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Interview with
REPRESENTATIVE TIP HALL
November 21, 1983

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Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello
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Oral History Collection

Representative Tip Hall

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Representative Tip Hall for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 21, 1983, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Hall in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions concerning the recent session of the 68th Texas Legislature.

Mr. Hall, to begin this interview, let's talk a little bit about the House speakership. You had a new speaker this time, Representative "Gib" Lewis of Fort Worth. Describe what you remember from his selection as speaker. In other words, describe how the whole process affected you personally in terms of voting for him and that sort of thing.

Mr. Hall: Well, I certainly didn't have any problems along this line because in the session in 1979, I was one of the ones who told "Gib" that I thought he ought to run for speaker of the House. Of course, we've worked together in the legislation for North Texas and TCOM and to get the situation straightened out when they were having some troubles. We worked together on that. They talk about him having a "good

ol' boy" image, and I guess he does; but I think the press has done him a great deal of injustice this year. When he came to us one time and was expressing his regrets because perhaps he might have brought some reproach upon the House because of failing to report some of his investments and interests in different business concerns, I told him I thought it was great because as long as the press was on him, it would stay off us.

That's really kind of a far-fetched rule, anyhow, to have to report each and every one of these things. We've made the reporting procedures even more rigorous now, in the future, than they've been in the past. It has really been kind of difficult for anybody that has any kind of holdings at all to run for an office because everybody will think that they have some kind of a special interest, and it's almost to the point of ridiculous.

But, of course, I didn't have any trouble with "Gib." I think he befriended me in every way as far as appointments are concerned because he appointed me to the Appropriations Committee. He made me chairman of Budget and Oversight for State, Federal, and International Relations. Then in the interim, I was made vice-chairman of the joint House and Senate committee to study state land and state property to see if we're getting the amount of money we ought to get; and I'm also on the Child Abuse Committee and also two other

committees as far as Appropriations is concerned. So he put me to work.

Marcello: Describe how the whole process concerning his selection took place. This is something I think we need to get in the record for the students of government. Now you have pledge cards and so on that you sign.

Hall: Yes. When Speaker Clayton got into the trouble that he got into, "Gib" started running even during the 67th Session of the legislature. Well, actually, I guess it was during the 66th Session because we didn't know what the posture of Clayton was going to be and how he was going to come out as far as the trial was concerned. But when he was acquitted, as far as that trial was concerned, "Gib" already had enough pledge cards, I think, to be elected speaker of the House, but he just shut down and told them that he would revive his activities after Speaker Clayton decided what he was going to do after his--what was it--his fourth term. When he decided not to run again, "Gib" revived it, and I am quite certain that "Gib" had enough pledge cards signed to be elected speaker even before I was elected in 1982. Of course, I signed a pledge card and immediately went with him out to West Texas to see another man that was a friend of mine, Steve Carriker, who was elected to that district out there, to get his pledge card signed. That's the way that they go about it. They go to see all the representatives that are in office and those

that hope to be in office and try to get them to sign a pledge card, and when they sign that pledge card, they pledge their vote to them. Then when we go into the House, the secretary of state gives us the oath of office and then presides until we elect the speaker, of course.

Marcello: Depending upon the speaker, can it be important at what point you have signed that pledge card? In other words, I assume that when a pledge card is signed, they are more or less put in numerical order in terms of their having signed. In other words, I guess what I'm saying is, again, depending upon the speaker, if one has signed a pledge card early, could that in some way be better than, let's say, having signed a pledge card after a speaker has the required number of votes to hold that office?

Hall: Yes, if you were really holding out, if you'd had the opportunity to sign the card. I didn't sign my card early before, in the 66th Session, when "Gib" was running, but I'd already pledged my support to him. I told him on several occasions, "You don't have my pledge card." He said, "No, but I know it's there, and I can get it." So if it's that basis, it doesn't really make any difference if you've signed it or not. If they know that you had had the opportunity to sign it, you would have signed it.

But if they approach you, and you say, "Well, I'm not sure I want to support you at this time; give me more time,"

then that might make some difference. I think it really makes a difference if, indeed, there are four or five men running for speaker and you were supporting one, and then he pulled out, and then you went over and put your support to him. I think that would make considerable difference as far as your appointments are concerned.

However, in all fairness, I think I'd have to say that Speaker Clayton--and I think "Gib" Lewis is the same way--if it came down to the point of saying, "I'm going to have to appoint this man here to this position because he's the best qualified. He'll do me the best job. He's the best for the State of Texas. He didn't support me. There's a lot of others over here that supported me, but he is the best man by such a preponderance that I'm going to have to put him there," I think, that being the case, they'd go beyond...and I think a case in point was former Representative Walt Parker. Walt didn't support Clayton the first time that he ran for speaker. He supported Carl Parker, who went to the Senate. But Walt was made vice-chairman of the Appropriations Committee anyhow because he was the best qualified. So there comes a point there, in doing the best job for you and for the state government, that you're going to look over some of those pledges.

Marcello: In your response to my last question, you did mention both Speaker Clayton and Speaker Lewis. In looking back in reflection, how would you compare or contrast the styles of

the two men as speakers of the House?

Hall: Well, I'm going to put it this way. Of course, I didn't know Speaker Clayton the first term that he served as speaker, nor did I know him the second term. I knew him part of the second term, and I was down there with him the third term. I was not down there with him the fourth term. But, of course, going into the speakership the first time, as Speaker Lewis did, he's not going to have the ease, and he's not going to be able to work with the ease that Speaker Clayton did when I first saw him when I went in. But there was some changes that were good as far as the speakership was concerned. We had some rules that some of them were a little bit concerned about because they gave the speaker just a little bit more power as far as his committee appointments were concerned and so forth. But I didn't see that the state suffered any by having a change in speaker, particularly in line with the fact that we encountered some things that we hadn't encountered all four terms that Speaker Clayton was in there.

Marcello: I'm sure we'll talk about some of these things in a minute. Again, you mentioned certain changes in the House rules, one of which gave the speaker the power to dismiss committee chairmen and vice-chairmen. What was your reaction to this proposal?

Hall: Well, it was a little bit scary at first, but since it never happened, I have real difficulty envisioning this ever happening.

If that individual is so much a team man as far as the speaker is concerned, and the speaker wants something and most of the team wants something, I can't envision anybody just arbitrarily being in complete opposition to him to the point that it disrupts the whole process. I don't mean that you can't disagree because you can disagree, and I don't mean that you have to necessarily carry on activities in your committee that are required by the speaker. But by the same token, if it's just one cog of a big wheel, and you're going to keep the whole process from revolving, maybe the speaker needs this power. But, like I say, it was never used, and I can't envision it being used.

Marcello: Well, it seems to me that perhaps from a practical standpoint, although the speaker perhaps doesn't want puppets, so to speak, as committee chairs, he nevertheless does want somebody who is basically in sympathy with his motives and goals and so on to keep the whole process moving.

Hall: Well, actually, I think all these committee chairmen--and Budget and Oversight as far as that goes--get together, and they pretty well establish what they want. The whole Appropriations Committee was called in on several occasions to meet with the speaker, and he would say, "What are we going to do?" Then he'd get input from each of us. I felt like I had a big part in molding the whole process that we went through this time.

Marcello: You mentioned a moment ago that one of the committees to which

you were assigned was the Appropriations Committee. Another one of the rule changes affected the membership on that committee. Is it not true that the requirement that half the committee be selected on the basis of seniority was done away with?

Hall: In a sense, yes, it was; but still the speaker put these people that had served prior on the Appropriations Committee in positions that would put them on the Appropriations Committee. What he did...and, boy, this was really sound. For instance, I was chairman of Budget and Oversight for the State, Federal, and International Relations Committee, so I met with the Good Neighbor Commission in Washington and some others about their budgets. I went over their budgets with them. Then I in turn presented that budget to the Appropriations Committee because being the Chairman of Budget and Oversight automatically put me on the Appropriations Committee. This was true in every one of the substantive committees. So we met with the people in our committee, and then we carried it to the Appropriations Committee. Before, you would go and meet with a particular committee, and then you would carry it to the Appropriations Committee after you'd met with him and meet with their recommendations, and then there might not be any of them on the Appropriations Committee. So it did streamline it, and it really did make it better because always there was somebody on the Appropriations Committee that was conversant

with the things that were being discussed.

Marcello: Let's get back to the Appropriations Committee again because that is a committee to which you were assigned, and, of course, it is one of the most important committees in the House. In an interview with another legislator, he mentioned that there are certain members who do not want to become a member of that Appropriations Committee if for no other reason than that people are always coming to them for special favors on this pet project and that pet project and things of that nature. Why did you want on the Appropriations Committee?

Hall: Well, when you're on the Appropriations Committee, you get a complete insight of all the state operations, and, believe me, they were right about everybody coming to you and everybody talking to you. On the Appropriations Committee, you probably put in three or four times as many hours of work as anybody else. But I feel like the people elected me to that office to help oversee the state government, and I didn't go down there to sit around and watch others work. I went down there to work, and for that reason I had the desire to be on the Appropriations Committee. I don't mind being on the Appropriations Committee, and I don't mind people coming to me and talking about their needs and so forth because, by the same token, I understand that, and I can also point out that everybody else has these same needs.

I'm sure you're aware that...I don't know that this is

the time to bring this up, but a week ago today, I was in a Child Abuse and Child Pornography Committee meeting at Bryan when Representative Bill Presnal made it known that he would not be a candidate for reelection this next term. For the past five sessions, he has been chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Not only did he make that known, later in the week he made it known that he was going to resign the 15th of January. He probably has more insight to state finances and the writing of the state budget than anybody in the House of Representatives, of course, but he's not going to run, and we're going to have to get somebody else. I don't mean that we won't have anybody else that's capable, but he has all the qualities that a good Appropriations chairman has to have, and that is to listen to people. Like you said, people come to him, and they lay out their budget before him, and he listens to them, and listens kindly, and he then says, "No." But I don't mean that saying "no" as abrupt as that, but he explains to them what we can't do. By the same token, there might be some agencies that he has no interest in whatsoever, but he would still listen to them and still allow them the right and everything. These are characteristics that a chairman has to have as far as the Appropriations Committee is concerned. He runs the committee well. We're going to miss him.

Marcellis: You've more or less anticipated my next question, and maybe

I can get you to elaborate on what you just said. Since you were on Appropriations, describe Mr. Presnal's conduct as chairman of that committee. When I say "conduct," I mean, generally speaking, the running of that committee.

Hall: Mr. Presnal was the type of individual who always gave everyone an opportunity to express their opinions, to ask their questions, to pursue their line of thinking, and he was the kind of an individual who allowed any agency to present all of their testimony. He never cut them short. He might ask them on some occasions, if they had several people that were testifying, not to be redundant because of the time factor, but he never did just cut anybody off as far as that was concerned. And as far as the members of the committee were concerned, he was very considerate with us as far as the time element was concerned. He would just explain to us that "we've got so much to do next week, and we're going to work," and, of course, with having twenty-nine members on the committee, we met the first time, and we never did adjourn. We'd just stand at ease until a certain time the next morning, so we always had enough to listen, and we didn't have to have a quorum except when we were voting, and the only time that we voted was when we were on mark-ups. We got to listen to all of this.

I guess I'm kind of partial to Bill Presnal because he's my deskmate. We sit side-by-side on the House floor; and he's

an Aggie and I'm an Aggie (chuckle). He was one of the first individuals that I became acquainted with when I went into the legislature. But he's just a fine individual. I don't know what he's going to do, but since this is not going to come out for some time--since he's resigning the 15th of December--I've got a sneaking suspicion that he's going to become the assistant to the chancellor at A&M. There's some talk of that. I don't know if that's true.

Marcello: I assume that in his position as chair of Appropriations, he was in a good position to take care of A&M.

Hall: Yes, I'm sure he was. Of course, A&M and Texas University don't really need to be taken care of. They're pretty well taken care of already (chuckle). But by the same token, he was just as good to any of the others on every opportunity. He allowed me to be good to North Texas, and he allowed me to be good to Midwestern State University. Of course, my son attended Midwestern State University. He allowed me to be good to Texas Women's University. Being on the Appropriations Committee, I had the chance to get to know all those members real well, and I let them know my pet wants as far as the universities are concerned, and most of them go along with it. See, we kind of scratch each other's back, so I'd say it's a pretty good political ploy to be on the Appropriations Committee (chuckle).

Marcello: I want to come back and talk more about Appropriations later

on because obviously, given the budget crunch, the activities of the Appropriations Committee were going to be rather important. Let's get back again to Speaker Lewis, and let me really throw out a loaded question to you, and you respond.

Hall: All right.

Marcello: How can a person overlook or forget items that amounted to a twenty-one-page amendment to his 1981 financial disclosure? How can one overlook over a hundred changes and forty business interests?

Hall: Well, one can't. Being a representative, when I fill out that financial disclosure statement, I just go through and check real fast, and as long as I'm a representative, nothing's ever said. If I were elected speaker, and they go back and check that, and they start finding things...of course, it wouldn't be any great problem with me because I don't have that much holdings, but I can easily understand how this could happen to anybody. He'd been doing this for five or six terms exactly the same way. It was never checked or thought to be important until he got to be speaker of the House. So he had to go back and amend these for about six or seven different terms to make this all...but to say that that's an excuse for it, I'm not going to say that because he should have had his house in order. It's kind of like I said to Speaker Clayton when he got caught with the--what--\$10,000 in the credenza down there...I told him, "You were

a dumbass, weren't you?" (chuckle) He said, "Yeah, I sure was." It was just about the same thing as far as Speaker Lewis, but I don't think he was intentionally trying to hide anything. I don't think that, because he has many, many people looking after his business interests; and to be quite frank with you, he never did say this, but he probably had somebody make out his financial statements.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. Did you perhaps get the impression that maybe not too many people in the legislature took this whole business of financial disclosure too seriously?

Hall: That's right. We didn't. Even yet I don't. Quite frankly, I feel like that unless there is some specific area where they can prove conflict of interest, it's not really people's business. I don't know how the law was made and why it's there--but I will certainly adhere to it--but I really think that in some of my financial transactions, if there's not a conflict of interest--unless they could prove a conflict of interest--it's not really anything that needs to be public knowledge.

Marcello: I think one of the things that got Speaker Lewis in trouble with the press was the fact that he came out in opposition to increasing the minimum drinking age, and he also came out against the open container bill when at the same time it was revealed that he did have certain business interests with people who represented the liquor interests and the paramutual

betting interests and that sort of thing.

Hall: That's right. To be quite frank, I told him that he better get off that horse, particularly an open container law. He better get with it because I think the people are going to demand it. Most states have it besides Texas, anyhow. I don't have a problem with passing an open container law, and I think we need it. I think our DWI law is a good one. I'm not sure that raising the drinking age is going to help any. I've heard all the arguments one way and the other. I've always had problems telling kids that they can vote and they can go serve in the army and risk their life and do all this, but they're not old enough to drink. Of course, I told somebody that I'd like to raise it to seventy-five (chuckle), but I'm sure the liquor industry would get after me if I did that. I don't drink. Even in Austin, I don't drink. Of course, I preach full-time, and I don't have any problem not drinking. By the way, in defense of the legislators down there, you very, very seldom see a legislator that's inebriated in any way. Of course, I don't guess you should expect otherwise, but it seems that some people think that's all they do down there.

Marcello: How do you explain the death of that open container bill in particular?

Hall: Well, I think they had a committee that wouldn't vote it out to the House floor. That's the whole sum of it. Really, with

some of the amendments they had on it, I wouldn't want it on the House floor, either. They said anybody in the car could be drinking except the driver. Now that's about as stupid a bill as anybody could pass because the driver would never be drinking. It'd be always the fellow next to him if they stopped you because he could always hand his drink to somebody else, and that would be rather ridiculous.

Marcello: Here again, I think this business over the open container bill reflects the speaker's position. He sent this, I believe, to the Liquor Regulation Committee, which was rather unfavorable toward the passage of that bill.

Hall: And you notice the chairman of that committee lives down on the border, and one of the members of that committee is from Lubbock. I kind of got in trouble over him because he's one of my suite-mates down there in the House--Froy Salinas--and the Lubbock Avalanche came out bomb-blasting him and telling what a sorry representative he was and how that he wasn't doing the state's business. I just wrote a letter to the editor, and I said, "For you to chastise Froy Salinas for the fact that he didn't vote for one bill that you wanted, fine. But to immediately make the assumption that he's not down here working--not doing the business of the state--is wrong, and you have no basis for which to make a statement." So the MAD people kind of got mad at me because I stood up for Froy Salinas. But I was not standing up for the fact that

he voted against the open container bill; I just thought that on one thing that he did, they made a general observation, and I didn't think it was fair. Of course, I get after that press all the time, anyhow. Yes, I think we've got a war--you didn't ask this--but I think we've got a war in our country as to who's going to run the country--the elected officials or the media.

Marcello: I have a question concerning the press. Again, you seem to be anticipating my questions. Would you assess the fairness or unfairness of the press toward Speaker Lewis?

Hall: Oh, I suppose the press was not unfair to him. I think the press is unfair to the public because they editorialize news and facts. I'm a great believer in the fact that the press ought to print things just exactly like they are in the news section. Then when they get over to the editorial page, they can express their opinion. I think all too often our press is distorting news to sway the public like the press wants them to be swayed. I think perhaps some of the things about Lewis, even though they were factual, were so distorted as to make the people think like the press wanted them to think. But it's not just about him. I think this is true about everyone.

Marcello: I think, with regards to Speaker Lewis's press relations, we have to remember that several things seemed to come to a head...

Hall: All at once.

Marcello: ...at one time. You have the revelation of his failure to completely disclose his financial interests; then you have his public opposition to those laws we just talked about concerning the drinking age and open containers; and then he also has that problem of articulating sometimes, does he not?

Hall: He surely does. He surely does. He's getting better. I think he's got somebody grooming him someway. I suppose that anyone who has not been before the public to some extent would have encountered this problem. Of course, preaching full-time and then having been a schoolteacher for some twenty-five years, I guess I almost get on an equality basis with my lawyer contemporaries down there and their ability to stand before the public and speak. However, I don't do it with the eloquence that they do, which is not necessarily needed.

Marcello: How did the disclosures of Lewis's financial situation affect the conduct of the House as the session wore on? In other words, did all that business concerning his failure to disclose have an effect, let's say, on his control of the House and things of that nature?

Hall: None whatsoever. Representative Brad Wright--he's a Republican from Houston--spoke to the Hospital Association's meeting in Austin. My brother-in-law happens to be on the board out here at Flow Memorial Hospital, and he and my sister were down there,

and Brad Wright spoke to them that morning. After he had spoken, he was asked questions--he allowed them to ask questions --and one of the questions that they asked him was, "What was his reaction to the fact that 'Gib' Lewis failed to make disclosure of some of his finances in his financial statement." He says, "Well, as far as I'm concerned, it's not any of the public's damn business he has his money invested if it's not a conflict of interest." That was his reply at the Hospital Association.

Marcello: And did you seem to think that that was perhaps the attitude of most of the members of the House?

Hall: Yes, it surely was. I don't mean by that that we ought to disregard the law that commands us to do it. I think we should do it. But the fact that he didn't, we didn't think, was as big an issue as the press thought it was. Maybe I'm wrong and maybe I'm naive, but I can't envision the fact that he did any of that for monetary gain. Shoot, he doesn't need it. He can make more accidentally than most of us can on purpose (chuckle).

Marcello: Let's get off Speaker Lewis and talk about another personality. I think we have to talk about these personalities because they're very important relative to the operations of the 68th Legislature.

Hall: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Let's talk about Governor White.

Hall: Yes, sir.

Marcello: How would you assess his performance as a lobbyist, if I may use that word, in getting his program or programs passed by the Texas Legislature?

Hall: Well, Governor White encountered a problem that hadn't any governor encountered in Texas in so long that it's kind of difficult to make any comparison whatsoever. That was the lack of finances. It was kind of difficult for him to lobby us for the teacher's pay raise because there wasn't any money there, and there was not the sympathetic feeling in the House of Representatives particularly for a tax increase because there was not that sympathetic feeling among the people of Texas for a tax increase.

I think that is beginning to swing. I think most people realize that there's come a time we're going to have to grow up; I'm not sure that they're ready yet for that. But what I'm saying is that the governor never had the opportunity to come over and lobby us for teacher pay raise because there was no way for us to do it. Had we had the money, he could possibly have done better or would have done better.

He lobbied, also, for the change to make the Public Utility Commission elected instead of appointed. This was the thing that the governor...I think it was mandatory on his part to try to get this done. I didn't vote for that. I would not have voted for that because everybody that approached me said, "Let's leave the Public Utility Commission as is.

Leave it appointed by the governor." The reason is that if these individuals were elected, they were going to be financed by the utility companies--their campaigns--and we might find ourselves in a worse predicament than we are now. The governor did contact me and ask me to vote for it, and I told him that the people in my district wanted me to keep the Public Utility Commission as was with a few changes. I think most of the people wanted to have a consumer lawyer. I really couldn't see any point in this because the Public Utility Commission is supposed to be for the consumers to start with. To me it's kind of like admitting the fact that they were doing what they were supposed to do.

But outside of that--those two issues--I think the governor did well. Some people said he offered us no leadership...that he offered us no leadership as far as legislation was concerned. He offered us no leadership as to how to get money, but there was no point in offering it because the time was not right for us to pass some kind of a tax bill. He himself was opposed to a five-cent gasoline tax, which I felt was the only tax we could have passed. But he has come around, and I think he will support a five-cent tax bill, a portion of which will go to education and a portion of which will go to the highway system. It's a mandatory thing that we take care of the highways and the education system because if we don't, we're going to be up the familiar creek without the

well-known paddle, and it's going to require a whole lot more money than what it will require now. It's going to take a whole lot more money to redo it. But I think he gave us real good leadership. I have no quarrels with the governor.

Marcello: How would you assess the governor as a compromiser, that is, one who perhaps was willing to give a little in terms of getting at least in part his program enacted?

Hall: No, I think he was willing to compromise. Well, it almost became a mandatory thing for him (chuckle), but I think he would have been willing to do it, anyhow, just to get some elements of the things that he needed. Again, I need to emphasize the fact that some of the things that the governor espoused in his campaign that we needed, all of us agreed that we needed, but we didn't know we were going to run into a shortfall of money. There was none of us down there that didn't want to improve the highways and improve education. We might not have wanted to go 24 percent, and I think this is a place where a compromise is going to come whenever the money is there. We're not going to be able to do that all at once. I'm not saying that we don't need it; I'm just saying that we're going to have to do with what we can.

Marcello: You mentioned the governor's advocacy of the 24 percent pay increase for teachers. Of course, this was one of the things that he promised in his campaign for the governorship. Did that get him "out on a limb," so to speak, when this shortfall

in state revenues became apparent?

Hall: I don't know that that necessarily got him "out on a limb." I'm sure that some teachers feel hard toward him because he didn't do what he said he was going to do. But he said he was going to do it predicated on the fact that the Legislative Budget Board and the comptroller had projected the money that we were going to have, and then when it fell short by three or four billion dollars, this was not his fault, it was not our fault, it wasn't the comptroller's fault--it was just the state of the economy. It was just something that was in the plans and would have been taken care of to some degree if the money had been available, but it wasn't.

Marcello: Basically, I guess the governor was taken off the hook on this issue by the appointment of that special blue ribbon committee to study the state of Texas education.

Hall: Yes and no. I say that because...the governor himself said that. I listened to him in a speech the other day. Sometimes he refers to this as the Governor's Committee on Public Education, and sometimes he refers to it as Ross Perot's Committee, just depending on the reaction of the people in the area as to what's being said.

But in defense of Ross Perot, again, the media is not giving him a fair shake on what he says. The claim that he says we need to do away with high school athletics. He didn't say that. What he said was that we need to take a

look at these things. When he talked about us increasing the length of the school day and taking a look at the curriculum and the teachers taking a competency test, he's advocating all these things after we get the teachers' salaries up to where they belong. But, see, the media never does print that point. They just say, "He wants this done. He wants this done. He wants this done."

But the committee could help Mark White or it could hurt him, depending on what the recommendations are that they come out with. I'm a great believer in what the National Committee found out. You know, it advocated a curriculum change, and it advocated the length of the day change and a few other things, but then it concluded by saying, "But until parents accept their responsibility as a parent and take an interest in what their child is doing, none of these things are going to help." I'm a great believer in that fact. I don't believe the problem is with the schools. I believe the problems are with the homes.

Marcello: There was also some talk around Austin about the governor's use of the media to get certain programs passed. What comments do you have about that?

Hall: Well, I guess he has more access to the media than some of the rest of us, and I guess, being in his position, he has the prerogative to go to the TV and the radio and the newspaper with things that some of the rest of us...I don't think this

is any different on the state level than it is on the federal level. I don't think that he's any more guilty than anyone else has ever been or anyone else is as far as getting their programs across to the public.

Marcello: There was something else that came up relative to that 24 percent pay increase for teachers, and I'd like to have your comments on this. When it was apparent that that part of the governor's program was in trouble, one of the things that he did was actually go in certain members' districts and campaign for that particular piece of legislation.

Hall: And one of them was the speaker.

Marcello: How did you feel or how would you feel had the governor done that in your district?

Hall: Well, it wouldn't bother me because the people all knew that I was for it. But I do not think that it served its purpose too well for him to go into the speaker's district and advocate this because the speaker was not in favor of a tax increase.

But the media made everybody think that the governor and the speaker were the greatest of enemies, which was not true at all. The governor would come down on the House floor and sit up there, and he would talk to the speaker. As you probably saw in the Denton paper, just after the session was over, the governor and the speaker drove up here to Ponder and met me to get a pair of boots made like what I wear down there. You know, down there it seems to be that people have difficulty

understanding the fact that we can differ, and differ vehemently when we're talking about an issue, and walk out the door arm-in-arm and go eat lunch together. I hate to compare us to lawyers, but (chuckle) I told some of my lawyer friends down there that if we never had got the first lawyer, we wouldn't have any need for the second one (chuckle). But we can disagree vehemently an issue and then go and work together on any other thing. We have to be able to do that.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about one of the real issues of the legislature. You've mentioned this off and on throughout the interview at this point. I'm, of course, referring to taxes and appropriations. Let me ask you a general question, and once more maybe this shows my naivete with regard to the legislative process. I think it is generally acknowledged that the majority of the members in the Texas Legislature are fiscal conservatives, or at least they call themselves fiscal conservatives. This has been something that has been a part of the Texas Legislature for a long time. Yet, even this Texas Legislature, which is essentially fiscally conservative, still spends every cent it can get it's hands on.

Hall: Yes, sir. That seems to be the idea that...the Legislative Budget Board works for two years before we go down there in the session. It works with all these agencies on their budget as to what they need and what they would like to have and how they would put this into effect and so forth. They usually

put this all down predicated upon what the proposed money is going to be as far as the comptroller is concerned. Even though we spend just about everything that we have every-time, we still have to knock everybody back from what they want to fall within the certification line. This year, to fall within that certification line, we had to cut back a whole lot more than everyone anticipated.

What most people don't know is that we went through all the colleges and cut out all new construction that was proposed for this next biennium. Now that that was all already started is going on, and people are going to say, "I thought you cut out all new construction." They're going to look around and see all this construction going on, but that was approved in the biennium before. We cut out all new construction. That was the first thing we did. And then we went through, and we cut out renovation razing. That word destroys me--razing. When you're tearing something down, you're talking about razing (chuckle). But we took that money out. In other words, what was not absolutely essential to carry on the school's program, we cut out of their budget.

We did this with all the agencies, which was altogether a new approach as far as the Appropriations Committee was concerned. We cut out all new positions except those that were mandated by the courts. Of course, we had to put those in. If the federal courts mandated that we do a certain thing,

we had to put those positions in. We went through, and we cut out all pay raises that were asked for. We left them right where they were, and then we wound up with giving a very small percentage of a raise. In the case of the state employees, I think we gave them a raise, but their insurance went up so much that they were actually out more money than they were the year before.

So there was not any question about the fact that we had to be fiscally conservative this time. Maybe in times past we have not had to be because if a school wanted to build a new building--the Coordinating Board said they needed this building, and their enrollment justified this building, and we had the money--we just went ahead and approved this building. But we didn't this time.

Marcello: What would have been the objections--and this is a speculative kind of question, I think--what would have been the objections to taking a portion of that surplus of previous years and putting it in a special fund and then perhaps using it from time to time as a particular need arose, such as increasing pay for teachers and that sort of thing?

Hall: Well, in 1978, when I was elected to the legislature the first time, the first experience I had in the Capitol as a legislator was at the special session on tax relief in which supposedly we gave people some tax relief by the action we took, which is really a misnomer. There wasn't any tax relief to it.

As you say, it would have been far better if we had taken that money then that we had...and as somebody said, we could put it in a savings account for the state, so to speak, and, you know, there wouldn't have been anything wrong with that. In fact, it would have been a great idea, and we've wished many times this year that that's what we'd done.

Marcello: It just seems to me like a tremendous amount of money would be generated just in terms of interest alone to finance some of these programs. Perhaps not in their entirety, but it would go a long way toward certain things that were felt to be necessary.

Hall: I suppose, if we had not had the constitutional provision that we have and are so proud of, we would have probably done some deficit spending on the state level this year. But I'm glad we've got it. I still wish we had it at the national level.

Marcello: Now this brings up an interesting question, and let me throw this out to you. One of the ways or means in which the governor, I think, wanted to get around this pay-as-you-go constitutional provision was to issue bonds for highway construction and then string out other construction projects so that they would carry through other budget periods. Was this another way of bring about deficit financing?

Hall: Yes, sir, and it was never even considered seriously by any of the representatives. In fact, I think the public is the only one that talked about that. We didn't even discuss it

because there wasn't any support for it. With all due respect to the governor, I don't think he really wanted to saddle our children and the future generations with this bond issue. We all feel like that they've got all that they can stomach from Washington without us putting any more like that on them,

Marcello: It seems to me that once something like that gets started, any future governor could use the same ploy.

Hall: Oh, yes.

Marcello: We'd be bond-issued to death, I guess.

Hall: Somebody said that the chances of that were none and less (chuckle), so it was never even seriously considered.

Marcello: Now in the whole appropriations and budget process during this past session, what role does Comptroller Bullock play?

Hall: Well, before we met, after the Legislative Budget Board put out their proposed budget probably last November up until the time we met on the Appropriations Committee somewhere around the first of February, there was about nearly a \$2 billion drop. All right, Bullock is the one that gives us projections. When he gave us that projection, we knew that we had to cut our budget down \$2 billion, so we went to work on the Appropriations Committee with that. But before we'd worked two or three weeks, he came back in and said, "Hey, I missed it. There's another \$1.8 billion."

Now it was not poor judgment on his part. It was the fact that deflation hit the Texas area all at once, and it

hit it in so many different areas--the devaluation of the peso in Mexico, along the shore over in Beaumont, the closing of Lone Star Steel in East Texas, and all these things. As a result, people quit buying, and our sales tax dropped. When we felt a depression or recession or whatever you want to call it through the cessation of tax money as far as Texas was concerned, we felt it all at once.

The part that the comptroller plays--after saying all that--that he tells us how much money he will certify that Texas is going to have in the next biennium, if we do not write our budget within that certified amount, our budget is not official. In other words, this goes back to the deficit spending. It makes no difference what laws we pass in the State of Texas. If the money is not there as certified by the comptroller, the law is of no effect. So we have to write the budget within the bounds of what he stipulates.

Marcello: It does make it pretty difficult, however, does it not, when he continually revises those earlier revisions, and in every case it was a downward revision of estimated revenues.

Hall: Yes, it made it real difficult. Of course, we went in from the very outset cutting the things that I've already mentioned. It wound up that we were relatively close right then. And what we do...when we go through and we've done everything that we can to get these down, what we do then is that we just take off 2 percent, for example, across the

board from everybody. That's what we did and came out with about \$60,000 away--that much left over.

Marcello: Some people have speculated that one of the motivations for Bullock continually revising the revenue estimates was to make Governor White look bad. In other words, the implication is that Bullock himself had gubernatorial ambitions and that this figured into his several estimates.

Hall: Thinking that that was the case, I think the speaker sent for Representative Stan Schlueter, who was chairman of Ways and Means, and several others over, and they sat down with the comptroller's chief deputies and fed all of the information into the computer and saw that what the comptroller was telling us was based strictly on fact and not to try to make anybody look bad. I'm sure people could construe that to look that way, but I don't think that was Bullock's...Bullock is not that deceptive. If Bullock thinks you're a horse's rear end, he tells you, and he doesn't refer to it as a rearend (chuckle). He's very, very blunt. He's not the kind to use deceptive practices at all.

Marcello: Okay, so you have a limited amount of money, and you have to stay within the comptroller's estimates; therefore, under these circumstances, you either have to cut spending or raise taxes. Now it seems as though, from everything that I read in researching this topic, that the Senate was more inclined to increase taxes than the House.

Hall: Yes.

Marcello: Is this true?

Hall: Yes, sir, it was true because of the lieutenant governor. The House was not inclined to because the speaker was not inclined to. I told the governor I would carry whichever tax bill he wanted. I have to support teachers because my whole family is teachers.

Marcello: And you have a bunch of them in your district.

Hall: I live in a teaching community, and I've always been an advocate of this. I told Governor White I'd carry whichever tax bill he wanted me to carry, but, you know, there's not any use of me or anybody else carrying it until we've got the votes to pass it. If we bring it up and get it defeated once, it will be harder to pass it the second time.

Marcello: I know that even before the session started, Lieutenant Governor Hobby was indicating that there had to be a tax increase. Then when the session began, one of the first things that the lieutenant governor did was to call the Senate into session as a committee of the whole and talk about a tax increase. What was the reaction of House members when this occurred, especially since tax bills originate, or are supposed to originate, in the House?

Hall: Well, this was the talk when this happened: "What can they do? They can't introduce a tax bill. We have to introduce a tax bill because a tax bill has to originate in the House

of Representatives." Again, I think the purpose of this was to let us know and to let the media and the people know that the Senate was in favor of a tax bill. I think this was the purpose.

Marcello: In other words, it was perhaps an attempt to maybe put pressure on the House to come up with a tax bill.

Hall: Possibly. But it didn't work (chuckle).

Marcello: Now one of the ways that the governor put forward to come up with the revenues that he felt were needed for his programs was an increase in the so-called "sin taxes," whether it's doubling the alcohol and tobacco taxes or tripling the taxes on video games and pin ball machines, and then, of course, raising the gasoline tax by five cents a gallon. What was your reaction to increasing taxes on these items as a way of financing the governor's programs?

Hall: Well, I had no problem with any of the increasing the tax on beer and cigarettes and video games. However, from all the research that my staff could do, we weren't talking about but maybe \$100 million or \$200 million. That's big money--I know that's big money--but that's not big money when we're talking about teachers pay raises. When we need \$3.5 billion, \$100 million is just a drop in the bucket. As near as we could come up with a figure, that's about all we were talking about as far as these "sin taxes" were concerned. I jokingly said to the governor that, since I'm a preacher, "Let's don't get

the tax on sin too high because I'll be put out of another job," (chuckle) and he laughed with me on that. I don't have any problem with that tax. The only problem with that tax is that that doesn't generate enough money to do anything that anybody wanted to accomplish.

Marcello: Is it not also true that he introduced that piece of legislation rather late in the session?

Hall: Yes.

Marcello: Wasn't it, like, two weeks before the session was over that that piece of legislation was introduced?

Hall: Well, it got out of committee...no, I don't believe it ever got out of committee, did it?

Marcello: I don't know, but it had trouble finding a sponsor, too.

Hall: Well, the big thing about it was that it didn't generate enough money to do anything. That was the fallacy of that particular kind of a tax.

Marcello: We talked about this briefly earlier, and I want to get some more comments on it. I think another one of the governor's very important programs--at least he so indicated--was making the Public Utilities Commission an elected body as opposed to an appointed body. I think you've given me some of your views concerning it already. Let me ask you this. What lobbying did the private utilities undertake with members of the legislature when this piece of legislation was being kicked around?

Hall: Primarily, the utility companies would tell us, when they would talk to us, that whatever route we took, let's keep a strong Utilities Commission. But now probably industry bothered us most because industry is aware of the fact that to be successful in any state and to be in a position to attract industry to that state, one of the things that we have to have are good utilities.

I don't fault the Public Utilities Commission for anything that they're doing. I think that the work that we've done in the past has really made it a strong organization. We've done things that, I think, helped the consuming public when we allowed the Public Utilities Commission just to present a proposal for a particular area instead of going in and presenting it for every city that they said needed that particular raise. You take some of these small cities like Decatur and Gainesville--some of those--they don't really have the personnel to go out and run a survey and to do all this work; and if they require it done for each of those cities, that costs a lot of money, and then utilities are just going to tack on as part of their expenses and put it on top of their bill. So I think that the Utilities Commission, because of the things that happened in this last session, is going to get a little bit tighter on the utility companies. They're not going to give them all that they ask for. They're going to penalize them if they don't give good service, and I think

that's the way it ought to be.

But we have ceased to enjoy cheap energy in the United States. We're not ever going to see it again. We just as well should prepare for it. That's not a prophetic utterance, I don't think. I think that's a well-established fact.

Marcello: I have just one last question I'd like to ask at this point, Mr. Hall, and I'm going to give you a chance to brag on yourself now. What particular piece of personal legislation did you get through this legislature that you're particularly proud of?

Hall: When I got on the Appropriations Committee, I didn't really work to carry out any legislation, and I don't work for any particular personal piece of legislation. Whatever the people want me to do in the area, this is what I work to get done. We established a juvenile justice court here in Denton. I got that done. Senator Bob Glasgow and I got that done. I passed a resolution for Coach Pete Shands and for Pat Roberts here in Denton--just to commend them on the great work that they had done. But my primary objective was to get an appropriations bill through.

I did introduce one bill. I didn't introduce it for the purpose of getting it passed. I introduced it for the purpose of trying to get people to straighten up. I introduced a bill to give the people a prerogative to abolish the central appraisal districts. The reason I did is I felt like the central appraisal

districts were spending far too much of the taxpayers' money just to establish their own little bureaucracy or monarchy-- whatever they have over there--and they were not really doing the job that the people wanted them to do. I also found out that within the State of Texas, some of the best jobs that were being done were the jobs where the central appraisal board just hired the local tax assessor and collector to take care of that business for him. He was going ahead and taking care of it for him and doing it at far less expense than some of these big central appraisal districts. I'm not sure we've heard the end of that either because they're still spending too much money with their budget.

Marcello: Now this all has reference to those former pieces of legislation known as the Peveto Bill or "Son of Peveto Bill" or "Grandson of Peveto Bill" or whatever.

Hall: Yes, that's correct. By the way Wayne Peveto is another one that's not going to run for the legislature next time. But I cite that. That was my primary bill. I introduced several pieces of legislation together with Bob Glasgow just to take care of the needs here within the district. That was primary.

Marcello: Again, you've anticipated one more question (chuckle). How closely do you and Senator Glasgow work during the legislative session? Or how closely does a member of the House and a member of the Senate from the same district work?

Hall: Well, we work together real well. In my district, I actually have four senators. I have Bob McFarland from Arlington--he's got North Carrollton and the Colony--and then I have Ted Lyon, who has a good portion of Collin County over there, as my senator, and then Senator Ray Farabee, who has the northern part of Denton County, and then Bob Glasgow. But Bob and, I guess--and Ray--I work closer with those than I did any of the rest of them because I knew them beforehand. Actually, the office that we have here in Denton is a legislative office. Bob pays the rent, and I pay the lady that runs it, so we work together and have an office here in Denton. We work together whenever there's a need to work together. Whenever there's a need that's common to our district, we just get together and work it out.

Marcello: Well, that exhausts my list of questions, Mr. Hall. Once again, I want to thank you very much for participating in our project. What you've said, I think, is certainly going to increase our knowledge of what happened in the 68th Legislature, and I'm sure that future students and scholars who use this material will find it most valuable.