how the legislative process worked to some extent. He had some people that he had a great deal of confidence in that were, I don't feel, very competent people. I know one in particular, a good friend of mine, and I told him, "Why don't you get the governor and tell him to come over to the House more because . . ." He very rarely ever made an appearance in the House and the Senate. I said, "Tell him to come over there and sit in the members' lounge and talk to those folks over there. They appreciate it; they like to see the governor; they like the idea of one-on-one. A lot of the guys never will see him personally if he doesn't." He said, "Oh, no, he's got no sympathy . . . no business going over there. He doesn't need to go over there and get in no argument

with somebody about some little petty thing." Well, they were always afraid he was going to get in some argument or something. It was that shell of protection they had around him.

As far as communications, I never had any problem with communicating with Dolph Briscoe. He and I got along marvelously; I mean, I felt very much relaxed and at ease around him. He was a type of individual, I think, who loved his family, and it was very evident in his actions. He was a very Christian-type individual. His main concern was for the good of the people of Texas, and he was hoping to do it. I just think that he had some people who advised him on some issues that hurt him, very critically hurt him. I think some of the people on appointments . . . I think his appointments damaged him very greatly. The people he had handling his appointments did him a disservice because, number one, they made bad appointments, and, number two, they did not screen the appointments like they should.

Marcello: In some cases, dead people were appointed, were they not?

Lewis: Yes, that's a good example, and he had to take the brunt of it. He took the brunt of it. Like I say, it wasn't he as a personality; I think what it is is that he respected people. He was not a domineering type of person where he says, "The heck with your ideas. I'm going to go this way full steam ahead." He listened to the people he had hired

to advise him, and he respected them to the point that he listened to them. He did pretty much what they wanted or they recommended to him, feeling that they were knowledgeable in those subjects, which they were not.

Marcello: What influence did his wife have in terms of his decision-making?

Lewis: She had a great deal of influence, a great deal of influence. Many times I've been in his office, and Janie would be there with him. She sat in on a lot of the major conferences he had. I know we relied on him a great deal because during this period of time we were going through the single-member district fight in the courts and the whole bit, and we had four or five different plans. We had the opportunity to sit and talk to him and discuss this problem with him many times, and many times she'd be there participating in the discussion. So, I mean, she played a very, very predominant role, I think, in his administration.

But, to get back to Clements . . . I guess I had the good fortune to be able to communicate and get along with all the governors I've served with. Clements is a Republican. Well, I've had the same relationship with him as I had with Briscoe. On several occasions I've had the situation where I needed to see him and talk to him about legislation and other areas of activity, and he's always been very open and easy to talk with, very easy to communicate with.

Marcello: Philosophically, how would you and Governor Clements compare

or contrast to one another?

Lewis: I think, philosophically, we compare very similar to a great deal because, he being a businessman, and I also being in business, we look at a lot of areas and situations similarly as far as what the solution should be. I guess everyone looks at it on the basis of facts that they've arrived at over the years. I think Clements is probably doing a good job. I can't get mad at him. Apparently, the people of Texas can't get mad at him because the polls have shown where he has been pretty well-received at this point.

Marcello: This is perhaps trying to put words in your mouth, but did it appear that when Clements first took office that he tried to run the government like it was Sedco?

Lewis: Probably so. But he did one good thing, I'm going to tell you, and it kind of gets back, I think . . . he corrected a mistake that Briscoe had made, which I think was a well-acknowledged mistake, and that's the people he surrounded himself with. He made one good move, and that was that he hired some of the most respected ex-legislators that had ever served in the House and Senate.

Marcello: Such as?

Lewis: He hired Don Cavness, who was from Austin, had a reputation as being a hard-working, full-charged type of individual when he was a member of the House; Jim Kaster from El Paso, who, although not a lawyer, probably was more knowledgeable

in legislation than any person that ever served in the Texas House; Hillary Doran, who is a lawyer from Del Rio, who can unravel--and I've seen him do it many times on the House floor in debate--a bill and string you up by the toes with it, just on the legal technicality of it. All three of these fellows were Democrats. They were conservative Democrats, but he hired those three people to advise and look at legislative matters. I think that's one reason he never got in any big, big arguments or big, big problems with members of the Legislature.

He knew how far to push and when to quit and when to go. He has a pretty good pulse beat because these three fellows worked the House and the Senate; they got the input back; they worked that floor.

Of course, he'd come over himself; he worked the members. Clements made an effort to work those members, and he'd call you in. I've been in several times. He'd call four or five members, and say, "Kind of let me know what y'all's programs are. What do you feel we should do?" He went out and sought advice from members, being Democrat or Republican. The times that I was there . . . of course, I've been there by myself, and he'd ask the same thing: "How do you think we're doing? What do you think we need to do?" He'd seek advice from members. I know one particular day we stayed, I guess, gee whiz, two hours, talking to him. There was

five of us.

He's very outspoken. If he disagrees with you, boy, he'll tell you, "I don't agree with that." Of course, it was early in the session--I say early in the session, about the second month, something like that--and, of course, by then everyone's legislative program is kind of jelling a little bit, and they knew what bills they were going to introduce and which ones they had priority on. So everyone was kind of going in order, and he'd say, "Well, what have you got?" We'd say, "Well, governor, I got this bill, and I need your help on it. I got this bill and this bill and this bill." He'd just tell them right out, "Well, I'm for that, but I'll tell you, I'll veto that other one." He's very outspoken, and he says, "I don't like it."

Al Price, who's a black member from Beaumont, was talking to him about some human rights issues and such as that, and he said, "You know, nobody ever explained it to me like that. I like that." He said, "You know, no one had ever explained that . . . ." and he acted real appreciative to the fellows. He says, "I never had thought about that. I appreciate you giving me that viewpoint on the issue." He's a very human-type person.

I think he's a type of fellow that doesn't play politics, which, I think, is admirable of him. I think if fewer people played politics, we'd get ten times more done at less than

half the expense and half the time. I don't feel he plays partisan politics because he has not shown that he has. In other words, he hasn't surrounded himself with a bunch of Republican hangers-on or patronage appointees, I guess you'd say. I think his appointments have demonstrated that. In the few appointments that were left to be made, he has appointed Democrats and Republicans. He looks at things more objectively, I think; he's not partisan.

Marcello: From time to time, he did come out with some rather strong statements, and then he, I guess, was forced to back down. For example, in terms of the appropriations bill, the versions that came out of the House and Senate called for the spending of more money than the governor desired, and he threatened to veto any bill that wouldn't guarantee somewhere in the neighborhood of a billion dollars in tax cuts. Then, of course, he has to back down. What happens? In other words, what was it that prompted or influenced the governor to change his mind?

Lewis: (Chuckle) Well, it's easy to criticize from the outside looking in; and once you get involved and start looking at the nuts-and-bolts of it, it's extremely different. You get into a situation where you have to weigh each individual issue separately or collectively, either way. I believe that he probably got into the situation where, you know, it's easy to say we're spending too much money, and I know I find myself

saying that, too. Of course, we do; in some areas, we do. But we got politics playing a role here, also, at the same time.

That's why the members of the Appropriations Committee wield so much strength and authority. What happened this past year is the Appropriations Committee in the House, and the Senate, too, wrote the appropriations bill where he could not line-item veto. In other words, they congealed that whole deal. In other words, if you had a university out there that had one weak spot in it, I mean, it was written to where you had to veto the whole ball of wax. Of course, it was a situation where, if he did that, well, of course, it's kind of like striking a blow against the American flag and motherhood. I mean, he found himself in a situation where those committees in the House and the Senate had pretty well painted him into a box corner--is really what had happened--to where he could line-item veto some items, which he did, that he could get to.

Marcello: Don't tell me about those line-item vetoes. He vetoed the appropriations for the Oral History Collection!

Lewis: (Chuckle) He probably had to take some drastic steps to get those, but what the committees had done, in the Senate and the House, is that they had boxed a lot of those items together where there's no line item. In other words, he had to get to the whole deal or nothing at all. In other words, if he

didn't like some segment of some program, let's say, at North Texas or the University of Texas . . . most of that stuff was written in the Appropriations Committee to where there was no line item to set out. They were all just "hunked"--University of Texas at Arlington: \$5 million or whatever it might be--and he had no flexibility, no leverage.

As a matter of fact, the Appropriations Committee just did it purposely. They did it purposely because they felt the need was there or they wouldn't be there; they wouldn't have put it there, they felt. Of course, I guess every master has his own pride, and he doesn't want anybody messing with his masterpiece. In other words, it came out of that committee, and they felt that they'd had the time to study and hear the testimony and look at those areas, and, doggone it, that was what was needed in those areas for expenditures, and they don't want anybody monkeying in their business. Therefore, rather than having any flexibility, they're just going to hard-core that line item down there to where, if he's going to veto something in there for Dallas, he's going to have to veto the whole deal.

So I think that was purposely done, and once he saw and realized that, well, political-wise, whatever that decision might be, he said, "Well, it might be more advantageous just to let that sleeping dog lie, as the saying goes, and just try to do what I can and say, 'Well, I did veto these

items and cut back some on it." But at the same time, he got indoctrinated to the true needs of the state.

Marcello: I guess when you are an amateur in terms of politics, and I guess that's what we would have to say that Governor Clements was . . .

Lewis: That's what he was; that's what he was.

Marcello: . . . you tend to over-generalize.

Lewis: That's right. That's absolutely right. I think he made the same mistake that a lot of people do that's not involved in government--not realizing the true needs. If you look at an appropriations bill, there's not that much flair there. There might be some areas that I know I personally disagreed with. I know I voted against the judiciary system because I thought they had increased the judges' salaries extremely more than they should have, and so, therefore, I was strongly and violently opposed to that section. Not that they're not doing a good job--they are--but I'm just asking why should we single out already highly-paid judges and give these people approximately an 18 percent raise or 20 percent, whatever it all balanced out to, and these people are all making in the \$40,000 and \$50,000 category. Now all of a sudden, we got a schoolteacher over here, and we give them a 5 percent or a 3 percent raise or whatever . . . or 7 percent. It made no rhyme or reason to me why you wanted to single that out. Well, of course, that's what happens sometimes when you

have a Legislature that's dominated by lawyers to some extent. They're going to look after their friends, and, of course, those judges are their friends, and those judges want some more money, and, therefore, they're going to have more influence in that area.

Possibly, there are some areas that you can single out. I know I've always been a big foe of the Admiral Nimitz Museum down in Fredericksburg to the point I always thought we kind of threw money away on it. Of course, I've always been a vocal opponent of it to the point where I think we have finally got it solved. They're going to let it die on their own because they've got so much opposition from me. I hopefully stirred up enough other members to oppose it because that was the first thing that came to an issue. My deskmate is Bill Presnal, and he said, "Deskmate, we're going to give them a little money this year, and they swore to me that they won't be back." He said, "Is that okay with you?" I said, "Well, yes, it's okay." So one person can have a lot of influence on pork barrels or whatever. Of course, I always considered that was a chamber of commerce project that they allowed the state to pick up the tab on because of Lyndon Johnson.

At the same time, when a governor starts looking at the appropriations for the state, and starts looking for cuts, are you going to make cuts in your nursing home program,

you know? It's all locked in where you must either cut it all; you can't cut individual items out. You can't say, "Well, \$9 million is too much. I think I'd only have \$8 million." Well, the structure of the language of that bill is such that it's all or nothing. So is he going to cut out nursing home care? No, he's not going to because it's just not practical for him to do it. He can't do it. In other words, he'd have the nursing homes closing down and the elderly out on the street. Does he cut out the funds for the mental health-mental retardation centers? No way. Do you cut out the funds for your major universities? So when you look at that proposal as it is then, he had no flexibility. That's when he sort of started snipping here and there. I personally wished it had been more line-itemed to where he could look at it a little closer and to where he could probably veto more things because a lot of those items I really didn't like myself, personally. But they were locked in together to where I guess it was no give-or-take; I mean, it was all or none.

Marcello: He had to back down on his stand concerning an increase in the legal interest rate.

Lewis: Yes, the usury law. I opposed and I personally voted against an increase in the usury bill for a lot of reasons. I just didn't think we needed it. To me government was trying to make an effort on inflation. The only way you can slow down

inflation is that you're going to have to put the bite somewhere; somebody's going to have to bite the bullet. Sooner or later, we're going to have to bite the bullet on inflation. I believe the federal government, which controls . . . and, of course, I'm in the banking business. I own a major part of a bank here in town--a small bank--and we pay high interest for money, the reason being that the government controls that interest rate. And the reason it's high is because they're trying to slow down building, construction, because they think that that has a chain reaction all the way down the line. Therefore, if they can slow building down, it's going to slow the economy down a little bit to where everybody can kind of get a grip on it. I believe that's why you have high interest rates right now. Of course, my reasoning was that if we allow interest rates to increase, well, you're not making any checks on inflation; you're just still allowing it to continue on. I think we probably need a little slow period.

I live about fifteen miles outside the city limits. I can't get a carpenter--I can't get anyone--to come out and work on my home. As far as any repairs, I have to make those repairs myself. I've got a slab out on my courtyard, and the foundation's settled on me. I've got a low spot. I've been trying to get a fellow for five years to come out. I can't get anyone to come out and even look at it, much less

come out and do it. So I don't think the construction trade is in a dire need. In fact, they've got more business than they can take care of. You just cannot get a plumber; you can't get an electrician. And once you get one . . . I know I had an electrician come out and do some work for me, and he charged me just an unsightly price. Of course, he charged from the time he got in his pick-up at his office until he got there and until he got back. I'm paying for that travel time at the same time.

It's kind of disturbing to me when all of a sudden I see people having to pay that price. Of course, these people are in great demand, and they get whatever they want for their services, which is fine. I mean, that's the free enterprise system, and that's just the way it is. If you don't want to pay it, you can send your son to school to be an electrician, I guess.

But the governor had a lot of pressure on him, and I think on the usury bill you had so many people involved. You had the construction trade involved; you had the savings and loan people involved; you had . . .

Marcello: Realtors.

Lewis: . . . the realtors involved. You had a strong, strong . . . I know I probably received more hassle and more threats and more verbal abuse because of my stand on that than I did on any single issue that's ever confronted me since I've been

in the Legislature. Of course, I just personally didn't feel we needed it. As I say, being in the banking business, serving on the board and serving also on the loan committee, we made loans everyday, and I know what an increase of 1 percent on a loan will do to one's monthly payment over a twenty-five or thirty-five year period. The savings and loan institutions were not in that dire of a strait, either. The savings and loan people have got more profit than they've ever had in the history of their existence. The same thing is true of banks. In the little bank we have, we're making a tremendous profit on that. We're about eighteen months ahead of our projection than what we show on our five-year projection. We're about eighteen months ahead of it right now as far as the profit factor and as to where we should stand concerning deposits. So the financial institutions . . . like I say, I'm very much a part of it, and being in the banking business, I've become a thorn in the banking community's side because I've opposed many of the changes they've tried to make this year as far as branch banking, which I think is detrimental to the small bank. Of course, I have a personal interest there since I have a small bank. Off-premises, electronic tellers, I've been opposed to that.

In fact, I've been opposed to anything that I feel will take the control away from the local community. Of course, that's what my opposition to branch banking has always been.

You found that these holding companies that's gone in, they're owned by one big holding company. Well, of course, what they're doing, they're buying up banks in the small communities around the state. Well, of course, the president of that bank is not a local fellow anymore. He's some guy that was transported out of Houston or Dallas out to Monahans, maybe, and has no local interest. He might be there six months, might be there six years; but he's just a company man, where in most of your small banks, your president is a local man. He owns stock in the bank and is there to serve the wishes and the will of those people who are the depositors.

Anyway, on the usury bill, I think Clements, in that particular situation . . . I think it was one of those situations where they convinced him, and maybe rightly so, that if that bill did not pass, it would just really hamstring the growth pattern that Texas has enjoyed over the last seven, eight, ten years.

Marcello: What ultimately came out of the Legislature was a floating interest rate, that is, one that can go as high as 12 percent, isn't that correct?

Lewis: That's right.

Marcello: And it's going to be subject for review in the next session.

Lewis: That's right. And you notice, too, the day that law went into effect it automatically went from 10 to 11 percent (chuckle).

It jumped a point in one day. I personally have no love for those rascals--savings and loan people. I have really got a strong dislike for them to the point where . . . like I say, their profits are high. I guess for a pro-business individual, I've become anti-business when it comes to somebody ripping somebody off, which I feel that they've certainly done to the point that their profits are high. They have a questionable situation on whether or not they can charge points on loans and who should be selling and charging points and paying these points. In essence, all that is is interest.

Marcello: Sure.

Lewis: That's all that is. They've got you where they want you, and, of course, they want you in a little better position for them. Of course, I borrow a lot of money, too, and I guess that's the reason I feel that way a little more strongly (chuckle).

Marcello: While we're on the subject of legislation of this type, what was your reaction to some of the consumer-oriented legislation that was proposed over in the Senate by Senator Meier? I'm referring to changes in the deceptive practices law and the treble damages and all that sort of thing.

Lewis: I feel very strongly that changes will have to be made in some of the consumer laws because what happened . . . I always judge life as a pendulum, and, you know, the pendulum swings both ways, and you just hope that it quits at the middle

ground. Being in business, I can easily see the problems that are being encountered. I personally think that those consumer laws were written for and by the trial lawyers, the plaintiff lawyers, which are probably the strongest lobbyists in Austin. If you want to get down to who's the strongest lobby, I'll tell you the trial lawyers are the strongest lobby because they put money in those campaigns. They put a great deal of money in those campaigns.

Marcello: And they have a lot of members in the Legislature.

Lewis: They got a lot of members of the Legislature, and they're a very strong, influential group. Those laws were written for and by the plaintiff lawyers because that's who gained from them. I mean, the person filing a suit, he doesn't gain that much. The only thing it does is that that apple or that carrot out in front of him is tempting enough for him to pursue that endeavor. Of course, the business community, who is the other end of it, who get the brunt of it, is going to be damaged because of the cost of them.

If you look at it and analyze it, no one wins except the lawyers. They're the ones that get the fee, and they're the ones that create all the expense. It's expensive going to court; it's expensive filing these suits. When you get into a situation where it is that advantageous for somebody to file a questionable suit, as you read each and every day in the newspaper, where huge, huge awards are being made

on cases, you say, "Gee, I would have never even thought about filing a suit on something that frivolous." So we have worked ourselves into a situation where everybody wants to go to the courthouse because it's been a very profitable venture for them.

I think that the business community has been very negligent in their activity in the political process over the years. I saw it as a business person who serves in the Legislature. I've seen the business community get completely run over, I mean, completely run roughshod and run over in the past from '71 through '78. If you start looking at the trial lawyer bills and the trial lawyers' legislative program, they were 99.9 percent successful in everything they did. Of course, they're smart. What they've done, they have joined hands with the AFL-CIO. They've worked in strong conjunction with those people to get their legislative program passed. They've said, "Well, this helps the workingman," and so, therefore, they've got that support. When you've got the plaintiff lawyers and labor working together, they become a very strong, viable force.

Marcello: You said that between 1971 and 1978 the business community was rather negligent in terms of . . .

Lewis: They let their business get in very poor shape in Austin, let me just put it that way.

Marcello: Evidently, you feel that this changed in the 66th Session?

Lewis: I think it's changed. Well, it had to because, all of a sudden, people's insurance had quadrupled and more so, like a workman's compensation and unemployment compensation. All of a sudden, you look around, and, gee whiz, the premiums have put some people out of business because it has just gotten so high. The same thing happened in the medical malpractice suits. That was another similar example. They started picking our pockets.

I was a little upset with the people who I knew drafted the bill. As soon as it was passed, they quit the attorney general's office and went in practice and specialized in those areas themselves (chuckle), so I had a little question about the selfish motivation of the people on some of these consumer advocate bills.

What happens, they sound good on the surface, but we all have to realize that there are no free lunches. We all pay the tab. When you see a major manufacturing company, whether it's a recreational vehicle manufacturing company, which their insurance is just unbelievably high, or anyone, just a commodity that you use daily, when that insurance premium goes up, that cost of that product goes up. So no one gains, no one benefits, by making it so easy for someone to file a questionable, borderline suit and be awarded a huge claim.

I don't know how we've come by the feeling that insurance

companies have all of the money. They think of the big, multi-billion-dollar insurance company as the one that has all the money. Of course, they don't mind . . . they look at the fellow here that's maybe on a salary making \$150, maybe less, a week and they compare that with this big, giant, multi-billion-dollar insurance company. Then this attorney is showing you the assets and the profits of this big insurance company, and he says, "We need to award a little measly \$10,000. They won't even miss it up there." Well, what happens is this thing keeps repeating and repeating and repeating. Well, those \$10,000-claims . . . and, of course, the insurance companies don't care. Believe me, they have not contributed one thing to it because they're kind of like the electric companies. Give them their percentage, and that's exactly what they work on. The higher their premiums, the higher their flow is. Of course, they got a good argument when they go to the insurance commission. They say, "We need a certain percentage." They never say, "We need a \$10,000- or a ten-million-dollar-increase." They say, "We need a certain percent increase." Well, I'd lots rather operate on 2 percent of \$100,000 than I would 2 percent of \$10,000. That's exactly what you're talking about, so the insurance companies have not been any help in the situation at all, either. See, they've got their scapegoat; they've got the State Insurance Commission.

They've got their scapegoats, so they're protected. So the only ones that're really paying the tab is the general consumer out there.

So that pro-consumer law really, in essence, is an anti-consumer law because your product keeps going up. You look at some of the companies . . . a good example, as I mentioned, is recreation vehicles. Look at the insurance premiums those people have to pay for product liability. It's unbelievable.

Look at some of the cases on product liability. The reason I say that, we had an interim study committee when my committee did take this under study at the end of last session--product liability--in cooperation with the other committees. We heard some horror stories on some claims that were paid out. We talked to people who were on the juries, and they said . . . you know what they're doing? They say, "Well, that insurance company can afford it." But that's their attitude, and that's the general attitude of the public. I think it's just an attitude of the general public.

Marcello: Let me just ask you a few general questions at this point, Representative Lewis. What was your reaction and views toward House Bill 1060? This was, of course, the bill which is sometimes referred to as the tax relief bill. Here again, the House, I assume, was responding to the

will of the voters as reflected in the constitutional amendment in the November elections or the amendment on the ballot.

Lewis: That's absolutely correct. That, I feel, was probably a good approach. Of course, it was debated. Again, we fall back into the rural-urban controversy. We've got a system, and whether it's fair or unfair . . . I've sometimes questioned it myself as far as taxing property, whether the property tax should be your basis as far as acquiring your revenues or as far as operating your government entities. Primarily, that's just what the argument was, whether or not this was the proper approach to take--how we should assess the value or levy tax on land, whether it's on its market value or productivity or whatever. Of course, the main thing that we did on that particular bill was just try to follow the mandates of the voters.

Marcello: How will this work in the future? In other words, one of the reasons that Texas can now afford a tax cut, I assume, is because of treasury surpluses, but Texas might not always have that treasury surplus.

Lewis: You're absolutely right. We receive a great number of dollars from the oil industry. Of course, that's decreasing; I mean, oil reserves and our natural gas reserves are going down. Our petroleum industry is depleting. The state will, at some time or another, have to fall back on other sources

if there is not some type of reserve built up or accumulated.

Of course, you found many people wanting to start accumulating reserves and start trying to approach different angles as far as having the additional revenue that's going to be required. Some states have gone to a personal income tax as far as the solution to that problem, plus at the same time maintaining the property tax. I feel that when you get into a situation like that, probably what would happen . . . laws are made and changed. If we get into a dire situation, we might have to reassess the approach that we presently have. I think it's all going to be determined by the abuse of the system. Most systems can be abused to some extent, I believe. I don't think there's anything that's foolproof. With a little abuse, it might survive; but with gross abuse, you might have to see some re-determination of it as far as people going out and buying property and letting it sit there as an investment or whatever. Of course, I think we had some fail-safe provisions in that where if you sell it, you've got to revert back five years as far as taxes are concerned. In other words, the primary thing that we were trying to do was to save the family homestead. That was the primary purpose of that bill. Hopefully, it did that.

Marcello: You mean that particular portion of the bill that had to do with taxing land in relation to its productive value rather than on the basis of its market value?

Lewis: That's right. But, like I say again, if it's grossly abused, we might have to fall back and change the system.

Marcello: Actually, over the long run, when you look at all the various provisions of that tax relief measure, is the individual taxpayer in Texas going to notice very much of a decrease in the total amount of taxes that they pay?

Lewis: I don't believe so. They in some instances will. I don't believe it was intended for a big decrease. I think what it is is just to kind of head off an inflationary-type increase. Of course, nowadays, you see some of the government entities, and they're giving tax decreases, but at the same time, they're reappraising property because all property has increased in value. I guess if anyone has a hedge on inflation, it's real estate. I guess it always has been, and always will be, the best hedge that you can have on inflation, is real estate. I really don't know. I don't know what the true answer's going to be. It's just one of those things where you just hope you did the right thing at the time, and I feel like we did. I feel that the reform measures we had were the proper measures. Again, like I say, I don't believe that you're going to see any significant decrease, but at the same time, I don't think you're going to see the great, rapid increase that has happened over the years. I think the reason is that you got those safeguards. In other words, all land, as I said earlier, is

increasing in value, so you can look at some of those family farms to decrease. It's not going up as far as their value increasing.

Marcello: How did you feel about the Peveto Bill that finally passed the Legislature this time after several attempts? I guess in the past, it really didn't have too much trouble getting through the House, but the roadblock seemed to come in the Senate. Generally speaking, what were your views and reactions to the Peveto Bill?

Lewis: The first year I voted for the Peveto Bill. Over the years, I had opposed the Peveto Bill, and I believe the jury's still out debating that bill, as far as I'm concerned, because it was one of those situations where I was willing to give it a try. I don't think anyone completely knows what's going to be the ramification of it. In principle, it sounds good.

Marcello: A single taxing entity.

Lewis: A single taxing entity. It sounds good, and now the only situation is going to be whether it'll work. I think it will.

Marcello: Did you vote for it this last time?

Lewis: Yes, I voted for it this last time. The only problem that I had with it is, of course, that it repealed so many other laws. I mean, that bill was broader than the surface value was. That's what my hang-up was, and not what it was

intended to do. I think a single taxing appraisal is good, but the bill was a little more in-depth than that. It never was brought out, but if you read the bill, it repealed articles and laws that've been on the books for many, many years. Like I say, the jury's still out on that bill. I voted for it because I was willing to give it a chance, because it's been around and it's got some public support. But I still have not been totally convinced whether that was a good bill or not.

Marcello: What kind of laws and ordinances and so on was it repealing?

Lewis: I think it was repealing some property laws that've been on the books as far as tax exemptions to some extent. I know when some of us looked through the statutes, it repealed some Green Belt exemptions that were on the books. Like I say, the jury's still out, and I think when some of those folks in favor of it will come back and say, "Hey, we've been getting a tax exemption here or some different treatment on taxes for this particular reason here, and all of a sudden, we don't."

It was a broad-based bill, and when you start reading a bill that says, "This bill repeals Article 2501, blah, blah, blah," and you got a whole paragraph of about a hundred different articles, look out (chuckle). That thing can come back and haunt you.

Like I say, I'd researched it, I think, probably as

much as anyone did--personally researched it--but at the same time, there were some provisions in it that I had some concern about. The concept is good, and I was willing to try the concept. Of course, I think what can happen, too, is that we can come back and some of those articles we repealed through that bill, that's going to be devastating . . . that's one good thing about coming back and writing new laws--they can be repealed and corrected. So I was willing to give it a chance there.

Marcello: Well, Representative Lewis, that concludes all the questions that I have relative to the 66th Legislature. Is there anything else that you think we need to talk about that we haven't included at this point?

Lewis: Well, I feel like we kind of hit the high spots, I guess you'd say, to some extent. I believe the 66th Legislature, personally, generally, overall, was a good, productive session. Of the five sessions in which I've served, there was not anything that made it stand out better or worse than any of the four previous sessions before it. I believe it may be a plus for the 66th that we left less on the table. When I say "less on the table," I mean less key subjects and issues that had to be considered. I think we left fewer of those this year than we ever have in the four previous sessions. I thought we addressed all of the major subjects. We took action on them, and we did the proper thing. I think it

was a good, productive session, so I'll give it a high mark.

Marcello: Who deserved the credit for this?

Lewis: I don't think you can pick out any individual person as far as taking credit on it. I think that, of course, Speaker Bill Clayton had a great deal to do with it. I think possibly Governor Clements . . . I think his influence was felt. I think he came in with the impression that he was going to make sure that his influence was felt, and I think in some areas it was. I think he had a strong influence. He probably took a stronger role in state government than has been taken in many, many years as far as the governor's concerned--as far as trying to implement programs and trying to give some direction.

Programs and things change with people's ideals and by just making comment on them. When a governor says, "I want this done," you'd be surprised that some people will say, "Well, wait a minute! Maybe we ought to do this because that's what the governor wants." Normally, it would not have been done or even addressed, so an individual in a key leadership role can have more influence sometimes than he realizes. Of course, that can go both ways as far as whether he's opposed to it . . . all of a sudden they may say, "Well, I'm not going to go for that because the governor's opposed to it." I mean, the governor, if he's a strong governor and a good governor, can have a strong,

influential role on the destiny of the state and the people in that state.

I think he possibly did not play as key a role as he would have liked to. I think he will play a major role in the 67th Session. I think he'll be vocal and more on the scene and probably have more impact and input into the legislative process than he did in this 66th Session.

I think you'll probably see Speaker Clayton taking a more active role in the 67th Session than he possibly has in past ones. I think you'll start seeing more from Attorney General White, who will start taking a more active role as time progresses from this session. At the same time, I think Lieutenant Governor Hobby is still a question mark. I think he's going to have to get his mind made up on what he wants to do as far as his future political plans. I don't think at this point his mind is made up; I don't think he's made any concrete decision on whether he wants to maintain where he's at or get out or what he's going to do. I think he's still in a kind of a limbo-type area.

But I think in the 67th Session you're going to see some fireworks, more so than you did in the 66th Session. I think the 66th Session was a deal where the Legislature was feeling out the governor, and the governor was in turn feeling out the Legislature, and at the same time we addressed a problem at hand and just took action on those problems.

Marcello: Well, Representative Lewis, we'll see what sort of a political prognosticator you are because I hope that we can come back and continue with this series of interviews following the 67th Session.

You mentioned awhile ago that you expect Speaker Clayton and Attorney General White to play a much more active role in the 67th Session. I assume you had reference to their future political ambitions.

Lewis: That's true. I personally feel that you have Speaker Clayton trying to make a move for a higher political office. I believe that he will be running for either governor or lieutenant governor. The Democratic Party will have to have a bearer for the Democratic ticket, and it will have to either be Attorney General Mark White or Speaker Clayton, one of those two. If Governor Clements continues receiving the favorable acceptance he has from the Texas voters, he's going to be a tough man to oust, so I think that these people will be looking at this very closely. No one likes to be a kamikaze pilot, believe me, regardless of who you're carrying the banner for. Of course, it's a frustrating position for some of them to be in. I know I would not want to be in either one of those two gentleman's . . . .

Possibly Attorney General White can maintain his present position and gain stature there because probably . . . I'll say this about Mark White. He's a very close, dear friend of mine, and if Briscoe had one star on his team, it was

Mark White. White was the stability Briscoe should have had throughout his administration. He was a man who could assess the problem quickly and could give you some good solutions to it quickly. I give Mark White an "A+" on his performance in government. He has certainly been someone that I've had a great deal of admiration for. Of course, he's probably in the most advantageous position now, as far as seeking the higher office, as far as wanting to make a run for governor or such, because he has that from which he can float. The attorney general can stay there for quite some time without people taking too many shots at him. He's in a situation where he doesn't come forth to the public; he's not in the decision-making process.

Marcello: Well, I think what you're saying is, you can't really embarrass the attorney general the way you can the speaker or the lieutenant governor or the governor.

Lewis: True, true. That is absolutely true. So he's really in a good, advantageous position where he can wait it out. If Governor Clements' popularity is riding high, he can say, "Listen, I'll just stay where I am and wait until he gets low and make a run then." Mark White's a very young man, and he's got many good years of public service ahead of him.

The speaker of the House is in not quite as advantageous a position because he has to move on after this term. He feels that he's probably overstayed, in some instances, his

stay. He's broke all the records and written all the history that he cares to write. I feel that he realizes that from here on it's downhill. In fact, I question whether or not it's very smart for him to stay to the fourth term, because he's going to fall into a lot of criticism. Once you're in that position--I don't care how fair or how well-liked you are or whatever--it's a touchy deal. Of course, he'll have to make a move after this term, and, of course, he's going to have to make a lot of news, make a lot of press, be in the limelight, more than he possibly would like to get the state-wide attention he needs--name identification state-wide--so he can run for either lieutenant governor--run for a state-wide office, in other words.

Like I say, I think Lieutenant Governor Hobby . . . I personally feel that Lieutenant Governor Hobby will probably . . . if I were making predictions, which apparently I am, I'd say that Lieutenant Governor Hobby will probably retire from politics. I don't look for him to try to run for governor. I don't think he has the desire. You have to have desire, and I just don't feel that Lieutenant Governor Hobby has the desire to run for governor. He enjoys his job; he does a good job. As lieutenant governor, he probably has as good a control on members of the Senate as any lieutenant governor we've ever had. He runs the Senate. Don't ever think he doesn't. He runs the Senate.

Marcello: Despite the "Killer Bees?"

Lewis: Despite the "Killer Bees," he runs the Senate. A bill does not get passed in the Senate that does not have his blessing, so he's very strong in a small group. I don't believe he projects that state-wide image that he needs.

Of course, when you're predicting two to four years in the future, many things can happen. I've seen many stars fall out of heavens.

Marcello: Just ask Ben Barnes.

Lewis: Yes, ask Ben Barnes. He's a good example (chuckle). So many things can happen. At the same time, some stars can rise, can emerge.

Marcello: Incidentally, do you think that the governor will be calling the Legislature back into special session on the subject of initiative and referendum?

Lewis: I think it would be very unwise for him to, and I'm going to tell you why.

Marcello: I've never spoken to any legislator who was in favor of an initiative-referendum.

Lewis: I'm in favor of initiative-referendum.

Marcello: You're the first, then.

Lewis: I really am, because I think that the more control the people have, or feel they have, on the government, the more responsive the government's going to be toward them. I'm a strong, strong advocate . . . my beliefs are that the closer that

government is to the people, the more responsive that that government's going to be to the people. This is my resentment of Congress. I think Congress is too far away from the people; they don't have the pulse beat of the people readily available to them. I believe, like I say, that the government that governs least governs best. I think you can have too much government.

That's one reason that I'm not too strong a supporter of annual sessions. As large and as complex as Texas is, and with many legislative and government changes that need to be made, we address ourselves to those major subjects every two years, and we handle our business in 140 legislative days. The only thing that I see really getting killed, or not taken up and considered, is bills that might be immediately popular, but devastating in the long run. In other words, a lot of bad bills get killed, or fail to pass, just because time runs out, and I think that's the fallacy we have in Congress. They're there all the time, and a lot of bad bills that might be popularly proper . . . you start looking at popularly proper bills, you're talking about the "getting reelected" type of bills that it's hard to vote against, even though it's going to be detrimental to the very people who want them. They just don't realize it.

I just feel that initiative-referendum has some merit to it. It might, like anything else, be misused, which anything

can be misused. But as far Governor Clements calling a special session this year, I think it'd be politically unwise for him to do it. He might not look at it politically. Again, like I say, he doesn't look at things politically, but I'm just saying if I were he, looking at it politically, I would not do it because, number one, initiative-referendum was very popular a year ago. Right now, its popularity has decreased drastically. I think at that time you had Proposition 13 in California, where everybody it solved all the problems. Well, now I think the media is starting to report some of the problems that it created. So I think you're starting to get that mixed reception, and it doesn't have the high flair that it once had. I have not had one person ask me to support initiative-referendum. My support is on its own merit--I want it--but as far as anyone having any strong convictions on it, I have not had one person address me that they have any strong conviction on it.

The same thing is true with wiretapping. I've not talked to one person that's strong on wiretapping: "We got to have wiretapping! Put all the criminals in the penitentiary!"

Marcello: This, of course, is another potential area for the calling of the special session--a wiretapping law.

Lewis: Yes, it is. He had indicated that he would call a special session for wiretapping and initiative-referendum. Well, those are not burning issues. It doesn't address itself

like school finance, and it doesn't address itself to everyday living. When you're talking about school finance, you're talking about teachers and teachers' salaries and the education of our youngsters. That's an everyday subject; that's a burning subject. Appropriations, you know, to keep the government operating, that's a burning subject, but initiative-referendum and wiretapping is not a burning issue. People don't look at it as a burning issue. The only thing they want to look at is that it's going to cost so many million dollars to keep a bunch of guys that the general public has very little respect for down in Austin.

I just don't believe that he can benefit from it, regardless of what happens. Of course, he's shooting dice; he's gambling whether or not it would even pass. He could have a thirty-day session, and it'd be defeated badly. Then where would he go from there? You've spent several million dollars on a special session that produced absolutely nothing. I would say it would be more devastating for him to come out with a thirty-day session where nothing was produced.

Marcello: Politically, such a session could be very, very damaging to him.

Lewis: I think it'd be very damaging to him. Now he feels a commitment; he feels somewhat of a commitment that he has made the statement that he would call a special session. But I would hope that someone with wise knowledge would

explain to him just what I explained to you, that it could be very damaging to him as far as his leadership role, to call somebody down and spend that much money to get nothing done. Of course, he is planning on calling the session, I've heard, in January or February, and that way it puts people's feet to the fire. They're going to be filing for reelection, and it's going to maybe make them more responsive to the people. But, I tell you, when you got an issue that's not that fiery with the people, they've got nothing to lose. So he's gambling.

If I were he, I would just let that old law pass down the river without making any action on it because if he does call a special session and initiative-referendum is defeated, and wiretapping is defeated, it's seen as a lack of leadership. Boy, I'll tell you, that'd be hung around his neck and hammered on him for the next six years or four years or whatever his term might be because it'd be something very hard to overcome. You've spent three or four million dollars of the taxpayers' money and got nothing, and you didn't have enough influence to get the legislators to do what you want.

I think D Magazine called me one time an "odds player," and I guess I'm pretty much of an odds player (chuckle). I'll play the odds. I just don't like to get out there and take uncalculated risks.

Marcello: Well, Representative Lewis, that's probably a good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having taken the time to speak with me. You've been very candid, and, of course, this is the sort of information that we want in these interviews. I'm sure that historians and scholars will find your comments most valuable when they're available for study and research.

Lewis: Well, Ron, I appreciate you coming down. It's been my pleasure.