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SENATOR O. H. HARRIS
November 27, 1978

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Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello
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Oral History Collection

Senator O. H. Harris

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Senator O. H. ("Ike") Harris for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 27, 1978, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Senator Harris in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a member of the second special session of the 65th Texas Legislature.

Senator Harris, what influence did Proposition 13 in California have for the calling of the special session? Did you see it having any influence in the governor's call for a special session?

Mr. Harris: Yes, it prompted a lot of people to get concerned about doing something about property tax relief, the speaker particularly, after we got there in the special session and found out what had been going on. Seemingly, the background of it was that the speaker very much wanted this special session to lower taxes and establish a position, I guess, for himself in the state for reducing taxes. And the governor had operated for two terms on

no new taxes, and he could leave a legacy for the state by even reducing that.

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast with events taking place in California as Proposition 13 was running its course?

Harris: Fairly close, largely because I had a friend that is a city employee in Los Angeles, and to that extent I was being kept posted on it.

Marcello: What sort of feedback are you getting from your constituents relative to Proposition 13 and even so far as reducing taxes is concerned?

Harris: People feel very strongly about it, and Proposition 13 is something out there for them to grab hold of psychologically. I don't think Texas is a state that is subject to a Proposition 13 situation, but, nevertheless, that was there. It was kind of a magic thing; it was immediate relief. If you want to lower taxes, let Washington reduce them up there.

Marcello: Some people have observed that this special session was an example of the election year politics. How do you feel about that?

Harris: It was exactly that. It should have never been called in the first place, in my opinion. It didn't accomplish very much at all. The proposition was on the ballot and didn't pass, so there is not going to be any significant relief to the people, I don't believe.

Marcello: Why was it that you did not think that we needed a special session relative to reduction in taxes?

Harris: Texas is in a good financial situation, certainly relative to other states, and a special session to deal with Article 8 of the constitution, which is a finance article, was not proper. That is the most important article in the constitution, and you want due deliberation over a period of time, not just "hurry up!" or "push! push!" or "let's do something and put it on the ballot!"

Marcello: Also, I think you have to keep in mind that the tax base or the tax rate in Texas is about seventh from the bottom in terms of all of the states in the union.

Harris: I suspect that's the case; I don't know the figures. We've got a good tax base in Texas, and it is largely due to natural resources.

Marcello: Why do you think that Speaker Clayton was such a proponent of the special session? Again, perhaps I'm asking an unfair question since you're not a member of the House, but I'll ask an unfair question anyway.

Harris: What the story was around from all the credible sources is that he wanted to have additional statewide identity and be in favor of lowering taxes. It's not any secret that he wants to run for a statewide office.

Marcello: Are you perhaps referring to lieutenant governor as being

the next stepping-stone for Speaker Clayton, perhaps?

Harris: That's what the talk is, that he wants to run for lieutenant governor.

Marcello: Why do you see Briscoe as being such a major proponent of the special session?

Harris: One of the stories around--and I imagine there's some credibility in it--is that Janie Briscoe wanted him to leave a legacy for the state.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that a reduction in taxes would also have put Mr. Hill in a bind when, and if, he had become governor, because he had made certain promises to the teachers and groups of this nature. In other words, do you see any vindictiveness on Governor Briscoe's part in trying to put Hill between a "rock and a hard place," so to speak?

Harris: That was the talk, but I don't put any credibility in it.

Marcello: What do you know about the putting together of the agenda for the special session? I guess most of this was done by Briscoe and Hobby and Clayton?

Harris: The Senate initially didn't have anything in the way of an agenda. We did a few things over there, but mostly it was Briscoe's and Clayton's idea. So we let them come forward with something, and we sat around and waited for a couple of weeks, and they couldn't get together. After a couple of weeks, Clayton was sort of like the dog that caught the car. He didn't want any cheese; he just wanted out of the trap.

So then the Senate got busy about it, and we had a proposition that was somewhat harmless and didn't do too much damage and would reduce some taxes--not significant, but some. That never made it, and then they finally got together on the package that you saw. There were six or eight items in that constitutional amendment, which you just don't do that. You just have one item per, and particularly, again, when you're dealing with Article 8 of the constitution. The format of it was wrong, regardless of the subject matter.

Marcello: We saw a lot about Briscoe and Clayton wanting the special session, but there was never very much said about Lieutenant Governor Hobby's position.

Harris: Hobby didn't want it. He felt much like I did in that regard, it wasn't necessary. If you were going to do it, do it in the regular session, which is coming in five or six months.

Marcello: I've also heard it said by some people that there wasn't too much advance preparation and planning so far as this special session was concerned. In other words, legislators went to Austin and still didn't really know what was going on or what the proposals of the governor would be.

Harris: That's exactly right. There was no planning at all.

Marcello: Do you think this was deliberate, or do you think this was just the nature of Briscoe and Clayton and the other planners for the special session?

Harris: I don't know. I guess my surmise is that they thought that it's tax relief, and everybody would be for that, and so we would just go down here and do something--not knowing what it was going to be.

Marcello: Is it not true that when a special session meets to discuss matters of taxation, the individual legislators can bring in other matters relative to taxation besides those that are on the governor's agenda?

Harris: Yes. That was an argument that we got into, and there was some question in the call as to how open was it. Was it all taxes? Was it reducing as well as increasing taxes? Obviously, nobody was interested in increasing them. The parliamentarian of the Senate, at least--and Bob Johnson in the House--fairly well knew what to do as far as the rulings were concerned. Plus, the leadership went around and made their pleas with people that had varying, different ideas that were not related to what they were discussing at the time.

Marcello: Did Hobby ever call any special caucuses of the members of the Senate in order to discuss strategy or planning for this special session?

Harris: Not prior to, but during the session, yes.

Marcello: What went on at the caucuses and special meetings?

Harris: I wasn't in on them (chuckle). They discussed what we thought

we could reasonably do and pass and get on out and go on about our own business.

Marcello: Let's talk about the original seven-point proposal that was put forward by Governor Briscoe at that special session. One of the points in that seven-point proposal called for a repeal of the 4 per cent sales tax on the residential utility bills. How did you feel about it, and how did you vote and why did you vote the way you did?

Harris: I voted in favor of it. It is not that big per household on an annual basis; it is not going to be that big of a saving. Also, I thought that if it was going to be repealed, it ought to be repealed across the board. They isolated it to households, which I thought was a mistake. Nevertheless, I went ahead and supported it, because it was obviously an area for some tax reduction. When you see \$300 million the first year for removing the sales tax on utilities, that sounds real good; but when you divide thirteen million people into it, it comes out kind of small.

Marcello: According to the figures that I've seen, it would save the typical homeowner about \$2.16 per month.

Harris: That would be just about right.

Marcello: So, in a sense, is it safe to say that it did provide some relief for the homeowner, but at the same time it was kind of election year cosmetics?

Harris: Oh, sure. No question about it. It's much akin to when Congress took the recess before the election in late September, early October, and they passed that income tax reform--the same thing.

Marcello: In observing the passage of this bill through the Legislature, I gather that there wasn't too much opposition. It was one of those things that you really couldn't be against.

Harris: Yes (chuckle). Are you talking about the one that's on the ballot?

Marcello: No, I'm referring out of the repeal of the 4 per cent sales tax, which only required a legislative majority.

Harris: Yes, you're right. It was sort of, "If I vote against that, I'll really be in trouble."

Marcello: The second proposal in that seven-part agenda that the governor put forward called for an increase in personal exemptions under the Texas inheritance tax laws. I think the increase went from \$25,000 to \$200,000. How did you feel about that?

Harris: I was in favor of that, too. More specifically, I'm in favor of repealing any estate or inheritance taxes, both state and federal. It's a double taxation in my opinion, and there ought not to be any such thing.

Marcello: Both these proposals that we've talked about thus far required simple legislative majorities. Then we get into the whole new ballgame and begin talking about those that would require

approval by the voters as constitutional amendments. Now, some people said, after looking at the governor's proposals, that the ad valorem property tax is the really oppressive one in Texas. How do you feel about it?

Harris: Yes, there is a real philosophical problem there, and we discussed this before, and it reared its ugly head again, that is, if you get out of your property taxes, then public education has got to be funded someplace. You're just shifting the area in which it's going to be funded. The proposition didn't pass--attempts to get some relief to property taxpayers in school districts, which takes the biggest bite of your property tax dollars. At the same time, we passed a \$450 million bill that would put \$450 million in a fund and allow the comptroller to put it in independent school districts, had this proposition passed, and it wouldn't have an effect on their tax base. That's the state giving local people money, and it's just another niche in the armor of cutting into the independent school districts.

Marcello: Let's talk about some of those other proposals that the governor put forward. Another one of his proposals would have required a two-thirds affirmative vote for any new tax or increase in an existing tax by the Legislature. How did you feel about that proposal? This is one of those that would have required a constitutional amendment.

Harris: That goes against the grain of what our system is about. I understand the anxiety to restrict taxation, but you're using something there that I think is improper. Coupled with the fact that when you look at what is required in the Senate, anyway, to suspend our rules with a two-thirds vote, you have in effect got it in the Senate, so you haven't accomplished anything. It's cosmetic.

Marcello: At the same time, is it not sometimes difficult to get a two-thirds majority vote for anything in the Legislature?

Harris: Yes. It can be quite difficult to do that, particularly on a tax bill, because that's the hardest thing in the world to pass, and rightfully so.

Marcello: Why do you think Governor Briscoe, as a former member of the Legislature, would have put forward such a proposal, knowing in effect that it certainly would limit the effectiveness of the Legislature, it seems to me?

Harris: I have no idea. I guess because it had been so long since he'd been an elected legislator (chuckle).

Marcello: Still another of his proposals called for the taxing of agricultural and timberland according to their productivity value. How do you feel about that?

Harris: I have basically favored that in the past. They changed it up, though, in the conference committee, and it came out based on its productive capacity. That has, to me, a different

kind of meaning than taxation based on production, Productive capacity, to me, indicates in the future, whereas, based on its production indicates to me in the past. You'd be guessing what the capacity is versus production of what it has been. Also, we may have identical types of farm or ranchland, same number of acres and all that, and I'm a lazy farmer and you're an aggressive farmer, The capacity is still there for me to produce, but I don't do it. I didn't like the change in wording there, I may be nit-picking, but it caught me wrong.

Marcello: Another one of the proposals in the governor's original package that I'd like you to comment on is the one that, in essence, would have given the voters the right to initiate tax reductions or increases by statewide balloting.

Harris: I'm in opposition to initiative and referendum. I believe in representative government. If you don't like the man that's representing you, vote him out of office.

Marcello: After the governor put forward his proposals, this whole business concerning the Peveto Bill cropped up again, or the "Son of Peveto" or whatever it was called. Just exactly how did it crop up, and how did it get into this special session, when obviously it wasn't one of the original proposals put forward by the governor? How did it crop up in the Senate?

Harris: It came forward in the Senate . . . I cannot remember . . . did

the governor open a call to it? I'm almost sure he did.

That's how it came up. Then Senator Jones had been advocating it in the Senate as Mr. Peveto has been in the House; and the lieutenant governor decided to let them have a run with it, and they tried to suspend the rules and couldn't. They didn't get but twelve votes.

Marcello: How did you feel about that Peveto Bill, or any variation thereof, as it appeared in the Senate?

Harris: I've always been opposed to it.

Marcello: Why is that?

Harris: It is called property tax relief, but that's not the case at all. It does not in any way lower taxes. We've been over this a time or two before. It cannot lower property taxes. There has to be a constitutional amendment to do that. The theory of it, if it was put into effect, is that it might lower taxes, but I doubt it seriously. As a matter of fact, I think it would increase them, because it tends to centralize the gathering of information for the purposes of appraising land and assessing the taxes on it. I just think it can't be done centrally.

Marcello: I also noticed, in watching the progress of these various proposals in the Senate, that some of them seemed to be sponsored and guided by I guess what you could call "lame ducks." For example, Senator Lombardino sponsored the repeal

of the sales tax on utilities. Is there any significance in that, or is this simply a last hurrah for him, also?

Harris: (Chuckle) No. If I'm not mistaken, Senator Lombardino handled that in the regular session, and it didn't pass. So as a matter of courtesy, I believe that's what happened.

Marcello: I also noticed that Senator Hance was the sponsor of the inheritance tax plan?

Harris: Yes. That was the same thing. He had handled that in the past. He was leaving the Senate. He was running for the United States Congress, and he wanted to have that in his little bag.

Marcello: Why was it that the utility tax repeal and the inheritance measures passed so quickly? Again, was it because they were more or less non-controversial, not too harmful? Do we again get into that election year cosmetics?

Harris: That's exactly right.

Marcello: While the special session is in progress, what sort of feedback were you receiving from your constituents, either for or against this special session that was going on?

Harris: Surprisingly enough, I got very little. I bet I didn't get ten or twelve letters in the whole special session. It was the summer months, and people were vacationing. They were worried about other things and didn't even know we were there for that matter.

Marcello: What do you recall about the attempts in the Senate to trade off some version of the Peveto Bill in exchange for the passage of the other proposals by the governor? What action took place there?

Harris: There was lots of jockeying there, particularly over in the House, to give Representative Peveto another go at his bill, and they were swapping and trading. This also occurred to some degree in the Senate. In the Senate it just got a free run. They did their work and out on the floor for a vote. Incidentally, that was a situation where we did not have to suspend the rules. That bill just, as we say, "laid out," which requires only a simple majority then to move it on to the third reading. You've got to suspend those rules if you start talking about eliminating the two-thirds requirement, but they only needed a simple majority and didn't get it. The vote was sixteen or seventeen to twelve, I believe, maybe eighteen to twelve.

Marcello: Again, I'm asking you an unfair question at this point, but I'll ask it anyway. What do you know about the organization of the so-called "Shifty Fifty" or "Filthy Fifty" over in the House? Do you know anything at all about that group?

Harris: Not a lot. Some of those people . . . it's the Democrat Study Group for the most part, although there were some Republicans in that crowd. That was, again, sort of like the old

"Dirty Thirty," kind of anti-management for whatever different reason. Philosophically, they had different reasons for being mad at the management, but they threw in together to be effective against the management, whatever the issue might have been.

Marcello: Ultimately, the House and the Senate do get together and come up with a compromise bill which ultimately did pass. We've talked about some of those things in some of my previous questions, but, as I recall, one of the points that came out in the final bill was to more or less tie state spending to the state's economic growth. How did you feel about that?

Harris: (Chuckle) It was a ruse, because, yes, that was in there, and it could not increase over the previous year and based on economic growth in the state, however you define that. But there was a little kicker in there, too, that both Houses by concurrent resolution, simple majority vote, could suspend that. So what have you done? He who giveth can taketh away (chuckle).

Marcello: How did you feel about the idea of abolishing the constitutional ruling that bank accounts, securities, and this sort of thing be taxed?

Harris: I don't know. I had some misgivings about that . . . really, mixed emotions. It is not done today, anyway. I don't know whether it is taking a tool away that we're going to

wish we hadn't done or not. It has been in there for a hundred years, and it's never been used. It's something a tax assessor-collector has a hard time finding to get hold of to tax.

Marcello: I've seen the figures that seem to indicate that the passage of this bill meant that there would be approximately a billion dollars in tax cuts. How accurate do you think they are?

Harris: I think it is not very accurate at all. One of the things . . . this gets a little complicated, but to give you an idea of what I think, it would have run the serious risk of raising taxes rather than lowering them out of this proposition that passed. If you recall, it increased your homestead exemption from three to five thousand dollars; and if you're over sixty-five years of age, it went to ten thousand. It also said "on appraised value." Is that right? It was changed to appraised value? It was changed to market value, excuse me, and the current constitution, or prior to the passage of that, has spoken all these years on appraised value. Well, market value is always going to be higher than the appraised value. Along about election day I got my taxes, for example, and they had my house and land appraised separately, and the total was less than what I paid for both of them ten or eleven years ago. If we switch from

appraised value to market value, I know what I can get for my house within five or ten thousand dollars, and it is considerably more than I paid for it, so I don't want to be taxed on market value. They're giving me a five thousand dollar front end exemption, but they're switching to market value, and it may cost me more than it did in the past if there is any changing of appraisal methods that the local tax assessor-collector uses.

Marcello: Let's switch from talking about the special session Legislature to the recent gubernatorial election.

Harris: (Chuckle) I'd like to talk about that.

Marcello: Okay, let me start out with a very general question, and then we can probably get into some specifics. What do you see as being the key to Mr. Clement's victory over Mr. Hill in this election?

Harris: (Chuckle) Everybody has hashed that one around, and everybody has got their own idea about what the significant thing was. It goes back to what I've always said. For a Republican to get elected governor in this state, there is a whole lot of "if's" that have to fall into place, and they just all fell into place.

Money had a lot to do with it; his ability to get himself known, the name identification, which is a basic. The turnout was right--2.3 million, I believe it was. Our folks got to

the polls. The traditional straight Democrat voting precincts' results indicate a poor turnout.

Another significant thing was La Raza Unita candidate in South Texas, particularly, and the attitude of the Mexican-Americans in South Texas was, "If you go vote, just don't vote Democrat. We don't care what you do, but don't vote Democrat." I think they're tired . . . and it has manifested itself, because they are tired. The Democratic Party has given so much attention to the blacks and none to them, or at least in their judgment, none to them. So that was another factor.

I think Hill came off very poorly in the campaign--a surprise to me--particularly on the debates. That is his forté. Not that Clements was outstanding. I'm not suggesting that. It's just that Hill came across poorly.

Also, he acted like he was governor in advance of the election, and I think that put him in the role of incumbency, which you don't necessarily want to be in these days. Also, people reacted adversely to it. "Who does he think he is? Wait until he gets elected, and then he can talk about redecorating the mansion!" All these factors.

Marcello: So, in other words, do you think then that there was a certain amount of over-confidence in the Hill camp and that this played a role in his ultimate defeat?

Harris: Yes, there's no question about it. It was a factor. He certainly was confident (chuckle)!

Marcello: Awhile ago you talked about money playing a role in the Clements victory. Again, I think for the benefit of those who someday listen to this tape or read the transcript, we need to explain what you mean when you say that money played a role in the Clements victory.

Harris: The significance is, he spent a lot of money. He said it well in the campaign when he was criticized for spending a good deal of money. I don't know what the final figure is, but it is, say, five million dollars, which in Texas is an expensive race. To cover the state is expensive, and in this day and time prices are going up. Still, it was more than you normally would spend statewide. His answer to Hill's charges on excessive spending was, "You've been running on the taxpayer's money for the last eight or ten years as attorney general and secretary of state in the past." The name identification is the number one thing he spent his money on.

Marcello: What role does Governor Briscoe play in Hill's defeat or Clements' victory?

Harris: That's another factor. It is hard to transfer identity. You like to go get all the support you can, but to transfer identity is more and more difficult in this day and time. His children and wife indicating their support for Clements

. . . I don't know how much it helped, but it sure didn't hurt him.

Marcello: And, of course, I don't think Briscoe himself actually did any campaigning in South Texas on behalf of Hill.

Harris: No. I think he made his statement that he was going to vote for him, and that was probably the end of it.

Marcello: I mentioned South Texas because you brought up the subject of the Mexican-American vote a little while ago, and obviously the Mexican-American vote would be very important in South Texas.

Harris: It certainly would, and Hill just didn't get it. I haven't looked at the returns yet, but Tower has a good track record in South Texas. In 1972, I believe he carried Bexar County, so he has done well down there; and the Mexican-Americans realize that if they vote for a Republican, their arm's not going to fall off, and lightning won't strike them. They hadn't voted Republican before.

Marcello: You've been a campaigner, and maybe you're in a position to answer this question. It seems to me, also, that maybe that fierce struggle between Hill and Briscoe may have simply taken something out of Hill in terms of gearing up for another round against Clements. I don't know if you can call it battle fatigue or what.

Harris: You're right, coupled with his over-confidence. You project.

Those people who know the psychology of campaigns and a person's personality and how it projects, when one attempts to change that, they say that's wrong. You take your good factors and work on them and do your best to project those and play down your not so attractive features of your personality. This image came across. He just won a big race; it took its toll on him; he felt confident. There were a combination of things. It projected itself, and it came out adversely.

Marcello: Awhile ago we were talking about the part that spending played in Mr. Clements' victory. Is it not true that in the past, Republican gubernatorial candidates in particular have been plagued by a lack of money?

Harris: That's right. To take that image, for better or for worse, and to project it to all the voters in the state, you have to have the dollars and the sense to use the media to do it. They have not had it in the past, where it was not a problem for Clements.

Marcello: Evidently, Mr. Clements was able to put forward a super-efficient organization, also.

Harris: Yes. It turned out that the organization . . . you never see this in a campaign, because when you're dealing with the organization, all you see is the problems (chuckle).

Marcello: It's not very glamorous.

Harris: That's right. It's not glamorous at all. When you're dealing with them on a day-to-day basis, you see the downside. In retrospect, in looking at it and piecing it together, they had a good organization throughout the state.

Marcello: Do you think that the fact that this organization was so efficient is actually a reflection of Governor Clements?

Harris: Him personally?

Marcello: Yes.

Harris: Yes, I think so. The people that ran the campaign did it on a hard-nosed basis, just like he runs his business. His success in his individual business has been in dollars and cents; their success in their particular business is a Republican governor.

Marcello: What role do Republicans such as you and Mr. Agnich, for example, play in a gubernatorial campaign such as the one run by Mr. Clements?

Harris: I don't know what role Fred played. After the primary, I sat down with Clements and his staff for a good part of the month of June to talk issues, to concentrate on a particular issue if it looks good. What are some pitfalls you need to be aware of? Who is sensitive to this, and who's not sensitive, and whose attention are you going to catch, and who are you going to make mad? Also, there's what we called the "establishment lobby," the representatives of varying groups in the

state. There are a number of them, and they also have political action committees. I tried to introduce Clements to these people--to talk to him about what they are specifically sensitive about, what they would like to pass, what they want to try to defeat. I tried to perform an educational process based on my experience that he didn't necessarily have. Then in the special session, I was just dealing with the organization and helping out here and there where I could. There might be something I might know about where I could shorten the time for them to get the answer and things of that sort.

Marcello: When you first started working with Mr. Clements on a close personal basis, did you perhaps find him to be a little naive politically?

Harris: Yes, sure. It's the old saying, that I knew a lot more about state government before I was elected than after (chuckle). I had all the answers then. He was more than willing to . . . knowing him and his personality, I was a little reluctant at first. But he'd say, "I asked your opinion. You give it to me." I'd say, "Okay, here it is."

Marcello: In what areas did you find him to be politically naive in the beginning? Can you cite me any examples?

Harris: Yes. The property tax is a good one. He wanted to jump right out there and lower property taxes and do away with them.

Well, okay, but how did that relate to the independent school district system, Texas education? How are you going to fund it? Aha! Let's hash this out; let's go further. Let's just don't take the issue and pounce on it, seize it and run with it. Let's find out exactly where we are. He was more than easy to work with in that regard.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that you were initially reluctant to give him advice, considering his personality. What did you mean by that?

Harris: He's a pretty strong-willed person. He is a man that knows where he is and takes a position and moves forward. I knew there were some areas that he was going to have some problems with unless he had some more of the background, and so I just had to work with him on that.

Marcello: How closely did you work with the Clements campaign?

Harris: During the month of June, quite closely; and also the month that we were in special session; then kind of off and on until the election. After the special session, I needed to be back here practicing law (chuckle). I moved my law office along about that time. But by that time, those issues were done with. The fat was in the fire there. It was phone banks, traveling, debates. There wasn't much I could do there.

Marcello: During that initial period, were there regular meetings, or were there simply irregular meetings when an issue came up?

Harris: No, they set aside three weeks in the month of June after the primary. A few days rest and then back in Austin. They held up in the Crest Hotel. Paul Eggers was there. We talked issues; we talked about problems, strategy. People came in to visit him, too. We set up a lot of meetings with . . . well, the first time we went to Austin, we had a meeting of all the so-called "establishment lobby." We put on a cocktail party. I introduced him there, because I knew most of them and he didn't.

Marcello: Who were some of these people that attended this cocktail party?

Harris: Do you want them by name or whom they represented?

Marcello: Whom they represented.

Harris: The oil and gas industry, Texas Mid-Continental Gas, the insurance business, securities representation, just on and on. This is not isolated to just business; it was also with various groups that had a specific issue they were concerned about . . . environmentalists or consumers.

Marcello: Would you bring in representatives from TSTA, for example, even though the leadership had publicly come out in support of Hill?

Harris: Yes. TSTA was invited to come and visit with Clements at their pleasure. Scheduling was a difficult problem, as you might imagine. They went to every effort to be sure

that anybody could come in and visit with him and sit down and talk to him about whatever ax they had to grind or whatever they wanted to say to him and discuss with him. Many of them took advantage of it, and TSTA was one of them.

Marcello: How does Mr. Clements perform in these one-on-one sessions, so to speak, or in these personal conferences with the representatives that were present at this cocktail party?

Harris: Quite good. One part of it was a learning process, so there was a lot of listening on his part at those initial meetings in June. Also, he was letting them know where it was he stood basically, within the framework of what it was. Take, for example, teachers. They obviously wanted a pay raise. He made it . . . as I recall, his attitude was, "I'll talk to you about a pay raise, but, look, maybe not as big as you're talking about. I'm not selling out to you like my opponent has." That kind of conversation. He fares very well one-on-one.

Marcello: Do you find that Mr. Clements is a very good listener?

Harris: Yes, he sure is.

Marcello: To be candid, did you actually expect Mr. Clements to win that election?

Harris: No (chuckle). I knew there was a chance--there always is a chance--and I thought he had a little better chance than we've had in the past largely due to the exposure that he

had because of the money he'd spent. Also, don't forget, he ran a pretty good primary, which is beneficial to the first-time candidate. No, if I were betting money, I sure wouldn't have bet on Clements.

Marcello: Actually, he had a much easier primary than Mr. Hill. He just blew Ray Hutchinson out.

Harris: Yes. That was surprising to a lot of us. I figured he was going to win it, but I looked at it about 60-40. I misguessed another one (chuckle).

Marcello: But at any point during the campaign, even right up to the actual election day itself, did you ever have a gut feeling that he just might pull off a win?

Harris: The nearest feeling I got to thinking that he was in the ball park, more than I'd ever guessed, was about a week or ten days before the election. I was in Houston for a political meeting, and at that meeting was Lance Terrence, who did his polling. Lance is known to be a very credible pollster, and he is not going to give you some figures just to make you happy or to publish. So you will know where it is you are. Some things were turning around, and this was long about the time, I think, that a debate or two had taken place. Hill had begun to project this image of incumbency, and those things were coming around.

Then the staff told me on Friday before the election

that Lance was calling it a toss-up. Right on up until Tuesday morning--I found out after the election--he was telling them it was a toss-up, and it was.

Marcello: Is there any one particular issue that you see as having swung the election for Mr. Clements?

Harris: Issue in terms of what we'll be facing in the next session of the Legislature?

Marcello: Yes.

Harris: No, I don't see any one specific one, unless it might be money. I think, as far as projection is concerned, in talking about issues was Clements' positive position about them. Whatever the issue might have been, he had a very positive attitude about it and a very strong position.

Marcello: One of the things that I kept seeing coming up time and time again was Clements emphasizing that Hill was advocating keeping taxes the same, whereas, he--Clements--was saying, "I plan to lower them."

Harris: He kind of bettered him on that, if that got a lot of attention. I'm thinking back about the primary now when Hill got the very definite posture about being in favor of no increase in taxes and no income tax. He was there going in. I just don't know if it would have had a significant effect or not on that as an issue. Certainly, if it did, Clements bettered him just a little bit by saying "cutting taxes," as opposed

to holding the line on them.

Marcello: You are, in a sense, one of the original Republicans in the State Legislature. I guess you could say you've paid your dues. What role do you see yourself playing as a Republican legislator with a Republican governor in the coming sessions of the Texas Legislature?

Harris: More of the same of what I was doing in the campaign. I've been dealing with a transition committee right now since the election. As a fellow said, "Whatever mistakes we make, we want them to be new mistakes. Let's don't make some of the old ones." My role right now is to try to chart the course for them as to stay out of the pitfalls here and there, to just be aware. It's not tell them what to do but tell them, "Here's what you need to be concerned about," more specifically, in the budget right now--getting the budget director, and what type you need. Somebody that knows that state budget and where they can hide the money so the governor will be sure to know where it is.

After the session starts, I would imagine we're going to have a lot of concern over appointments, and he needs to put some attention to that and be concerned about it and be careful about a lot of things. It's just generally keeping him in a good working relationship with the members of the Senate. They're not all going to vote with him all the time,

and Schwartz and others are going to be taking out after him fairly regularly. Just don't give them any excuse or don't give them any additional material to take shots at you with; and continue to work with them and deal with them.

Marcello: So, in essence, your role after the election is in many ways similar to what it was before the election.

Harris: Exactly.

Marcello: That is, you can perhaps give him the advice of your years in the Senate and familiarize him with the inner-workings of state government.

Harris: That's right. That's basically what it amounts to as it relates to the Senate and passage of legislation and as it relates to appointments primarily. I can advise his staff, in dealing with the Finance Committee in the Senate and the Appropriations Committee in the House, as with the budget director.

Marcello: Just a moment ago you were talking about the transition committee that has been meeting regularly in Austin. Talk a little bit more about this. Who is on the transition committee?

Harris: I misstated that. It is not a committee; it is staff. George Steffen is running it, and JoAnn Lay and Bill Keener . . . Bill used to be with Senator Tower, and JoAnn used to work for Senator Tower years back. They are doing the mechanics of making a plan now, and then the implementation of it will

begin in the near future. It is not a committee.

Marcello: Are there any other state legislators besides yourself who are involved in this transition taking place.

Harris: I don't know who. They asked me several questions about the House, and I'd just say, "I don't know" (chuckle). I suggested two or three different members that they should get hold of to talk to about it in getting to know the House members as best they can. It is less workable in the House because of numbers alone. My advice to them is--and I think they're going to do it--to meet and know every member of the Senate prior to the opening of the session; have a social luncheon maybe this week, pretty quick, anyway; then invite them to come visit with him or try to meet with him in groups. There is some plan that has not yet finalized, but there is going to be an effort on his part to meet and know every member of the Senate.

Marcello: Also, in reference to this transition, we have to keep in mind that basically Mr. Clements will not have a whole lot to do with the present budget that is going to be put forward. This is actually going to be Mr. Briscoe's work, is it not?

Harris: Yes. Well, I doubt that Briscoe will have much of anything in that regard. You know, the governor by constitutional statute does not have a lot of powers in Texas. My attitude

has always been that he is just as big as he wants to be. During the Connally administration, they started to give the governor some budget powers--increase his budget staff and letting him come forward with a proposal. The Legislative Budget Board meets during the interim, and they come forward--they just did last week or so--with their budget. The House may or may not take the LBB recommendations, but the Senate will, and we will introduce it in January. Then the governor comes forward with his budget, and you've got another document to work with. As soon as the session starts we start all hearings over again--of all the state agencies. My advice to him on the budget, because that LBB bill was cut way back, is to take that bill, or those proposals, and then look at the agencies and what their requests were and who got cut back and how much and why. I'd direct him to four basic areas--Texas Education Agency, Human Resources, Mental Health and Mental Retardation--where you might find some fat. Anyway, look at those proposals by the agencies and look at what the LBB was, and you might want to just stick with that budget with some adjustments here and there.

Marcello: The LBB's budget proposals are usually always less than the governor's?

Harris: The LBB is the Legislative Budget Board, and in the Senate we just traditionally introduce that bill. The recommendations

were cut way back, and it might be that Clements just would take that bill and maybe make adjustments where he felt like and use that as his proposal. It was an idea of mine not to go up on it, because I knew the Legislature won't go up on it (chuckle).

Marcello: If you will, can you project the type of relationship that you see developing between this Republican governor and this very Democratic Legislature? What sort of relationship do you see developing down the road between Mr. Clements and Legislature that is obviously dominated by Democrats?

Harris: It is largely up to him, and this is a hard thing. It ought to be 50-50. When a new governor comes in, it ought to be without regard to party, and it ought to be, "Look, you be fair with me, and I'll be fair with you." I don't think it's going to be that way. At least my suggestion to them is that they act like it's not going to be. That may be a little unreasonable, but the onus is on him to step forward, courting them, talking to them about appointments, again, not giving them any excuses at all to be picking on him.

Marcello: I've heard one Democrat say that the Legislature and the governor will get along well as long as he doesn't meddle in legislative business and vice versa. Is that sound advice that you would give to him?

Harris: No, not completely that way. You see, the Legislature is

very proud of the fact that it is strong. By the virtue of the constitution and statutes they are strong in power and independent. But we all know that the governor has influence over the Legislature, whether it is political party or whatever it may be, appointments or what. He's got a good trading power or however you want to look at it. And he has the forum. The news media will print what he says, where they wouldn't what I might say if I get crossways with the governor.

Those factors are still going to exist with a Republican governor, but the Legislature is really going to rear its back in my opinion and say, "I don't care who is the governor. You'll be just as strong as you let us let you be, because we're going to go on about our business, and you can go on about your business." That is going to be their attitude, or the attitude of some of them.

The governor . . . that's why he's going to have to work a little bit harder from his vantage point--in order to get them in an area of exchange and not be just totally independent of one another.

Marcello: Senator Harris, is there anything else relative to the gubernatorial campaign or the special session that we haven't covered or that you think we need to get as part of the record?

Harris: No, I think that's about it. It is way too early to tell about

the governor. I know we'll do this again at the end of the next session, and it will be real interesting then to rehash what it was he did or didn't do or should have done. I think Clements is going to extend that extra effort.

Marcello: Again, I thank you very much for having taken time to participate. You've been candid, as usual. We appreciate that, and that's what we want.

Harris: I enjoyed it.