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Interview with

JAMES J. KASTER

February 25, 1982

Place of Interview: Austin, Tx.

Interviewer: Ronald Marcell

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Oral History Collection

James Kaster

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Date: February 25, 1982

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing James Kaster for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 25, 1982, in Austin, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Kaster in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he served as Governor Clements's legislative liaison during the 67th Session of the Texas Legislature.

Mr. Kaster, I'm looking back over some of our past correspondence leading up to this interview. I noticed that at one point you had evidently decided to leave the Legislature and run for public office in El Paso.

Mr. Kaster: That's correct.

Dr. Marcello: Why don't you tell me a little bit about why you made that decision to leave the Legislature and return to El Paso.

Mr. Kaster: I have six children, and when they were young, I could continue to serve in the Legislature. The longer I was in the Legislature, the more demands that were made on my time

in legislative matters. I was a pilot for a fixed base operator and got paid only when I flew; I got paid nothing when I didn't fly. The more time that I had to spend in Austin, I was not able to make a living.

In Texas it's contemplated to be a citizen-legislator; you should not be full-time legislator. But I served on the Constitutional Convention one year, and then we had a legislative session, and at the end of that I served on the O.P. Carrillo impeachment committee, which took up the better part of another year, and then came another session. As former Representative Billy Williamson said, "I knew what the job paid when I ran for it, but I didn't know what it cost." And that became true in my case; it became harder and harder for us to make out on the \$600 a month that I was getting paid. My net pay was somewhat less than that.

Therefore, I finally came to the decision that I just couldn't afford to stay here anymore, even though I loved it. So on September 1, 1977, I became tax assessor-collector in El Paso County. The pay was at that time \$24,000 a year, which looked a lot better than the \$7,200 that I was making in the Legislature.

Marcello: Was that an elective or an appointive office?

Kaster: The person that was there...we created a new County Court at Law. He was an attorney, and he wanted to take that. So there was a vacancy which the Commissioners Court filled, meaning that

I had to run at the next general election, which I did, and was successful. This was in the election of 1978. So I was successful and was re-elected very handily. In fact, I led the ticket. That was even the ticket that Governor Clements was on.

In December of 1978, Governor Clements came to El Paso for a fund-raiser, and I went to it, like a lot of other people, and that was the first time I'd ever laid eyes on the man. On January 2, 1979, I received a call asking if I could come to Austin to meet with Governor-elect Clements, and I said, "Certainly," not knowing what it was about. I was down here, then, the next day, on January 3, and met with Governor Clements, and he offered me this job. By that time I had become very disappointed in county government. It is the "dark continent" of American politics for good reasons. I was used to the Texas Legislature, where they're attempting to solve problems on some rational basis. My experience at the county level was that all decisions made by the Commissioner's Court were based on politics and had nothing to do with rhyme or reason. It was very discouraging. Governor Clements asked me if I would go to work for him, and I said, "Yes." I took about that long to reply. And then I went to work the next Monday, in fact, which was the day before the session began in 1979.

It turned out at that time that no one in his administration had ever served in Texas politics. He had served as deputy

secretary of defense in Washington, and this was his first elective office and obviously his first time elected as governor. He didn't know how the Legislature ran. I asked him later how come he came to choose me. He first offered the job to Bob Johnson of the Legislative Council, and Bob had to turn him down. He said, "You know, the session is just beginning, and I've got too many responsibilities." The governor asked, "Well, who could I get?" And Johnson said, "Well, Jim Kaster might be interested." Then he talked to Speaker Clayton and asked him who he would recommend. And Clayton said, "Well, you know, Jim Kaster may be interested." And finally he asked Fred Agnich, who was my deskmate, and Agnich said, "Yeah, I think he'd be good." So he said my name kept coming up, and so then I became the "resident expert" because nobody on his staff had ever served in the Texas Legislature. Then we devised some type of legislative program and went with it.

Marcello: Let's back up a minute. You mentioned that the first time you had met Governor Clements was at the fund-raiser in El Paso. What were your initial impressions, if you can recall, of Governor Clements at that time, before you knew him very well?

Kaster: I didn't even meet him at that time. That's the first time I'd ever laid eyes on him, and he made a talk. I was impressed with his talk. He was quite forceful and stated that he was not elected by Republicans. He said he was elected by Democrats

and Independents and Republicans, that Republicans by themselves couldn't elect anybody. He knew that I was a conservative Democrat, and he was also was a realist. In talking to me about hiring me, he said that he needed a conservative Democrat to deal with a predominantly Democratic Legislature.

But I was impressed with the man. When I was sitting and talking to him, interviewing for the job, so to speak, I had understood by this time that here was a man, you know, worth sixty-plus million dollars, and Tobin Armstrong was in there with him, and Tobin's worth probably twenty-five or thirty million dollars, and they're asking me if I want to work for them (chuckle). I said, "Certainly!" They're very successful men. As I later found out, the interesting thing about Governor Clements is that the more I'm around him, the more impressed with him I am. And this is after three years. I'm more impressed with him today than I was the first day I met the man. Here he is, a man who began his business with \$20,000 of borrowed capital in 1947 and built it up to the world's largest drilling company. It's a competitive business. He is goal-oriented; he's successful; he's a hard worker; he has tremendous common sense. He is a very appreciative person of the State of Texas and has probably the largest private collection of books on Texas history of anybody. He has over 6,000 volumes just on Texas, and he reads most of them. He's an avid reader.

He's very interesting person to be around, very pragmatic.

During our first session, he was combative, and we didn't have that great a success, although we didn't have too bad a failure. It's the nature of the election of governor in Texas. I don't care who it is, the first-time governor, when they're elected, they don't actually take office until after Legislature is already in session. They're elected in November; therefore, they don't have time to develop much of a legislative program.

Marcello: And they're living with the former governor's budget, are they not?

Kaster: Exactly. They try to come up with something, but it's patchwork. You're talking about 140 days, and you lose about two weeks before the governor gets in there. So it is extremely tough for any governor, Democrat or Republican, so the first time a governor serves, he does not have much success. Clements was maybe a little better than the rest because he had some ideas of things he wanted. What we had to do that session was to get bills that were already introduced and say, "Yes, we support these."

Well, now we come forward to the last session of the Legislature. We were eminently successful then. We introduced forty-four pieces of legislation that we had been involved in the drafting end--very tough pieces--and we sifted through a lot to get down to the forty-four, and we passed thirty-four out of forty-four.

Marcello: Let's go back again. We'll come up and talk about this a little

bit later on because you said all sorts of things that I think I need to have additional comments on as you've spoken. I am assuming that you had been a Democrat all your life.

Kaster: Correct.

Marcello: Were there any shakey moments or qualms about suddenly working for a Republican governor, even though, perhaps, philosophically you were very much alike?

Kaster: None whatsoever. I feel that the people of Texas made a judgement and elected a person that they wanted to lead the state, and I'm not going to question the people's judgement. He is a realist and a pragmatist. He feels that once people are elected, they should go for what is best for Texas, and he truly believes that. I can remember when the Republicans came and said they wanted to organize a caucus. He said, "That would be the greatest single mistake that you could make. If you start going on politics where there's a Democratic caucus and a Republican caucus, then you destroy the make-up of the Legislature in Texas. The State of Texas is well-blessed by the laws that are there, as evidenced by the progress the state is making. It's not an accident. It's because some people have put forth laws that are in the best interests of Texas, not in the best interests of the Democrats or the Republicans, but the best for Texas." The governor, being a student of Texas history, understands this and does not want to change that. He feels that's the best.

When I served in the House, you know, I didn't care if a guy was a Republican or a Democrat because we worked together on issues. We had a common philosophy, and I think that philosophically the State of Texas, by and large, is a conservative state.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that from a practical standpoint, the organization of a Republican caucus would not have been a very good thing for a Republican governor, since the bulk of the Legislature was Democratic? In other words, that would be accentuating those partisan differences.

Kaster: Sure. He understood that, and they didn't organize. Now this last session, some Democrats tried to organize, but then you get into a problem with conservative Democrats and liberal Democrats and the perpetual fight between the two, so it's not going to be that successful. It turns out that it's mostly the liberals, a very small minority of the Democrats in the Legislature, so it didn't work, and it was more getting at Bill Clayton than it was Bill Clements.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the political education of Governor Clements. As you mentioned awhile ago, he had been the head of a very, very successful corporation and had had just a little bit of experience as a public servant when he had been the assistant secretary of defense. Describe how perhaps you and his other aides educated him politically.

Kaster: It was...

Marcello: I mean, here was a man that was used to getting things done.

Kaster: That's correct.

Marcello: He made a decision, and people carried out his decisions.

Kaster: It was difficult in that he had two demands on him that first session. The first demand is, here's the first Republican governor in a hundred years. Everybody wanted him to come speak to them. At that time he was receiving over three hundred requests a day to come make a speech somewhere, and he was taking too many of them while the Legislature was in session. We kept asking him not to go, that, you know, the Legislature was here for a short time. And then when a legislator would say, you know, "Bill Clements is pushy," or something, and particularly his feuds with John Bryant, and he would tell the press, "You can tell John Bryant he can go jump in the lake," And there was just nastiness between the two. Well, this certainly didn't help in the situation of things.

I think when he arrived here, he felt that all legislators were a bunch of crooks, on the take--the usual cliches that apply. I think he maybe kind of felt that he wasn't a politician and that he wasn't involved. But when you're elected governor, you are involved, whether you want to or not. That went on, and it got maybe a little less toward the end of that session. Then he saw the hours that they were working, and I think he maybe changed his attitude, but not too much that first session.

At the end, after the session was over, I devised a strategy

then: "What we're going to have to do is get him to meet with people that he wants." During that first session, the mansion was open, and he had every legislator over to the mansion for lunch. I had every legislator in his office so he could find out who they were.

Marcello: That's a big thing for the legislator, too, is it not?

Kaster: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Very important. Some of the meetings were very strained; I mean, they had no more in common than the man in the moon.

So then we changed our strategy. We prevailed on him, once a month and in between the sessions, to have a group of legislators in for lunch. And we were careful who we got. We got compatible groups, that were philosophically attuned. I think those, over that period of time, had the greatest influence, then, when he found out that all legislators aren't a bunch of crooks, you know, that they are hard-working, that they're interested. We had them to where they would open the governor's eyes to these things, and then they'd have frank discussions. Then when we got to the session, it wasn't a bunch of strangers; he had gotten to know these guys. Then when the session started, we would have lunches--not everybody going to the mansion, because the mansion was closed for remodeling--down to the Headliners Club. But, again, we were very careful who we got. Then they would meet with him at his office, but instead of having just from nine o'clock to ten o'clock as our time, we kept it flexible.

Sometimes, after five o'clock, we'd have them up into his office and sit down and have drinks, particularly the senators.

Now this paid off, and our success rate was immeasurable. The stuff we passed was very difficult--the wiretap legislation, for example. They've been trying for ten years to get wiretap legislation, but they just couldn't do it. Oral confessions, the five drug bills--all these--were very tough pieces of legislation and took a lot of doing, but we passed the darn things--mainly because Clements going one-on-one with these people is excellent. He is a fast learner. And he then really enjoyed it.

This next session, he didn't travel. He wasn't a new kid on the block, and so he didn't have these demands, and he learned how to say "no." We'd say, "If you gotta go make a talk, do it like on a Thursday night or a Friday because the Legislature's gone." And then at the end, he stayed here a great deal. He would stay here, and he really became interested.

Here in my office, I have a closed-circuit TV, and I remember the special session on redistricting. They had a midnight session right there at the last. In fact, it lasted until four o'clock in the morning. Well, he and his wife and several people from out of town came in and watched this whole thing. This is the first time he really saw what was going on, and he really liked it. He didn't want to get up in the gallery. Sometimes he'd slip up into the gallery and watch what was going on.

A lot of times they'd spot him, so he didn't want them to know what he was doing. But he got to watch the whole thing and thoroughly enjoyed it; I mean, he enjoyed it.

I think he really enjoyed the process now. Governor Clements is a goal-oriented person. He's always set goals and done it--with the Defense Department and here. Now he sees he can set a goal and then do all the things necessary to obtain that goal, such as passing his legislative program. And so he is much more effective, then, by a quantum jump. In fact, knowledgeable people--and I'm talking about the professional lobby--people that have been around, said that his success at this last session bettered John Connally's best, and they all acknowledged that John Connally was the best. They say Clements did better than that because of the quality and difficulty of the legislation that was passed--not just numbers, but the quality of them. And I think that's right.

It all has to get back to Clements and his change in attitude and willingness to have these lunches. He enjoyed them; he really enjoyed them. And in these five o'clock drinking sessions with senators, I mean, they let their hair down. One of his biggest critics the first session was Carl Parker. Well, they got to talk, and they found out they kind of liked each other even though they're as far apart philosophically as you can get. The governor then could understand...you know, when I call Carl Parker, and I need his vote, and he tells me

"no," okay, you know, the governor understood. The one thing Clements does not mind is somebody saying "no," you know, "I can't vote with you." "Well, okay, I hope maybe next time." What he doesn't like is guy who says, "Yeah, I'll vote for you," and then votes against you, you know. He cannot stand that. He is upfront, and what you see is what he is. He's not duplicitous or anything. And he's very effective with the Legislature.

Marcello: I hear you saying two things, and correct me if I'm wrong. When we talk about his evolution in the Governor's Office, I hear you saying, first of all, that he personalized the Governor's Office as he went along. You mentioned bringing individual legislators in or meeting with small groups of legislators. Now you mentioned that he is a very good one-on-one. Let us suppose that here is a legislator who is wavering on a particular piece of legislation in which the governor is very much interested for or against.

Kaster: Right.

Marcello: He calls the legislator in for an appointment. Describe, if you will, what his procedure would be under these circumstances.

Kaster: Well, you've got to realize, from the legislator's point of view, to be called by the governor is very heady stuff; I mean, that's impressive and they like to go home and say...

Marcello: He wouldn't mind having a photographer there.

Kaster: No, he'd like to go home and say, "Yeah, the governor was

talking to me and asked me about so-and-so." It was built up, you know, over these months, getting to this point for the next session, so he knew them. It wasn't just calling him in cold. In the first session, he had to call them in cold, and he really didn't like to talk to them about votes. A couple of times when it got down to the key vote, we'd just take him down on the floor, and he'd go around and shake hands with people and say, "I sure need your help on this," or , "I sure would appreciate your help," and he pulled it off.

Sometimes he would call them up. We would give him a list of guys that we thought that with the governor calling them, we could change their vote. In some instances it happened; in some instances it was very disappointing. I think the biggest case of a guy that we stopped calling because his word meant nothing was Senator E. L. Short from Tohoka. He never carried through on his commitment, where a guy like Carl Parker would say "yes" or "no," and mostly "no." And that's fine with the governor.

The governor does not expect everyone to agree with him on every one of his proposals. He understands now that, even though he's elected as a whole, each one of these are representing a certain constituency, and they feel different in Beaumont-Port Arthur than they do in El Paso or statewide. So he understood that and had no quarrel when a guy says "no,"

There were a couple of times on confirmation by the Senate

of an appointee that he'd be very interested in, and sometimes he would call if it looked like it was shakey. He only lost a couple out of several thousand that went through there, so, you know, that's not bad. But he would either call them on the phone or ask them to come by. It's no problem (laughter) getting anybody to talk to the governor; I mean, we never had anybody say, "I ain't talking to the governor!" That just doesn't go because, you know, they're politicians and to say, "I had lunch with the governor," or "I was in the governor's office," well, they're going to go right home and tell it to the people wherever they're coming from. That's impressive because of the office. It'd be like me saying I went and saw the President of the United States. I'd be impressed, but the guys that work for him wouldn't think a lot of it. But I remember from having served on the Legislature, you know, it's impressive.

Marcello: Another thing that I think he evidently learned in this education process is that a tremendous amount of the day-to-day activities of government take place outside or off the House floor or the Senate floor. They take place in the committee meetings or in the one-on-one or group sessions that you talked about.

Kaster: That's exactly right because as a good politician, you really want to know your votes. Of course, I had two former legislators working--one would work in the Senate; one would work in the House--and it was our job to try and figure out what the votes were, particularly on the tough issues, and where

our problems were before we got to that point so that we weren't surprised. In very few instances were we surprised. We had a good handle on what was coming up and what we needed to do to get it. It's like a big chess game, and, you know, for every action there's a reaction or a counter to it.

We would give the governor options. The governor likes to have several options. He doesn't want to be locked into one course of action. Many times he can see an option that we wouldn't see, and he was exactly right; I mean, he picked this up just exceedingly quick. The attributes that went into his success in business he has transferred over into politics very easily and naturally. It's the same skills, just in a different direction. And a lot of people...oh, his opponents say he runs it like a business. Well, that's not all bad when he's had the success he's had (chuckle). He didn't get that way by being stupid.

He's natural with people. He is at home with a guy sweeping the floors around this place or the lieutenant governor or the speaker or anybody in between. They like him; I mean, he's just natural to be around.

This time, also, one of the major differences was that when those who opposed to him would say something unkind, he refused to answer them. And that ended that; I mean, the press... and pretty soon it ended all that kind of stuff, too, because it's no fun when he doesn't come back at you. You know, it'd

just be sour grapes or something, and it was ignored. Well, of course, now we're in a political campaign, and that's all fair, and that's all expected. The governor expects it, and it doesn't bother him in the slightest.

Marcello: What is his attitude toward press conferences?

Kaster: He enjoys them. Governor Briscoe, who was his predecessor, hated them and had very few of them and frankly did not spend much time around this Capitol Building. When the Legislature was out of session, he enjoyed being on his ranch more. Governor Clements is here all the time; I mean, he's around this place, and he loves those press conference. He loves the give-and-take. Briscoe was a perfect foil to Clements. Clements has one every week. There may be one week where he doesn't have one, but I've seen weeks where he's had three. And he's appeared regularly on public television, where he answers questions from anybody that calls in on any subject.

He has such a quick mind and has such a knowledge of it, and by continually doing this, he feels that he has his pulse on what the public is thinking. As the questions come, and if they keep coming then right now, he understands that that's a matter of concern to the public. He's very seldom caught off guard by keeping up constantly in doing this. He keeps his mind sharp, and the issues don't get away from him. For instance, Briscoe would appear so infrequently that when he would come, he wouldn't know what the hell the question was.

Something would just catch him cold because he wasn't constantly doing this.

Clements likes to do it, and he has more press conferences... and they always show up, and he says, "You know, anytime y'all want to do this, it's fine with me." Boy, they're up there with topics. The press likes to get insights. He's kept his contacts up with the Defense Department. They still call him on things, and he has contacts with Reagan. He has an interest in Washington with things such as his immigration plan. The immigration and illegal alien thing is a great problem in Texas. They told him, "It can't be solved; you just can't do it." He said, "Hogwash! There is no problem that can't be solved if you want to work at it." So he's worked at it and is coming up with some good, solid recommendations on which to follow through.

Well, the press finds this very interesting, again, in contrast to Briscoe, who sat down on his ranch in Uvalde. Clements, if he's not here in the Capitol Building, he's in Washington or Mexico or something on state business. He enjoys it and takes a great interest in it and puts in a lot of time. He generally gets in here at 9:30 in the morning, and a lot of times he won't leave before eight or nine o'clock at night. Then he'll take a bunch of work home and finish reading. He has a lot to read, but he keeps up and is a tremendous worker. He'll take vacations, and he'll take the weekend off and recharge

his batteries and come back full blast all over. That's just the kind of person he is.

Marcello: When he offered you the appointment as his legislative liaison... is that a correct title to use?

Kaster: That's correct.

Marcello: How did he outline your functions and responsibilities?

Kaster: This was on Wednesday, January 3, and he wanted to know who I supported in the gubernational campaign, and I said, "Governor, I was on the ballot, and I was supporting Democrats," I said, "I was a Democrat on the ballot," He said, "Did you support Hill?" I said, "Well, I supported Hill like I supported rest." I said, "I wasn't enthusiastic about it because I'd previously been working for Governor Briscoe."

Then he said, "Well, I'd like you to come to work handling legislation." I didn't know what it entailed; I didn't know what it paid; I didn't know anything except that I said "yes" because, like I previously said, they were successful people, and I wanted to take the job. I said, "When do you want me to work?" And he said, "Yesterday," I said, "How about Monday?" He said, "That's fine," I had a flight back that afternoon, but before I left I'd rented an apartment. So I went back to El Paso and resigned my job. The Commissioners Court put another person in there, and I had to sign all the books, and then I came back. But I didn't know what the job entailed,

Then I find out that, you know, I'm the legislative liaison.

I didn't even know what that meant. I thought it was going to be like,,Briscoe had a guy named Howard Richards. It was a one-man operation, and he would sit up there and kind of monitor things, but it was really low-key. I thought, "Well, that's what he had in mind for me." Then he tells me what he expects of this job and that I should get people working for me and get a staff, which I did. In the session I have two legislators, and this next time, we're liable to have three ex-legislators and a secretary and a researcher and an analyst. We have a lot of help, and it's a good-sized operation.

But the one thing about Governor Clements which I really appreciate is that he tells you what he wants done and let's you have your input into it. When I went to work, I was told I would be reporting directly to the governor, and I still do that. When we had staff meetings, everybody could put in their input, and he wanted it. He didn't want any "yes" men. He said that was one of the faults that President Nixon had, that he had too many "yes" men not giving him the downside of things. So that was fine with me, and I was very candid and told him what I felt.

Then he said that when we finally come to a decision, he expects everybody to support that decision, and that if there came a time when there was a decision reached that I philosophically and morally could not support, he would expect me to quit. I said, "That's fine, but I've been in a Legislature where compromise

is the 'name of the game' to get something going." I said, "I can't conceive of that."

There was one instance in that first session where I was violently opposed to something. They were going to take the Governor's Committee on Aging and put it into...they were talking about the Welfare Department or the Department of Community Affairs. I stated in the strongest terms possible that I thought it was a horrible mistake, and that the worse possible thing they could do would be to put it in the Welfare Department. Old people did not want to be on welfare, and they liked it the way it was. Well, they did it, and the way they did it was terrible, and there was a hue and a cry, and they got mud all over them from it. It was horrible! I then had the satisfaction of knowing that I knew what I was talking about, and I think from then on, Governor Clements understood what I was talking about.

I worked very hard that first session. One, I wanted to prove my credibility, and, two, we had a very difficult thing, a new governor. So, you know, I put in more hours here than I put in when I was in Legislature. I'd get here about six o'clock in the morning and leave about nine o'clock at night. It's just a normal first session, but I still did it during this past session. But I don't put in any more hours than Governor Clements; I mean, he just puts in different hours. The difference is that he'd leave at five o'clock and go make a speech somewhere

and get back at midnight.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were coordinating the work of two other former legislators, also. Who was responsible for selecting them?

Kaster: Me. The governor gave me full authority, and the only thing I did before I hired them, I said, "This is the person I want to hire." The first session I had Don Cavness and Hilary Doran.

Marcello: How did you arrive at a decision concerning them? Why did you select them?

Kaster: They were recent members of the Legislature who had not been defeated, who were conservative Democrats, and philosophically like I was. I did it on that basis and told the governor. Of course, he didn't know them from Adam, and we were very successful. The next session it was Hilary again, and Don was doing some freelancing and didn't want to do it again. We just hired them for the session. I stayed on all the time, but they were hired for the session. And I had Bob Close, who was a Republican from up in the Panhandle. Now Hilary's become his executive assistant because the former executive assistant quit and so Hilary moved up there. So this next session I'll have a completely new group. But with the size of the job, I think we'll have three. I'll put two in the House and one in the Senate because 150 members is hard for one guy. What I do is, I float among both.

Marcello: And, again, what is the function of these individuals? You were coordinating their activities, I gather.

Kaster: Right.

Marcello: What exactly is their function?

Kaster: We used it as a teamwork. One, this last session, we knew what the governor's legislative program was. It was up to us to attempt to pass it through the committees or whatever. Secondly, we had to keep up with bills that we felt would be potentially embarrassing to the governor--trying to kill those as far as we could. We only had to veto a handful. The first time, the governor vetoed quite a few. This next time, we had more people come and say, "What does the governor think about so-and-so?" or "My bill will do this, that, or the other, and can you talk to the governor about it?" And there was a lot more people wanting to see the governor and get his opinion because they find out he won't back off. He doesn't care what the bill is. If he doesn't like it and thinks it's bad for Texas, he'll veto it. The first session we had one bill overridden on a veto. It was a local game law that exempted Comal County from the uniform regulatory game laws.

Marcello: I hear Fred Agnich talking about that practice. He pulls what little hair he has out, I think, in talking about those local game laws.

Kaster: It was horrible. The governor said that you either have uniform game laws or you don't. You know, a deer doesn't know where the heck it is and could care less. Well, he feels that biologists from the Parks and Wildlife Department know more

about game management than some commissioners' court. So we vetoed it, and they overrode it, you know, "We'll really show the governor. Well, the governor could care less, if that's what they want. Later on,..that was Benny Bock's bill, and Benny Bock told me personally, about a year later, "You know, that really was a bad bill," (laughter) But he was obligated to try and do it, and it was because he was such a nice guy that it went.

The next time we didn't have those kind of laws, and, in fact, they would come to us, saying,..if it had anything to do with game, we had a bunch more during this last session being put under the uniform regulatory act instead of being exempted, which indicated that the governor was right. In fact, there still is a continual problem. But, you know, I think the governor is absolutely right on it.

Well, that's the only veto that's been overridden in thirty or forty years, and everybody wanted to make a big deal that a Republican governor's veto was overridden. That's still the only one, and to me that's a nothing bill--it's a nothing matter. If you really want to show your independence and do it, you know, great. Who cares? But the governor is perceived to be a man who, when he says he'll veto it, he's going to veto it. You can bet on that. And it cut out a lot of it,

One of the big jobs we have in this job is to prepare an analysis, a one-page analysis, of bills when they pass and to let the governor know what is in there. Well, he'll look at

the analysis, and if he's satisfied, fine. If not, he'll start reading the bill. Also, we'll try to make recommendations to pass or veto. He had the ultimate decision on it. Particularly at the end of a session, when you have around 600 or 700 bills passed in the last ten days and we're trying to do an analysis, it's really hectic, and everybody works on that to get the job done because he has to get them signed or vetoed.

Marcello: Is this his doing, that is, to have a one-page analysis?

Kaster: Yes, You have to realize that if you have 900 bills, that's 900 pages, with that one-page analysis (chuckle). But, again, if he's not comfortable with the analysis--and we try to be very impartial about what the thing does--then he'll sit and read the bill. He uses a felt-tipped pen, and he'll underline...well, not on the original bill, but, I mean, we have a copy and the original because if he approves of it, he signs the one-page analysis to indicate that he'll sign the bill. Then if there's a public signing, we'll take the original bill for public signing. That way, he doesn't have to read the bill; he already knows what is in it. Or he'll sign it up in his office. But we'll make up the copies, and he puts a little "c" when he's finished reading something. That way, if he looks back, he knows he's read it; it's his shorthand way of doing things.

The one-page analyses, we keep them on file just to know if he says, "By God, why did I sign that," we can say, "Here you are." (chuckle) Then what's funny is, if I recommend that he vetoes

a bill and then he signs it, and it turns out it wasn't that great (laughter). I'm not always right. He's the guy that ultimately has to stand by it because his name's on the ballot, I'm not. Having run for elective office, I do not ever want to put something in his mouth that's going to be embarrassing to him. From being on the ballot, I think my job is to serve the governor, not to do anything that I particularly think is great.

Marcello: If I'm hearing you correctly, I detect that you were saying, in effect, that you, too, underwent a learning process. You mentioned that during the last session, the governor did not have to veto nearly so many bills as he had during the previous session. Again, I assume that partly this is due to the fact that you had been learning on-the-job, too,

Kaster: Oh, certainly. There's no question about it. As I indicated before, I'm more pleased with the governor, enjoy being around him, more each day, and that's because of a learning process. My father, who is dead now, I thought, had more common sense than anybody I've ever been around. My father's common sense can't hold a candle to the governor's common sense. The governor is the most practical...he is exceedingly brilliant; I mean, he has a mind that is just very sharp, very sharp. He is an exceedingly rapid learner.

And I've learned about this man. When I went to work for the guy, I had laid eyes on him only once and maybe said one word, "Hello, Governor," and that's it until I went to work for him.

He's just,,he's fantastic. The interesting thing is that Janie Harris, his personal secretary, worked in the Defense Department for seventeen years and was assigned to Governor Clements. When he left, she came with him. She gave up the Defense Department job and says it's the best thing she ever did,

I've made decisions in my life where I've had to think about it and weigh it, and it turns out, usually, that it was a rotten decision, such as when I decided to go to mortuary school and get my funeral director's license, which was the worst thing I ever did in my life and blew three years out of my life. It was terrible. I instinctively knew this was the right thing to do. I don't know why, but I instinctively did, and I've never regretted it for one second,

It's the best thing that ever happened to me, and I enjoy my work. I'm back in the state government. I'm having an input from the executive side, where it's more fun than being on the legislative side, where I was looking at it from a House point of view. Now, all of a sudden, I'm looking at it from a statewide perspective and not dealing with just local people that elected me. I'm now looking at it now from a different perspective and working with both the House and the Senate equally, and the lieutenant governor and the speaker. I wouldn't trade it for anything. It's been the greatest experience, and, you know, if Clements is not reelected, fine. It was a great experience, and I am a realist to

know that in politics jobs start and jobs end, and you enjoy it while you're doing it,

Marcello: How would you describe the relationship between Governor Clements and Lieutenant Governor Hobby?

Kaster: Very cordial, It's one that developed over time. They had meetings--he and Clayton--about once a week, and the governor is never going to say anything bad about Lieutenant Governor Hobby. In fact, when George Strake announced that he was going to run for lieutenant governor, the governor was not, what I would call, enthusiastic and told George, "Look, Bill Hobby has helped me a lot," which he did because of the nature of the way the Senate operates, and we would not have passed a lot of that legislation. I think Bill Hobby, personally, does not like the wiretap bill, but he helped us get it out of Oscar Mauzy's committee, who hates wiretap, and assisted us in the passage. The governor knew it, and they developed a very good relationship. I think there was mutual trust. There was just a lot of meetings, and they got to know each other,

The governor has had an excellent relationship with both Clayton and Hobby. The great thing about these meetings, which were one of the real keys to success, other than these other meetings with senators, is that they could sit down and work out the problems on a bill. The way the Senate operates, if Lieutenant Governor Hobby wanted those provisions in there, they were in there, and he had meetings with senators, I think, once a week. So he

knew what the mood of the senators was, so when he would meet with Governor Clements, then, he could accurately say, "I think this is objectionable, so can we work this out?" It was kind of like horse-trading. So they'd work out the problems, and then it would just come sailing through; whereas before, the first session, it wasn't that much. But, again, he didn't know Hobby that well. But now, I think they are friendly, very friendly.

Marcello: What you say is interesting, I think, in that Hobby is a potential rival for the governorship.

Kaster: Right. Well, that wouldn't have made any difference. Even in their dealings, if Hobby had announced, "I'm going to run for governor," in that session it wouldn't have made any difference. As it turns out, Clements isn't going to run after this. If he's elected now, he's not going to run for a third time, and if Hobby gets it, you know, more power to him.

Marcello: But I guess what I'm saying is, perhaps, a couple or three years ago, Clements didn't know whether Hobby would or would not be running,

Kaster: Well, it's true but Clements doesn't care who runs against him. He knew somebody was, and it just might as well be Hobby. But Hobby is very correct in his dealings with the governor. He's not trying to usurp the governor; he's not trying to step on his turf. He's very conscious of protocol, and it's always been that way. He's a gentleman.

So Clements had dealings with him, but not to the extent we

did last session, There were dealings and never any unpleasantness-- never. He'd go to Hobby's office, and he'd sit down and have a drink, or Hobby would come over here--Clayton, too--so it was just back and forth. It was not all, "Come see me," He'd go walk down and see Hobby. And Hobby would call him up and say, "I need to talk to you." He'd go down and talk to him, I mean, just drop everything. And it was the same thing if he needed to see Hobby. Or he'd walk down and walk up to the podium while they were in session, and they'd sit up there and talk. So it was a good working relationship--and still is--and if Hobby's there, it will continue to be, I can assure you, because he informed Strake, "Governors and lieutenant governors don't run in tandem." This is right. The people elected him as a Republican and Lieutenant Governor Hobby as a Democrat. And he said, "I am not going to say anything bad about Governor Hobby. I am not." And you won't hear him; he will not.

Marcello: How would you describe the relationship between Governor Clements and Speaker Clayton?

Kaster: Very well. It's harder for Clayton to deliver on things because of the nature of the beast with 150 members. But he was very helpful, also, and I think that Clayton really appreciated it that when he was having his troubles with Brillab, the governor never took a cheap shot, never said anything. In fact, the only thing he said is, "I believe that a man is innocent until proven guilty, and I'm going to stand by that." Where others were really taking

shots at Clayton, he never did, and I think that Bill Clayton appreciated that. They talk frequently, too. It was kind of like a triumvirate, really, not just Governor Hobby and Clayton, or Governor Hobby and Clements, but it was all three of them frequently meeting on things and working out these problems.

Marcello: If the governor had such a thing as an inner circle of legislative advisors, who might some of these people be?

Kaster: He did have. Let's see...in the House we had about ten. We tried to get mostly Republicans, but there were some conservative Democrats in there, Tom Craddick, Jim Nowlin, Bob McFarland, Bob Davis, Fred Agnich, and Bob Maloney were the leadership in the House; I mean, these were committee chairmen. But they were the conservatives, and so when we'd have lunches with them, that's where he really enjoyed it. Then he'd have them come over. In the Senate he had Ike Harris, who was carrying heavy stuff, John Traeger, and...it was just a group. They would be his advisors, but more definitely in the Senate because of Hobby, who really controls the Senate; I mean, we can talk about that all we want. Clayton can't control the House, but if you get with the team, then you can get the consensus over there. And so we worked with the team and the committee chairmen over here.

Marcello: But again, what would be the purpose of consulting these various legislators? Would it be to try and get the pulse on a certain piece of legislation or how the House or the Senate felt about this, that, or the other?

Kaster: Yes, right. That's exactly right. Then they were giving him kind of like time schedules. It would not be as readily apparent as saying, you know, "You need to have committee hearings done on this by a certain date," because of the rush of legislation and of things that maybe we weren't aware of that were crowding in. So we would push and get it out of there before they'd get jammed up. They were honestly trying to help the governor with their pulse on what was happening in the House and the Senate.

Now the advantage of that was that it was them saying it and not me saying it. You know, I see him all the time, and so it does not have the impact of him hearing it from somebody else. Again, he had a lot of confidence in them. This was developed over time. These were really good folks that he enjoyed. He knocked off all these people that he didn't enjoy being around.

Then I also felt that it was helpful, too, because, you know, you help your friends and just kind of ignore your enemies. That's kind of the way we operated. Any of them that wanted to see the governor, well, if they asked, I got them in to see the governor. I don't care who they were, anybody could see the governor, but they'd have to ask. The other side, we didn't invite. Sometimes they'd ask...our friends would suggest that we have a meeting, and we would.

Marcello: At this stage of your political career, are you still a Democrat or have you switched parties?

Kaster: I've been a Democrat up until now, and my intention in the next

election is to vote Republican. It has nothing to do with the governor. I was so upset that when the last state Democratic convention was held in San Antonio, where Bob Slagle was elected, and they put into the Democratic platform legalizing homosexuality, legalizing sodomy, I said, "If that's what the Democratic Party now stands for, they have left me. I cannot abide by that." And then I looked at the Republican platform, and these were the things that I believed in. I said, "If that's what we're going to go down to, is pandering to this kind of stuff, then I don't want to be a part of it." So it had nothing to do with Clements; it's just philosophical thing based on party platform and what the party stands for.

And then I started looking around, you know, and I guess the best friends I got are Republicans (chuckle). They're conservative. Conservative Democrats are still my friends, but, I mean, it's philosophical. I'm a conservative, and I perceive that the Democrat Party has gone way too liberal for me. I keep thinking, "Why should I be doing that?" I do not intend to run for political office anymore, so I feel I can vote for whomever I want.

Marcello: Okay, that brings us up to the 67th Session of the Texas Legislature, so let's talk about some specific legislation.

Kaster: Okay,

Marcello: Obviously, the governor and his staff drew up a "wish list" of things that they were really interested in having the Legislature pass. As you look back on that session, what would you say were

perhaps the three foremost pieces of legislation in which the governor was most interested in getting passed? There may be more than three, and we can talk about more than three, but let's start with the top three first of all.

Kaster: The foremost one that he wanted was the use of wiretap for drug cases only, felony drug cases. This had to be his greatest interest, and it also had to be the hardest one to pass because there are strong feelings on it. He was absolutely convinced that it was useful. Colonel Jim Adams, who is the head of the Department of Public Safety, was formerly the number two man in the FBI and is an expert on wiretapping. So we modeled it after the federal wiretapping statute, which has been held constitutional by the Supreme Court, and we put more restrictions on it for Texas. But it was very difficult to pass, and he was very interested in that. I'd say he was interested in that as much as anything.

Marcello: Let's talk about that before we go on and identify some of those other pieces of very important legislation on the "wish list." How do you explain the governor's interest in wiretapping?

Kaster: Because of his confidence in Colonel Adams. When Adams says that the problem is...and it's interesting. I just got through on a grand jury in Travis County, and we indicted these pushers right and left, but until you get to the source, for instance, a person that can put up money to finance buying an airplane, flying to Columbia, picking up your heroin, dope, or whatever...you're talking about a lot of up-front money. You find out that a

clean businessman who has become greedy because of the enormous profit that they can make,,they're not doing it, but they're financing it. The only way that you can ever get to them is to put a wiretap on them. When everything else has failed... and, again, we could talk about the restrictions that are in there, but for convincing a judge, this is your best way, and it can only be done by the Department of Public Safety. So it's very controlled. It's not local police doing it. We also made it a felony for anybody else to possess this paraphernalia and to do it, So if you can get to that guy, then you have dried up a source of money and cut down on the flow of narcotics.

Marcello: What role does Ross Perot play in legislation of this type?

Kaster: The two things we did in the interim after the first session was to establish two task forces. He had Willis Tate handling a public education task force, and he asked Ross Perot to handle a drug education task force. These are just volunteers. Ross Perot, who is an interesting individual, another successful guy, suddenly became the foremost authority in Texas on illegal drugs and what was needed to correct it. They proposed five pieces of legislation. He mobilized P.T.A. groups around the state. He had General Reisner going around showing parents the paraphernalia these kids are using and to watch out for it and that there is a problem. And by mobilizing those,,you know, when these five drug control bills came up, Perot then hired some lobbyists, which happened to be three good-looking girls that worked for him and

an attorney, and they worked like the devil in passing those with our help. Primarily, they were the ones working on it.

Marcello: Are you saying the legislators are susceptible to pretty women (chuckle)?

Kaster: Well, these pretty women...there was no hanky-panky. They knew that subject up one side and down the other; but, yes, I'd say they are subject to it because the interesting thing was, when the fifth bill finally came to the House, somebody got on the back microphone and said, "Mr. Speaker, does this mean if we pass this one, we're not going to see those girls anymore?" (laughter) Boy, they sailed through; they passed through. And those were controversial. Those were tough pieces of legislation.

Marcello: I've heard other people talk about Perot's organizational ability on this and on other matters.

Kaster: Absolutely fantastic. Again, it's just because he wanted to.

And then the Educational Task Force proposed six bills that are the greatest changes in public education in this state since the Gilmer-Aikin Bill. In one bill we eliminated all the mandated courses that the Legislature stuck into public education bills over the past thirty years. We wiped them out and got back to the basics and said, "Instead of the Legislature setting the curriculum, why don't we let the Texas Education Agency?" We come to find out that that has been tried in the United States for twenty years, and this is the first state that's been successful in doing that. There's always vested interest groups that got

courses like "Kindness to Birds and Animals" and all this stuff, which may be nice, but, you know, in a time where we have a decline in the SAT scores and you need to get back to a person being able to read, write, and comprehend, that's what we wanted to get back to. So they proposed six things, and we passed five of those. So those two task forces proposed eleven bills, and we passed ten of them.

Now for the next session, we've got eighteen task forces. And this is the cream...these people are fantastic; they're knowledgeable in their areas; they are absolutely great. It's just amazing, and it's all volunteer labor. But what these people do, you find out that they knew more about the subject than any legislator. An interim committee in the Legislature looks at it from the purpose of "we gotta have legislation." These committees don't. If they feel no legislation is necessary, they'll say so. Or if they feel an agency should do something different, fine; or the federal government, fine. So they're looking at it from a different perspective. Well, by the use of these people--and we'll draft our legislative program from these task forces, from their recommendations--we'll sift it, and we'll make our priorities, hopefully around fifty bills. I'm talking about fifty tough pieces of legislation. We don't want fluff; we want them tough. Then we'll go to the committees and have the task force members come and say why they favor the bills. It's very effective--very effective--because this is what the people

of Texas want,

Marcello: And this procedure was very effective in getting the drug enforcement bills passed?

Kaster: Totally. There was five of them, and, I'm telling you, those were tough pieces of legislation, but because of Perot and his organizational ability, by mobilizing mothers around the state... and I'll tell you what we're going to do this next time--and mark my word, it'll be done--there's going to be strengthened laws on driving while intoxicated. It's because the task force had these "Mothers Against Drunk Driving" on there, and they've been very successful in California. When you get that network started up, even though there're a bunch of criminal defense lawyers in the House and Senate who probably don't want it changed, they'll vote to change it. I'll guarantee they'll vote to change it. It'll be tough to pass, but I'll just lay money it'll be passed--because of the interest in these task forces and the knowledge that they get. They know what they're talking about when they finally get through. They've been meeting now since last fall.

Marcello: Does the friendship between Perot and Governor Clements go back a long way? Have they been friends for a long time?

Kaster: Yes, they have. Governor Clements at one time served on Perot's board of directors at the request of Perot. And I would say that Governor Clements is the only man in the State of Texas that could have put the heat on Perot to take on this drug thing ;

because Perot's a busy man. But Clements put it on the basis of friendship, you know, "I served on your board when you wanted me to, and now I need your help." So Perot did it.

Anything that Perot does, he goes at it "wholehog." I heard the guy talk--and this is after several months, maybe six months of looking into it--and he really knew what he was talking about. He knew the total amount of illegal drugs coming in and how that compared to the big industrial corporations and profits made off of illicit drugs. He put it in perspective of why it was going to happen and what it would take to try and slow this tremendous growth and tremendous profit. He educated the people about it. He thought it was an educational matter. He said, "What should you as a parent look for in order to know that your kid is on dope." That guy is amazing. He is absolutely amazing. And how much money he spent, I can't tell you. He paid those three girls and that lawyer to be down here this session until all those bills got passed. They would meet in strategy sessions--you know, absolutely above board, no hanky-panky--and they were sharp.

Marcello: What is amazing in light of what you've just said is the fact that the wiretapping bill and those other law and order bills managed to get through a Senate that had hostile individuals in key positions. I'm referring to...

Kaster: Oscar Mauzy...

Marcello: ...Oscar Mauzy, and, of course, like you mentioned awhile ago,

Lieutenant Governor Hobby wasn't too enthusiastic about wire-tapping. Oscar Mauzy was obviously very much opposed to wire-tapping. How do you explain getting the bill out of Mauzy's committee and on the floor for a vote? This has to be an interesting process.

Kaster: Yes, it was an interesting process. The governor talked to Oscar Mauzy in his office several times. We had a big law and order package, so he kept telling us, "Yes, I'm working on it." The one that the governor really wanted was that wiretapping. We'd already passed it in the House, and once we got it past the House, all we had to do is get it past that Senate. Finally, it got down to getting Bill Hobby in there, and really putting it on Hobby as a favor, that he agree to make Mauzy have the hearing. We already knew what votes were in the committee, other than the chairman, so we kicked it out of committee. Then we got it to the floor, and we knew we had the votes on the floor. But the key to that whole thing was Bill Hobby.

Marcello: I remember at one stage, for example, Mauzy had logged that bill eighty-eighth on the list for consideration.

Kaster: Right, and then they had the hearing (chuckle), which, again, demonstrates the power of Bill Hobby. You've got to remember that Mauzy was chairman of that committee because Hobby put him there, so Hobby called his chit in. We didn't have any chits with Hobby, but he's such a decent individual, and he knew that this was the governor's priority matter.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what you guys could do for Hobby on a piece of legislation.

Kaster: Well, I kept thinking that something was going to come. He never asked for anything. He never asked for anything, and, boy, he had a mountain of chits there. But, again, when I say that what Governor Clements is not going to say anything unkind about Hobby, that's some of the reason.

He knew that Hobby didn't like the bill. You know, he had qualms about an invasion of privacy and all this, but, you know, there were polls out there showing that about 70 percent of the people favored that in drug cases, that people are tired of these drug cases. So it became difficult for him, running for election, to come out and say, "I killed wiretap." Well, if 70 percent of the people want it, that's not so good. You have the A.C.L.U. and all that against it, but generally the public is tired of the drug traffic in Texas, and if that is a useful tool in cutting it, why tie the police's hands? These were independent polls by several people, so I think the governor showed him those polls, and I think he maybe ran some, and he found out that was true.

Marcello: Suppose Mauzy didn't want to get that bill out of committee. Is there anything that could have been done?

Kaster: Sure. You can re-refer a bill, which the Senate did on the redfish bill.

Marcello: When you say re-refer a bill, do you mean refer it to another

committee?

Kaster: Yes, The Senate can vote to,,the author of the bill can get up and move that that bill be re-referred to another committee-- which is exactly what happened on the redfish bill. It's very unusual, and it has to be orchestrated in advance. But that would be your last thing,

Marcello: I would assume that that is a very, very serious matter, is it not, that is, to buck a committee chairman?

Kaster: Oh, (chuckle) you've got that right. It's very hard, But you've got to also remember that Mauzy had a few pet bills that he wanted the governor to sign, such as masters for the courts in Dallas and some other little goodies that he wanted. And those senators had some bills that were very important to them, so it's a two-way street: "You help us with ours, and we help you with yours,

Marcello: That also has to be the extreme humiliation for a committee chairman, that is, to have a bill re-referred to another committee.

Kaster: Oh, no question. You would think so. In the redfish bill, it was where the committee chairman probably didn't care that much about it, but his district was against it, so he let it get re-referred. You know, he expressed his indignation, but I question,,you know, it was probably one of those agreed-on deals. Generally, those have to be agreed on because the committee chairman and vice-chairman are going to vote against it unless it's agreed on. They may have bills, and they don't

want that...you know, all of a sudden, they get chaos, so it's very judiciously used.

And re-referral would not have been appropriate in this matter; it had to be in Jurisprudence. So it was up to us to really put the heat on, and we really turned every screw that we had loose; I mean, we called in everything possible at that hearing to get that darn thing done. The whole secret of that was to get it out of Mauzy's committee and then to get that hearing jumped up from eighty-eight to one. It took Hobby...and they had a Saturday meeting. Hobby went all-out to help us. We would have never gotten it out without him.

Marcello: Let me get your reaction to this: I read in the newspapers that Hobby came out in favor of the wiretapping bill, and, also, in general, supported what the governor wanted on redistricting in return for the governor's promise that he wouldn't support a candidate to run against Hobby. Do you know anything about that?

Kaster: Yes, and that is totally and completely false. I was at every meeting, to my knowledge, that Governor Clements and Hobby had because that was my job, and I was at every meeting that Clements and Clayton had. I can absolutely state without equivocation that they never came up. It was never intimated or asked.

It would be something, quite frankly, that Hobby would not ask. He would not ask that. If you know Hobby, that's more of an insult to Hobby than it is to Clements. That is not the way Bill Hobby is. As I say, he's a gentleman, and he

believes in protocol. If he'd have wanted something--and there may have been some little something, you know--but it was nothing of the magnitude of what we were asking. It would be pale and insignificant. But that was never the case.

But the governor is also a gentleman and is also appreciative of what Hobby did. Therefore, he told Strake that, you know, "I am not going to say anything against Bill Hobby, and a lot of people that support me are going to support Bill Hobby. So that's the way it is."

Marcello: What was Speaker Clayton's reaction to the wiretapping bill?

Kaster: Oh, he was in favor of it, but we didn't have any problems in the House. That was no problem in the House. The problem always was Oscar Mauzy. That was always the problem (laughter). We had problems in Lynn Nabers's committee, but we did get it out of there without a lot of difficulty because, there again, it was tied in, kind of piggy-backed, to Ross Perot's five bills, and you couldn't separate the two because you're using it for drug cases only. Therefore, even though it wasn't one of his five bills, their efforts helped us pass that.

Marcello: What would you say was a second bill on the governor's "wish list?"

Kaster: The education bill, I think, he was extremely interested in. The one that we failed on was the initiative and referendum issue. You know, that never got out of the House. I think that the governor sensed that we weren't going to get it, and even though he was in favor of it--he's still in favor of it--it was

something that...why beat your head against the wall? You're not going to get it. We gave it a shot, and I felt all along that if you could pass one of the two, which one would you want--wiretap or initiative-referendum--he wanted wiretap.

Marcello: As a former legislator, and having some other former legislators working both Houses, what kind of advice were you giving him relative to initiative-referendum? Now you guys had been there, so I think you had a pretty good pulse as to how legislators felt about initiative-referendum.

Kaster: I don't know that we were...we weren't...myself and Hilary, just from talking, kind of got the general impression that, you know, fine, whatever form they want to pass it, we'll take it.

Marcello: But do you feel the governor was perhaps a little idealistic on initiative-referendum? It sounds pretty good.

Kaster: Right. That's right. And there was no great support for it in the Legislature. You know, we can tell when we got a real shot, and when you're talking about two-thirds--and let's say we'd have got it by that House--that thing would have been so dead in the Senate that you couldn't have pried it out. It's easier to pry wiretap out than for them to give up some power. Yet we had drafted this thing as we felt it was applicable to Texas. We looked at all the other twenty-three states that have it, and, quite frankly, it would have very seldom been used. But still there was that thought. And you had the business community uniformly against it.

Marcello: Why was that?

Kaster: Well, my theory is that it has to do with controls. If you're a businessman and make a campaign contribution to a legislator, you're buying access to the guy--you're not buying his vote, but access--and you can come in and talk to him because you gave him "X" number of dollars, or several of them gave "X" number of dollars, that's a measure of control that you can control. When it gets out to the public, then your problem is magnified. You can't control what goes on out there, and all of a sudden it becomes extremely difficult. And the same thing is true with labor. Labor was against it. They perceived it as an anti-labor tool. Business saw it as labor going to put up repeal of the right-to-work laws.

So all these "bugaboos" came up. It probably would not have happened. I question whether in my lifetime it will happen. The first session it got identified with Proposition 13 and tax relief and all that...I don't know. He has not been talking this time as strong on initiative and referendum. He's more on these task forces, but we don't have a task force on initiative-referendum. I think his ardor has cooled on him, to be frank.

Marcello: How active was he during the session in trying to get some form of initiative-referendum passed?

Kaster: We worked at it, and the reason that it kind of turned sour... we had Carlyle Smith working on it. We only got eighty-four

votes, which is about sixteen short of the two-thirds necessary. Later on, Carlyle Smith perceived of himself as a great orator on redistricting and was really taking shots at the governor and loved to hear himself talk; and therefore, if it ever goes again, it's not going to be Carlyle Smith. It'll be somebody else. But the governor is interested in trying it, but we weren't pulling out all stops like we were on wiretap, because, again, I knew which one was most important to him, and the wiretap was the most important to the governor.

Marcello: What role does Waggoner Carr play in this whole business over initiative-referendum? I'm referring to the Texas Thirteen.

Kaster: I know, the Texas Thirteen. In my opinion--and we're being candid--this is a mechanism where Waggoner Carr makes money off of Proposition 13. He's their legal counsel. He raises the money, and, you know, I don't know if there is an accounting of the money. I don't know how much they raise, but I think he has a vested interest in keeping the thing going.

I became unhappy at Waggoner Carr when he wrote a letter asking why we weren't going to have a special session in the summer that Billy Clayton had his Brillab trouble. I wrote him back that, you know, we felt it would be inappropriate because the whole session then would not deal with initiative-referendum. It would be to get after Clayton and get us the new speaker, and that's all they would talk about for thirty days. And I wrote him that. Then a letter showed in the Texas

Observer. He'd given that letter to the Texas Observer, and from that point on, you know, "I get burned once, and that's your fault; but to get burned twice, it's my fault." Therefore, I'm very careful with my dealing with Waggoner Carr. I perceive that he has a vested interest in keeping the issue going. You know, he's a former politician and attorney general and all that, but, just personally, I've gotten gun-shy.

Marcello: How about Jim Nance? What role does he play? Of course, he was one of the corporate lobbyists who was working the floor against initiative-referendum.

Kaster: That's correct. Jim Nance, probably in his greatest effort, may change one vote. He's perceived by the membership, and by me, as a royal pain-in-the-ass. Nobody can stand the guy. He's warped on it. He'll stop a car on the street and give them one of his tomes against initiative-referendum which is filled with inaccuracies. If I got 50,000 bucks to write something, as he did, or whatever he was paid, to draw up something against initiative-referendum, hell, I'd do it, too. You know, he gets paid to take a position and took it, but he got warped on it. He took great delight in killing initiative-referendum, and he didn't have a darn thing to do with it. He may think he did, but I talked to members, and we were using Jim Nance as a reason for the House to pass it. I said, "Do you realize that if you pass it, Nance is going to have to go work the Senate and leave you guys alone?" They said, "God, I never thought

about that!" So he, in my opinion, played no part.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that business was opposed to initiative-referendum because of the possibility of a corporate income tax being passed as a result,

Kaster: That's right. Harry Hubbard said, "That's the first thing we're going to do." Boy, he's really afraid because he thinks the first thing business is going to do to get the right-to-work law in the constitution. So there was that mutual fear.

Marcello: I gather that at some point during the session, the governor bowed to the inevitable because he became pretty quiet with regard to initiative-referendum as time went on,

Kaster: Well, it is inevitable when you have something like that with that. When you get labor and business in bed on an issue, I mean, why fight city hall (laughter). There are other things to pass. You know, let Waggoner Carr carry the fight and pass it (laughter).

Marcello: Do you think the governor, from this point forward, is going to kind of let initiative-referendum lie?

Kaster: Yes, because you've got to realize that most cities have initiative and referendum; I mean, you can get petitions signed in most cities. Most of it has to do with taxes. That's the greatest concern people have, is their taxes. Well, when you look at the state taxes, you know, we're out of the property tax business, and nobody complains about the sales tax, and nobody's complaining about the tax on natural gas and oil;

so when they say taxes, they're talking about property taxes, and that's on the local level, anyway. They have the initiative process, and through the property tax revision on Senate Bill 621, there's methods where they can roll back tax increases. You have "truth-in-taxation," and the people can take care of the property tax at the local level. So that, really, is the main reason that you have initiative and referendum in California, is to get down taxes. But in state taxes, we're forty-fifth in the nation for per capita tax burden as it is, anyway. So it's kind of a false issue now.

Now Waggoner Carr wants to keep it growing, supposedly as a way to stop the massive, massive growth of Texas bureaucracy. Well, Clements has stopped that; I mean, it's leveled off. There may be a slight dip. And if you take what it would have been, it would have been 3,000 more bureaucrats, so he's cut that. There's been no tax increase in Texas since 1971, so it's kind of a non-issue. So I think that when all the people that Clements deals with...the Republicans aren't keen for it; the business isn't keen for it; the labor hates it. You take the public reaction, and, yes, it sounds good. But, you know, it sounds good to do what? Well, they don't know, but it just sounds good.

Marcello: Okay, let's go on and talk about some more issues that came up before this legislative session. What would you think would be a third piece of legislation on the "wish list?"

Kaster: Well, we had the six bills for education and the five bills for drugs. I don't know that these are,,we worked very hard on those. I think the hardest one to pass, the one that the Republicans were most against, was the curriculum revision bill. We had the secular humanists and,,you name it. We're supposedly changing this into a godless society. And the Republicans were really fighting us on it, and the governor was very, very strong for that curriculum revision bill. I'd say that was about the third hardest bill we had to pass. You know, we were fighting the people that were supposed to be for it--trying to get them to be quiet or just calm down. On the staff, I remember Alan Clark was against it. I finally had to get the governor in a staff meeting, and I said, "Governor, if you'll remember, when we all came on, we said that we would all have our input, but when we finally came to an decision, you expected everybody to support it regardless of your personal points of view." And he said, "That's right." And I said, "We got a curriculum revision bill,,," George Strake was against it. I said, "I expect everybody to support it, and if they can't support it, to shut up about it because these guys were mouthing about it!" The governor got onto them, and we got that thing passed, but that was exceedingly difficult. But the governor was very strong in favor of that--very strong. And that's the one that's been tried for twenty years in the United States, and we're the first ones to get it.

Marcello: Let's talk about redistricting.

Kaster: All right.

Marcello: Evidently, that must have taken a tremendous amount of time during the session.

Kaster: That was probably the overriding factor of the entire session. Now the reason that we were successful in getting our bills passed, primarily through the House first, was because this was the session.,,the constitution says bills are introduced for sixty days, there's committee hearings for sixty, and then you vote on them unless they suspend the rules by a four-fifths vote. Well, they were playing games in the House, and they failed to suspend that rule; but it also says that they can only consider matters that are declared "emergency" by the governor. The very next day, we sent an emergency letter to the House, telling them that our entire legislative program was an emergency (chuckle). So the only thing that they could have committee hearings on were our bills.

Well, looking at that, you had redistricting. They knew the governor had the power of veto, and so we had that constantly hanging overhead; I mean, that was in the back of our "noggin" there, that we would use that stroke. I would say that permeated everything.

Now the governor, all he cared about was that there be a black district created in Dallas, primarily and foremost. Houston had one, and Dallas was entitled to one. He also knew

that it was going to benefit the Republicans; he made no bones about that, And good-bye, Jim Mattox, if that was done, Clements said that he didn't know about the rest of the state, He's lived all his life in Dallas, and he knows Dallas." He said that they were entitled to it, So redistricting got down to trying to be fair to the Republicans, to give them a shot at holding what they had, while the Democrats were trying to cut down their numbers.

Marcello: Well, I mean, this is the name of the game in redistricting.

Kaster: Right.

Marcello: I think we have to realize that the Republicans are going to try and draw districts to their advantage, and the Democrats are going to do likewise for the Democratic Party.

Kaster: Correct. If there was a Democratic governor, he'd be doing that, and if there was a Republican governor, he's going to be doing that, But the governor didn't really,..in the House and the Senate redistricting, we did not involve ourselves one bit. I told the governor, "It'd be a great mistake for the governor to express a view on House redistricting, I was in the House in 1971, and we looked at that as our job. And we were going to approve what the Senate did, and they were going to approve what we did, and the governor better sign it," So we took no position on that. I told the governor, "There's enough Republicans in both Houses to take care of themselves, so we don't have to worry about that. They're going to do it."

Marcello: This is legislative redistricting?

Kaster: Yes. The fight came on congressional redistricting, and the governor said, "I'll be interested in that," which he legitimately had a right to do because, you know, the Senate and the House are both going to be involved on that. That is an entirely different matter, and that's where he wanted that black district, where at least the blacks in Dallas could have an opportunity to elect a black. Frost and Mattox are saying, "Oh, we represent them," And Craig Washington says, "Oh, yes, they represent them," But, of course, Craig's a black from Houston, and Barbara Jordan and Mickey Leland came from a black district, and he felt, you know, "If it's good for them, then it's good for us." And it was right, and he felt it was right,

Marcello: So Craig Washington was in favor of the creation of a black district in Dallas.

Kaster: No, he was opposed.

Marcello: Oh, he was not.

Kaster: Right. His thinking was convoluted. Besides, what does he know about Dallas? He's from Houston. The governor wasn't telling him how to redistrict Houston. All he wanted was one district of blacks in Dallas, that's all. He said, you know, "What you do in the Valley and what you do in Houston, I don't know anything about. I've lived all my life in Dallas, and I do know what they want."

Marcello: How do you explain the fact that so many conservative Democrats

seemed to support this aspect of the governor's redistricting plan?

Kaster: The main reason the Senate did, and the main reason Hobby did, was because of a speech Senator John Wilson made in support of a black district,

Marcello: That's specifically who I'm referring to,

Kaster: He swayed...his speech at that time was probably the single most persuasive speech made in the entire session by anyone because it turned people to that proposition, that, yes, this is fundamentally right, and the Senate then took that position, even though he would have the liberals against that. John Wilson is a conservative, and he did not do it in concert with us. He did that on his own. He told the governor...after he had done it...before he made his speech, he said, "I've done this, and I'm telling you what I've done." And he made that speech, and that's when Hobby changed his mind, and several others changed their minds, and that was the single most persuasive speech made. People knew that John Wilson had cancer. He didn't have anything to gain by it, but he felt it was right. He is an excellent orator. He's one of the best over there now that Schwartz is not gone.

But he was tough, and I think that carried on to the House. Again, Clayton would control that more than others, and he was a conservative and wanted to go along with more conservatives. It was more a liberal-conservative fight than

it was Democrat-Republican, even though it would be perceived that way. It was really a liberal-conservative fight.

Marcello: This is what I was going to ask you. Do you think that perhaps some of these conservative Democrats supported a redistricting plan that would favor Republicans so that conservative individuals would be elected to Congress, and then these people would support the President's economic program and so on?

Kaster: Yes.

Marcello: That sounds complicated.

Kaster: Well, at that time it had not so much to do with supporting Reagan because you're looking at a ten-year scheme. I think the conservatives felt, "We want conservatives. I don't care whether they're Republicans or Democrats, as long as they're conservative."

Marcello: So that would have eliminated Mattox and Frost among others?

Kaster: Correct. Specifically Mattox. The governor felt that Frost maybe could win it, knowing the district, but Mattox would be dead because that would put him...if you take those districts out of his, it would put him in the Republican area. But I think the feeling was that when you say conservative, it means less government, less spending, that type of an approach, the more the individual stands on his feet, instead of the liberal philosophy. And the governor, of course, feels that way, that everybody should have an opportunity. And I think Clayton felt that way.

Marcello: As an interviewer and an oral historian, I sometimes listen to a tone of voice in order to find a meaning behind the answer being given. What are your feelings toward Jim Mattox?

Kaster: I served with Mattox. Mattox was a liberal when he was in the Legislature, and as he would get on the back microphone and start talking, his voice would start rising and become...I mean, it'd get higher in timbre until he was almost screaming in a high-pitched voice. He was dedicated to his liberal cause, but he could never...he would get so upset and scream that he'd lose his effectiveness,

Now I don't know what he's doing in Congress. He's apparently changed his act somewhat up there, but I haven't been following him that close. I just followed him when I was in the Legislature.

Marcello: Had you ever seen so many members of Congress in Austin as you did during the redistricting process?

Kaster: Oh, no. Even Jim Wright came and sat in my office and was a "hail fellow well met," and all he wanted to do was kick Phil Gramm and Charles Stenholm in the rear end (laughter). You could name them, and about all of them were down here at one time during that session. You're talking about (chuckle) their lives,

Of course, the whole thing ended up in Federal court, which it was bound to. The interesting thing is, of the states that have complete redistricting...six of them don't do redistricting

because they only got one congressman, but of those that have, two-thirds of them were all in court. There's only one-third that haven't gone to court (chuckle).

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that Jim Wright was interested in doing in Phil Gramm. Can you elaborate on that?

Kaster: Well, of course, Phil Gramm was a burr under his saddle, and from his point of view, in my opinion, he's looking at becoming the next speaker. And if he can't control the Texas delegation... which he didn't. The Boll Weevils, Stenholm and those guys, carried Reagan's program. Well, the greatest of them was Phil Gramm, so, boy, if he could redistrict him into something to kill him, you know, he was willing to do that. He knew, from being around the Legislature, that he was set as House majority leader. Those Fort Worth guys are going to take care of him and make sure he was safe. He was looking at it, I'm sure, from the speaker's point of view--to get this guy out and help him get elected spaker.

Marcello: Some newspapers speculated that Speaker Clayton supported the governor's plan for redistricting in return for the governor's support for the state water plan. What do you know about that, and what is your reaction to that?

Kaster: It's a non sequitor because the governor supported the water plan, anyway, and told Clayton right on. In fact, there were many meetings on the water plan between Hobby and Clayton and the governor--lots of them. That plan changed so many times

through that process that it looked like nothing that went in. It was very difficult to understand, and so we'd have to have Clayton to try to explain what it was. The governor absolutely supports the water plan, so the two had nothing to do with one another,

Clayton, I think, supported the redistricting plan because it was a conservative plan. That's why he supported it. But there was no quid pro quo on that. The governor feels that the greatest problem facing Texas over the next twenty years is water. He says the energy problem is not going to look like anything compared to that water problem. You have such a long lead time. It doesn't take long to drill a well; it's short term. But it takes a long time to plan a water reservoir.

Marcello: As a student of the Texas Legislature, during the past session, Clayton had the Brillab cloud hanging over his head even though he had been declared innocent, plus it was obvious that he was a lame duck speaker. Did you see this having any effect upon his ability to control the House in various pieces of legislation?

Kaster: No, I didn't. I think he had pretty firm control. When you get to redistricting, Jesus Christ himself in the speaker's chair couldn't control them because each guy is looking at it from "my" district. "What does that do to me? To hell with everybody else." I mean, that's "blood-and-guts" time (chuckle). You know, "This plan's fine if it leaves me the way I want it."

So, you know, he held control, and I'll show you the control on the medical practice act. I mean, he held them, by God, even to the special session to where the doctors had to take... let the optometrists put in eye-drops to dilate their eyes. I mean, he had control. That was the most amazing thing right there, when they had a big pow-wow at the speaker's stand, and the House voted 150 to nothing for that bill. Just like that (snaps fingers). It was amazing.

Marcello: Mr. Kaster, we could talk about other things, but I think we've covered what I consider to be some of the most important things. But before I close this interview, I would like to ask you if you have any closing comments concerning the 67th Session.

Kaster: Well, from my point of view, and, I believe, the governor's point of view, it was extremely successful by any measure. The press acknowledge it, and there has been no one that said that it was a bad session. The problem is that it's going to be hard to top, or even equal. I was very pleased with it.

Anybody would be well-advised to get into politics and to enjoy it. It's an enjoyable profession. It's a fascinating profession, either as a student or an observer, to find out what goes on. It's fascinating, and I really enjoy it.

Marcello: Well, once again, I want to thank you very much for having participated in our project. It's been a long time, and I'm glad to have you back again.

Kaster: It really has. Well, I'm glad we're caught up-to-date and, you

know, one of these days, I'm going to get up to North Texas State and look at the Oral History Collection because the people that you've interviewed,..as time goes on it's going to be fascinating. Every once in awhile I read one of the transcripts that you gave me from the first time. In fact, I'll probably go home tonight and look at that and compare it to my feelings now. But, you know, I couldn't be happier right now than I've been.

Marcello: Well, again, we're very happy that you are participating, and you can perhaps do us one last favor by telling the governor how great a project this is and persuading him to participate in it some day when he leaves politics.

Kaster: I will. In fact, that would be very interesting to you, and he would do it, and I hope that that can be arranged. I think it would be fascinating reading. He's a complex man, and it's interesting to learn about him.

Marcello: Well, again, thank you very much.

Kaster: Okay, Ron.