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Interview with
Jack Blanton
June 30, 1970

Place of Interview: Carrollton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Oral History Collection
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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Representative Jack Blanton for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place at Mr. Blanton's office in Carrollton, Texas, on June 30, 1970. I'm interviewing Representative Blanton in order to get his reminiscences and impressions of the 61st session of the Texas Legislature. We are going to cover both the regular and the two special sessions of that legislature. Mr. Blanton, since this is the first time that you have participated in our program, I wonder if you could very briefly give us a biographical sketch of yourself. Where you were born, where you went to school, something about your family, your education.

Mr. Blanton: Well, I was born in Missouri, and my family moved to Texas when I was quite young. I grew up here in Carrollton, attended grade school here, and graduated from high school here. And later I attended SMU and graduated from that institution.

Dr. Marcello: When did you get married and how many children do you have?

Blanton: I married in September of 1942. I married a girl whose family had been here for about a hundred years at that time and were some of the original settlers in the Stewart colony which includes present Dallas County. And we have three children. Our son is married and is a recent graduate from North Texas. I have a daughter eighteen who is a student at Sul Ross University in Alpine, and a daughter sixteen who is still at home in high school.

Marcello: Did you see military service during World War II?

Blanton: No, I was not in the military.

Marcello: Also, I think another question which would be pertinent to this interview is how would you describe yourself on the political spectrum? Would you consider yourself a liberal or a conservative or a moderate or just what?

Blanton: Well, if you're going to label us, I suppose I would be on the conservative side. However, oddly enough I have some responsibility in the recent minimum wage law which my more conservative constituents would not consider to be in my spectrum as you call it. I tried to get the bill for reducing the voting age on the floor of the House. It passed the House but it was defeated on a recount. These are a couple of the liberal bills. Aside from that most of my voting has been conservative.

Marcello: Would you care to say anything else about your political philosophy; in other words, why is it that you are

conservative?

Blanton: Well, I'm conservative, I suppose, because I grew up in a conservative household and still find no particular fault with that view, although I do not agree with the conservatives in some of their beliefs. I suppose you'd have to say in my dealings with human relations, I'm much more liberal than my background would appear to be.

Marcello: Let's move on to the general session of the 61st Legislature therefore. For our record at least, one of the first major controversies which arose during that regular session was the one year budget versus the two year budget. Which one did you favor and what were your reasons for favoring it?

Blanton: Well, I favored the one year budget. I favored the one year budget for a number of reasons. First and foremost, I think it's utterly ridiculous that the state of Texas does not change its constitution so that the legislature can meet annually. As directors of the largest corporation in the state, which is the state itself, we sometimes-- more or less often as you may feel--but sometimes make errors in our legislative deliberation. And under ordinary circumstances if we don't have a special session an error must remain with the state of Texas for nineteen months, between the end of one session and the beginning of another regular session. A further reason for believing in the one year bill, aside from the fact that it would fit with

annual sessions and annual appropriations, is that there is some evidence to believe that a tax increase could have been delayed . . . no more than delayed, but at least delayed. And the trouble with tax bills is that if we create more taxes than we have appropriation need for, we somehow or another usually find a purpose for the money, and rarely wind up with any kind of a sizable surplus. I would prefer to delay the tax bills as far as possible.

Marcello: What did you think of Governor Smith's original tax proposals, which I think totaled somewhere around \$250 million. For example, did you think the taxes were equally distributed between business and the consumer? Or were they distributed as you would have liked them to have been?

Blanton: Well, his proposal came quite early in the session, of course, and we got so far from it that I dismissed his proposal from my mind, and I really want to refresh myself on his proposals before I discuss them. However, we left them pretty far afield when we finally wound up with a tax bill.

Marcello: One of his proposals, as I recall, called for a tax on the chemical industry. Now many people have said that this was politically motivated mainly because Governor Smith felt that he didn't receive the support from that particular industry to which he felt he was entitled. Do you know anything about this?

- Blanton: I don't know whether or not the chemical industry did or did not support Governor Smith. And I do not pretend to know what Governor Smith's motives were in proposing such a tax. But I personally expressed myself at the time as being against selecting one industry--in this case the chemical industry--to bear what I thought was a disproportionate share of the tax load, and therefore I was against that particular phase of his proposal.
- Marcello: Now it has been said by the press and by several of the legislators as well that Governor Smith at times can be rather vindictive when he feels that he has been crossed. Do you give any credence to this?
- Blanton: Well, I feel that all of us react politically to various pressures and various stimuli. Whether or not it would be an act of vindictiveness I'm not qualified to say. But I will say that Governor Smith treated me very fairly on what legislation I sponsored although I did have some difficulty with him with one particular bill, but we managed to work it out to his satisfaction and he did later sign the bill.
- Marcello: Some people have said that he was especially, or could be especially vindictive toward Dallas, because here again he felt that the people of Dallas perhaps hadn't supported him as he thought they should have in this recent election.
- Blanton: Well, he certainly made it known to the business leaders of

Dallas that he felt completely free and independent in any decision he might make for or against Dallas.

Marcello: I think another one of the tax proposals which came up during that session was the so called Cavness Plan. What were your opinions on the Cavness Plan? I think this was the plan, was it not, to divert money from the state school fund or the oil revenue . . .

Blanton: Don's proposal was not to divert a portion of the permanent school fund, but rather to take a portion of the income that now goes back into the fund. Of course, this is a matter of semantics for you can certainly say that this is diverting some of the permanent school fund. But the lieutenant governor has appointed a study committee to investigate the Cavness Plan. And I would be a member of that interim committee if and when it's activated and formed . . . I have been appointed on that committee. We have not done study on it. Of course, with the questions that have come up before the legislature there are certainly two sides to that story. And we have to decide . . . the legislature has to decide whether it's better to use some of the funds now which might later produce more dividends or whether we should do things now which put the tax load on our unborn generations. It all has to come from the same place. People pay the tax. We can place it as high as we want to, but the people still pay the tax. And we have to make the decision, which is better,

and it's going to be a delayed form of pay whichever way we go.

Marcello: While the legislators were debating the pros and cons with regard to the state budget, the legislature also was in the midst of passing a substantial number of bills which might be termed their social legislation. For example, one of the proposals called for an increase in the welfare benefits which the state provides. Were you for or against this particular proposal? And what were your reasons for your stand?

Blanton: Are you speaking of the raising the welfare feeling from \$60 to \$80 million?

Marcello: Right, this is correct.

Blanton: Yes, I supported that. Texas has a very niggardly welfare program, and I think it's something like six cents per day that we spend as Texans for welfare assistance for those of us who are less fortunate.

Of course, we hear about things like Ruth Jefferson. I've known Ruth Jefferson all her life. She's from Carrollton. And regardless of what I may think of her personally, she is merely a symbol of what everybody is complaining about, and it's regarded by a great many people as subsidizing illegitimacy. And that's what they object to. Of course, I would venture to say that 98 per cent of the people who raise objections are unaware that only about 7 1/2 per cent of

our welfare assistance goes to the mothers of dependent children. And the big portion of it goes, of course, to the blind and the deaf and those who are totally and permanently disabled. And a very small proportion of our welfare benefits--the \$75 million--goes to the mothers or fathers of dependent children. It's a simple matter. I believe it's less than 30 per cent that goes to AFDS, and 30 per cent of \$60 million which is what we originally had would be \$18 million, and if there are nine million of us in Texas--there are actually more than that--but if there were only nine, that would be \$2.00 per year per Texan. That's not much money; six or seven cents a day.

Marcello: There was also legislation proposed to raise the state minimum wage. Now were you for or against this proposal?

Blanton: Well, actually I was a subcommittee chairman in the House of Representatives which reported the bill out and pass it and it is now a part of the law of the land.

Marcello: At this particular point I also neglected to ask you what committees in the House do you belong to?

Blanton: Well, I'm on State Affairs, Agriculture, Common Carriers, Counties, and Elections.

Marcello: Is there anything else you would care to say about the state minimum wage law which apparently you had a hand in forging?

Blanton: Well, of course, the sponsors of the legislation were

disappointed, not only in the amount of the minimum wage law, that is the minimum figures, but in the sum of the exemptions that were applied to the law. But as I pointed out to them as I did in other instances, it's better to have a vehicle which can later can be improved than to hold out for the whole apple and get nothing.

Marcello: I think there was also a bill proposed which would have increased the amount of money provided for workmen's compensation. Were you for or against this legislation?

Blanton: Yes, I supported the new workmen's compensation law. And as I recall, I'm not sure, but I believe it was practically unanimous. There may have been a few votes against it, but this is one law that nearly everybody in the House could be for.

Marcello: Why did you particularly favor it? Why did you think it was such a pressing matter that it be increased?

Blanton: Well, there's no doubt in anybody's mind that has studied the situation, and I'll have to exclude trial lawyers here, but the rest of us understand that when the state has the highest rate for workmen's compensation and the lowest rate of payment to the disabled, something is wrong. And when the labor people and the TMA can get together on a bill, there must be some quality in the thing that would make it a better law. There's no substitute, of course, for selling the bill and knowing what's in it.

Marcello: Now who's the TMA? Is this the Texas Manufacturers Association?

Blanton: Yes, and they did support the bill, too.

Marcello: I think it's very interesting to note here that at the beginning of the interview you said you were a conservative, or you thought that you were a conservative, but you supported just about every piece of social legislation which was proposed in that House. And most of . . .

Blanton: Well, wait till you get to fiscal matters, and then you'll see my conservative side.

Marcello: Oh, I see. Let's hold off on that for a little while then. Now, of course, another one of the subjects which came up during the regular session was the subject of education. And among other things, there were several bills in the legislature to increase the number of state colleges. For example, there was a bill to establish a University of Texas at Dallas. Would you care to tell us a little bit about your activities in the passage of that particular bill?

Blanton: Well, you've touched on a subject that is dear to my heart, because I happen to have written and sponsored House Bill 303 which did create the University of Texas in Dallas. And the story of its trials and tribulations not only through the House, but through the governor's office are to me very interesting stories.

Marcello: Would you care to go into the details?

Blanton: Well, to begin with a number of attempts have been made by interested groups in making the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies at Richardson a part of a university system. A great many people have objected to this for a number of reasons which I won't go into at this moment, but one group which objected to it particularly the way that we wanted to do it was the College Coordinating Board. And they are formidable foes when they're against a bill. However, we worked the bill through the House, and Senator Hall worked it through the Senate; and it was sent to the governor for his signature. Four days, I believe it was, before the regular session was over, I received a hurry-up call from some Dallas people who were interested in the school. I met them at the capitol building, and they reported that the governor had told them that unless the bill were changed to make it in conformity with the wishes of the Coordinating Board, he would veto the bill.

Marcello: Who were some of these Dallas people that he had talked with?

Blanton: Well, Mayor Jomnson was there and Mr. Cecil Green, and Mr. Gene MacDermitt, large contributors, mostly, to the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies.

Marcello: Why is the College Coordinating Board opposed to the idea?

Blanton: Well, somewhere back down the line somebody discovered that-- I believe it was Florida--had instituted a number of upper level universities which would take the graduates of the

junior colleges and furnish the junior, senior, and possibly graduate work for them. And the Coordinating Board had decided that that would be the proper role for a new college in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. I disagreed with their theory, not so much because I had a college bill which I didn't want interfered with, but the fact that the type of instruction which will be given at the University of Texas in Dallas does not necessarily lend itself to following the type of instruction that a student would get in a junior college. I have no fault to find with junior colleges, and I wanted to do more than we've done so far in the field of junior colleges, but U. T. Dallas is a successor to a technical type of school, a very specialized type of education, primarily in physics and earth sciences and things of that nature which are not normally the second part of any education you might get in junior college. And therefore I was opposed to the upper level institution idea. The other objection that the Coordinating Board . . . the principal objection that they had was that they wanted it to be a free standing university or to be joined together with other state universities in the area in a sort of a metropolitan conglomerate-type college. And I was opposed to that, the principal reason being that I thought by joining it to the University of Texas, which was the only state school that had the equivalent type of program and I want to emphasize over and over that I have

no fault to find with any other university, state or private, in the area. It's just that this particular school is of a special type of education, and we hope that all of them will have top quality. But the Coordinating Board had those objections to it wanted it to be an upper level university only. And they wanted it not to be a part of the university system. Another reason that we wanted to be part of a university system is that we felt that since that was the only state schools that had very much of the type of education that we were going to offer up there, that we could get to a level of, if not competence, at least reputation much sooner than we could if it was a free-standing university, by being part of a university that was established in those fields, in those disciplines.

Marcello: Why didn't the Coordinating Board want this to be a part of the University of Texas System?

Blanton: Well, if you've read the late columns, or the recent columns by my good friend Manny DeBusk, Manny is an old "Tech man," and he is determined that the university system will grow no more. And he intends to do this not only by limitation of other schools in the system, but by placing enrollment limitations on the universities in the system.

Marcello: You also mentioned awhile ago that the Coordinating Board can be a formidable opponent.

Blanton: Foe is the word I used.

Marcello: In what way can it be formidable? Do you mean because of the particular influence of the members of that Board?

Blanton: Well, that's part of it, but, of course, the Legislature created a Coordinating Board to make the recommendations, not only as to what schools should be built, but also what courses should be taught in what schools, and what degrees should be offered. Most of us in the Legislature at least feel that it is an advisory board. We recognize that it has done a great work in its field, but we don't feel that we're absolutely required to take the advice of the Board which we ourselves created unless we feel its advice is better than what we have in mind.

Marcello: You mentioned somewhat earlier that you worked very closely with Senator Ralph Hall, and he was the sponsor of the bill in the Senate. Is that correct?

Blanton: That's correct.

Marcello: In what ways did you and he work together on this particular piece of legislation?

Blanton: Well, he did the same thing for the bill in the Senate that I did for it in the House. And that was to nurse us through all the pitfalls. And try to see that it did not get lost in the committee and that it was brought up at the proper time and early enough to be considered before the adjournment and that sort of thing--all the little things that you have to do to keep a bill alive.

Marcello: Did you ever get together with Senator Hall to plan any joint strategy on the measure, or anything like that?

Blanton: Well, there's really no joint strategy when the bill is moving through the two Houses. Now, you have some cases of joint strategy, and as I told you, the governor four days before the session was over notified these other people who in turn notified me that unless the bill was changed, he would be forced to veto it. I immediately went to the governor's office, of course, and I was a pretty familiar sight around the governor's office by that time because I had lived pretty closely with him during the time that the bill was being processed through the House to the Senate. And I went into his office that morning, and, of course, he knew immediately what I had in mind because he was quite sure, I'm positive, by the look on my face that I had received the news. And he didn't assume any particularly defensive pose, but he was well aware of what I was doing in his office.

Marcello: What were his reasons for backing off from supporting the legislation?

Blanton: Well, I'm confessing that I'm trying to quote the governor, and the governor made these remarks to me over a year ago. But the gist of the matter was that the governor was somewhat surprised that House Bill 303 had passed, since it had had some rather strenuous opposition. And his words to me "I'm

in a bind on this thing," because I think it was seven bills had been introduced into the House to create some new colleges and universities. As I recall his words, "Six of those bills were recommended by the Coordinating Board; one was not. Yours is the one that was not, and yours is the only one that has passed both houses of the Legislature. And I do not know how you were able to get it this far, but you're putting me in the position of asking me to sign the one bill the Coordinating Board did not approve, while the six that they did approve languish in committee. And if I sign your bill in its present form, I will have in effect gutted the Coordinating Board."

Well, of course, I was equally as insistent that he wasn't gutting the Coordinating Board, but that I was interested in knowing what he wanted done to make the bill passable. And he went over a few of the items with me. Actually, we finally agreed that if we could rewrite the bill and leave out the first and second year, he would be agreeable to signing it. He said this would make it near enough, because we had earlier made some concessions. We didn't attempt to run roughshod over to the Coordinating Board. We made some concessions before the bill was written. As we were writing the bill, we put in the fact that it would not open for undergraduate students 'til 1975 and that it would not do anything to take anything away from

any other state university in the area and that sort of thing.

So we recalled the bill from the governor's office which is a step by step process exactly as we sent it to the governor's office to call it back. We called it back and threw it on the House floor and the last action on the bill was that I moved that the House concur on the Senate amendment. The Senate had placed a small amendment on it-- a rather innocuous amendment, but an amendment. And I asked the House to concur on the amendment, and they did. And that was the last act, so when we recalled the bill from the governor's office, then I moved that we reconsider the vote by which we concurred in the Senate amendment. And the House voted with me to reconsider that vote which meant that we had erased that vote. I then moved that we not concur on the Senate amendment and asked for an appointment of the conference committee. The House agreed with me, and we voted then not to concur on the Senate amendment. And the House conference committee composed of myself, and Representative Braecklein, Representative Chris Semos, Representative Charlie Jungmichel, Representative Bud Sherman, was appointed to meet with the Senate conferees. This was, I believe, on Wednesday, and the following day the Senate did exactly the same thing, and the Senate committee composed Ralph Hall, Senator Mauzy, and Senator Ike Harris, Senator McKool,

and Senator Kennard who had been a most vocal critic in the Senate. Well, we sat up all night Thursday night and took out the first two years. That's the only substantive change that we made in the bill. All the conferees except Senator Kennard signed the conference committee report. We went back to the House and to the Senate, repassed it ahead of the deadline, and on the 13th day of June, 1969, the governor came up to the University of Texas in Dallas and signed the bill creating it.

Marcello: Two questions come to mind. First of all, do you think that the governor was giving you his real reason for hesitating to sign the bill? What I'm referring to is again that it's been said that this was perhaps another sign of the governor's cold petty vindictiveness at times . . . that he was going to sign the bill all along but he wanted to see the Dallas legislators perhaps do a little bit of begging. Do you think that this is one of his motives?

Blanton: No, I don't think so. In the first place, I was the only Dallas representative that talked to him about it at all, that is a House member. And I am not sure that any of the Senators talked to him or not. But . . . no, I think what happened was that the governor was completely surprised that the bill would ever get through either house, or certainly not both houses. And that he really felt like he wouldn't have to make a decision on whether to sign it

or not. I do know that he was under a great deal of pressure from the administrators of other schools, from leaders from other areas who didn't want the university to come to Dallas. There are always people who are against these things, and he was under pressure not to sign it. But I think he was as surprised as anybody that it ever got to the position where it would need to be signed.

Marcello: Who were some of the more vocal opponents of the bill in the House? And in the Senate for that matter.

Blanton: Well, Senator Kennard certainly was the most vocal in the Senate. He attempted to filibuster the bill to death and he tried every parliamentary maneuver that he knew to keep the bill from coming up before the Senate. And I might say that he was up against an old pro in Senator Hall, who also knew a few senatorial tricks which we don't use in the House. And he was able to thwart any moves to keep the bill off the floor. Of course, we had the strong support of the lieutenant governor as well as the speaker. And then on the House side, of course, Mr. Parker of Denton had to be against the bill because the other state schools that are in his district were so strongly against it. And Representative Allred of Wichita Falls . . . and I've never understood why he was so bitterly against it. But he was certainly the most vocal. Fortunately, he was ineffective in this particular case, but he was vocal.

Marcello: What were some of the reasons which the opposition used to try and defeat the bill?

Blanton: Well, the first and most common was that the gentlemen who had created the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies had created a white elephant which they were trying to push off on the state. This was an . . . and I think the very ridiculousness if that's a good word . . . for that posture was the biggest help that I had in passing the bill because . . . the state was in the mood and in the need of creating new institutions of higher learning. And I'll talk about that a little bit more later on. But the state was in need of higher institutions and intended to create institutions of higher learning. And it is very, very rare when the state intends to create an institution of higher learning that it is given a facility that's worth as many million dollars as that one is, plus 325 acres of land. Incidentally, 50 acres more than they agreed to give. But 325 acres of land in that location in the first place is not even available to anybody else there. And in the second place, it would be quite expensive. So the fact that the opposition to the bill insisted on calling the gift of a multimillion dollar piece of ground together with a staff of PhD graduates in the field of science and physics and that sort of business, which would be a little difficult to gather up if you just started out. A white elephant

actually aided our cause. You look for a group of physicists with that sort of background, and I think this probably helped more than it hindered in the House of Representatives. Of course, some of the Fort Worth representatives who voted against the bill were not necessarily vocal against it. Only one made any attempt to alter the bill on the floor, Mr. McLaughlin, who will no longer be in the Legislature after the next election. But there was no other real vocal opposition to the bill. We didn't amend it in the House. The Senate put one small amendment on it which was agreed to and then had to retract.

Marcello: In addition to the UT Dallas bill, there were also several proposals to establish other four year colleges around the state. Did you favor most of these proposals?

Blanton: Yes, I favored all of them, and they were very fortunate because nobody offered to give their areas any gift to get the thing started, and so they had no opposition. But I did support all of them. And the reason that I supported all of them is because that they are presently in the third grade of the public schools in Texas . . . already in the third grade . . . a sufficient number of students so that if we don't grow anymore in population in Texas, which we will, and if we don't have anymore immigration into Texas, which we will, and if we don't increase the percentage of high school graduates that go to the university, which we

also will . . . but even without any of these three added factors there are enough students in third grades of Texas right now to double the need for college places in 1980, when this third grade that we now have will hit the colleges. And I think it's time that we have an awareness about the situation. I know that we are not going to double the number of college facilities. We are going to have to extend the college day, and we are going to have to go to school twelve months or have a full course of study twelve months in all grades of school in order to handle this tremendous load of students that we are going to have in the next ten or eleven years.

Marcello: Now, is there anything else that you would care to say with regard to the education measures which were . . .

Blanton: Well, that's all the education measures that I personally had anything to do with in a regular session. However, I am the chairman of the House committee which was set up to examine the possibility of the extended school year. And I think that I can assure you that the committee will report back to the legislature favorably towards extending the school year to a four quarter system. Probably one in which the students attended only nine months of the twelve. But it would reduce the number of students in the physical plant at any one time by one-third. And so, with a few minor exceptions we could look forward to a number of

years where we would need no further school construction. And I think from the taxpayers' standpoint, while we could increase the course content and enrich the school program academically, at the same time we could declare a moratorium on further building. And this is all done with local tax funds, of course, and would be very welcome to the taxpayer who, by the way, in Texas has been pretty good about paying without defeating bond issues as they're being defeated in other states. As you probably know, a number of other states have even had to shut their schools down because their voters refused bond issues. The defeat of a bond issue for schools in Texas is a very rare occasion.

Marcello: What do you think the reason for this is? Do you think that Texans think they realize that there is a need for these schools?

Blanton: Well, in the first place, and I would have to be as fair as possible in telling you that we have never done too much . . . we've never tried to do a whole lot. We have never overloaded the taxpayer from that standpoint. And historically we just have a record of approving it because generally these things are operated and sought by those people who are considered solid citizens in the community. And there just hasn't been any reason to suspect that what they recommend is not what's needed. Now in the future, of course, we are going to have to . . . we've played catch up pretty much for the

last several years. But I think the last three legislatures, and particularly the last two legislatures, have indicated an enlightenment and an awareness of the problems like none that have ever preceded them. The educational picture in Texas is vastly different from what it was ten years ago, if you want to compare it with other places.

Marcello: Another subject with regard to education which has just come to my mind is the matter of student unrest on the state's campuses. And I think this subject also was brought up from time to time in the Legislature. First of all, let me ask you this, were you satisfied with the steps that were taken by the Legislature to curb student unrest in the state's colleges?

Blanton: Well, yes, I don't think that the state went too far. Of course, unrest is much better curbed in other ways than with force. The example that comes most readily to my mind is the man who I consider to be one of the great educators in the state of Texas and whom we recently lost, and that's Dr. John Kamerick of North Texas State University. And incidently, John was an opponent of UT Dallas. I'm one of his strongest fans and called immediately upon learning that he had resigned to see if there was not some way or other that we could keep him at least somewhere in the state of Texas. But I much prefer that violence or unrest or possible violence and possible unrest be handled like John Kamerick

handled it. Because the situation that existed in Denton when he became president, at least to me, seemed to be ripe for an explosion. And simply by using the people at hand and his own wisdom and their wisdom added together, John Kamerick calmed that thing down and turned it around. Now some of the students that were trying to be protest leaders at the time are John Kamerick's strongest admirers. And although I was not on the campus at the time, I am also one of John Kamerick's ardent admirers. I think that his loss to Texas is one that we can ill afford.

Marcello: Do you care to give any explanation as to why you think he did resign? Do you have any idea as to why he may have decided to get out?

Blanton: It's my understanding that the Board of Regents of North Texas State University offered Dr. Kamerick only a one year extension on his contract after having been here a short two years during which time the unrest on the Denton campus had been completely eliminated so far as I can tell. And so many other innovative and enlightened practices had been established by Dr. Kamerick. If the regents offered this one year extension, I think he did the only thing left for him to do, and that was to resign. A one year extension of a contract is an indication of very little or no confidence. If this is what has happened, it's my personal opinion that it is the most idiotic action taken by the board of regents of any state school in recent years.

Marcello: Do you know any of the ways in which Dr. Kamerick perhaps antagonized the board of regents?

Blanton: Yes, I'm sure of some of the things that he did that antagonized them is in that he succeeded where they had failed. And he proved that the policies that they had attempted before were inferior, and this is always dangerous ground.

Marcello: Before we move on to the special sessions of the 61st Legislature, is there any other particular piece of legislation that you would wish to talk about? For example, are there any bills that you personally sponsored other than the ones that you have already mentioned?

Blanton: Well, one of the bills that I personally sponsored was a complete revision of the Texas Grain Warehouse Law which tightened it up and made it a stronger law and made the warehouse certificate more meaningful and more certain to be representative of a commodity in storage.

Marcello: What was the problem in this particular area?

Blanton: Well, a member of grain warehouses in the western part of the state had, as most grain warehouses in the state, fallen on rather hard times during the last few years due to the uncertainty of the government program and the on-again off-again attitude of the Commodity Credit Corporation. Most grain warehouses in Texas have experienced some difficulty in the past few years. As a result, many of them had gone

completely out of business. And when the warehouse receipt holder went to the warehouse to collect his grain or collect for his grain, no money was available and the grain was gone. And at the request of the grain trade . . . and I used to be in the grain business myself before I went into the Legislature . . . at the request of the trade I sponsored their bill which was written with the help of the Texas Agriculture Department and Commissioner White in particular. And we passed it without amendment and did tighten up the grain law.

Another bill that I had more than a passing interest in was the Texas Teacher's Professional Standards Act, I believe it is called, which was actually sponsored by Mr. Cory of Victoria. But I was the sub-committee chairman on that bill. I think the bill was supposedly dead when I was made the sub-committee chairman. But I thought there was a good deal of merit in the bill and that it was high time the teachers in Texas were considered as professionals, which they've never been recognized as before by the legislature. And so we reported the bill back to the floor of the House and did pass it. I think it was a good bill. It helped the teachers, maybe not as much as a pay raise, but it helped them in many ways.

Marcello: If you have no further comments on the regular session, let's move on to the two special sessions of the Legislature. Just for the record, and I know this is something which is

already public, but at least for the Oral History Collection could you tell us what necessitated the calling of the special session of the Legislature?

Blanton: The Legislature was called into special session because the governor vetoed the one year appropriations bill which both the House and the Senate had passed.

Marcello: Now . . .

Blanton: And the state would have been without funds after he vetoed the appropriations bill on September 1, I believe it is, that the appropriations bill becomes effective. The state would have been completely without funds had we not gone into special session.

Marcello: Of course, one of the problems which came up during this special session was how the state was going to provide the revenue to pay for the legislation which had been enacted during the regular session. And certainly one of the first areas which was discussed was that of increasing the state sales tax. How did you feel or what was your personal opinion with regard to an increase in the state sales tax?

Blanton: Well, I'm a believer in the sales tax. I think a sales tax is probably as fair and it's certainly as broad based as you can get. There's no way to escape if you do your buying in the state of Texas. Since food, drugs, and rent are excluded from the sales tax, the people in what we regard as the poverty bracket are not going to be unnecessarily hurt by

any increase in the sales tax, because practically all of their income is spent for those three items. And therefore, an increase in the sales tax becomes more in the nature of a luxury tax which is very broadly based, and yet a person can control the amount of sales tax he pays if he is willing to do without some of his luxuries in life. I think it is a very fair tax and I like it. And I suspect it will be increased again to at least a five per cent figure. The four and one-quarter was ridiculous, but as I pointed out earlier, we don't like to have more taxes than we have to have because somehow or other we find use for the money.

Marcello: Of course, one of the targets for the state sales tax during the special session was the inclusion of alcoholic beverages. First of all, what was your personal position on the inclusion of alcoholic beverages under the state sales tax?

Blanton: I was in favor of it including . . . not necessarily the beer tax. I hate to say this because I sound like a beer lobbyist . . . well, as far as that's concerned, all the "sin taxes" as we call them--tobacco tax, liquor tax, beer tax--of those three items each carry, as a part of their price tax, an amount of taxes greater than the rest of the cost of the item.

Marcello: These would be state excise taxes and federal taxes?

Blanton: Every kind of tax that there is imaginable is applied to the "sin taxes" or to the sins of man, and so therefore the

cost of beer and the cost of liquor and the cost of tobacco is more than half taxes, and that's probably enough. I did try to keep the tax off of the . . . off of both liquor and beer. At the time particularly beer, because I figured if we went to the liquor-by-the-drink which I strongly supported, that we would put the per-drink tax on that and that would equalize . . . bring in an enormous amount of revenue, by the way. But I do think that those three probably carry enough taxes if there is anything to proportion at all. And it's not for me to say what's sinful and what's not. They are legal products, and I think they should have a chance as any other legal product does to compete in the market.

Marcello: There was quite a bit of mention about the activities of the beer lobby during the debate on including beer under the state sales tax, and in particular the name of Homer Leonard is usually mentioned. He, of course, is the chief lobbyist for the beer industry. What do you know about the activities of Mr. Leonard during the special session?

Blanton: Well, Mr. Leonard was active. If I represented an industry, any industry, that paid as heavy of the portion of a sales tax and taxes as beer does, I would have been active, too. However, I think that the activities of the beer lobby in Austin during the special session were not only detrimental to the industry . . . and they were detrimental as far as I am concerned. I was philosophically opposed, as I told you

a while ago, of adding more to a product that already was more than 50 per cent taxed. But while my support on leaving the beer out of the sales tax was not jeopardized, my sympathies were. And I further think the people in the beer industry, the retailers and wholesalers, felt that the beer lobby should have ceased its activities long before it did. I think that they realized that the whole industry was hurt by the further activity of one lobbyist.

Marcello: What were his activities in particular?

Blanton: Well, I don't know because I rarely saw the man while I was in Austin. He happened to know that philosophically I was opposed to the tax on beer, and therefore he didn't call on me at all. He didn't feel that it was necessary, and I had very little contact with him. At any time, whether I am in Austin or away from there, I just have very little contact with Mr. Leonard because I have a reputation of being rather set in a position. And as soon as he learns it's favorable, he's happy, and if it's unfavorable he resigns to the fact that he can't change it. So we really have very little contact. And I don't recall Homer ever having asked me to vote any way on any bill except one bill which applied to mental health and retardation and had nothing whatsoever to do with beer. I understand that a lot of people were disappointed or disgruntled because they felt like he was putting pressure on them. Now what kind of pressure he could

put on them, I suppose that he could threaten to support their opponents financially I don't know. He's certainly has never threatened me, because he's never talked to me but about one bill.

Marcello: How close is the relationship between Speaker Mutscher and Mr. Leonard?

Blanton: Well, I understand now, and again I don't know, because I am not close enough to the situation, but I understand that Speaker Mutscher could have had the job that Representative Cory took when he did not run for the legislature again and took a job as a lobbyist for the beer institute . . . brewers institute I believe they call it. He apparently did not want the job because I'm sure that he could have had it. It obviously was available because Representative Cory got it. And I'm sure that the speaker could have had it had he wanted it.

Marcello: Well, Mutscher himself comes from a county with a heavy German origin, does he not? A Germanic population . . .

Blanton: As I have heard him personally comment occasionally that "people that object to the tax on groceries should come to my country because beer certainly is groceries where I come from." I'm sure that's had a great deal to do with it.

Marcello: I guess we should get this into the record that Speaker Mutscher was opposed to the idea of including beer under the sales tax.

Blanton: Very much . . . very much and but now how . . . how closely aligned . . . I know that the beer lobby had supported the speaker as it supported the speaker before him. And I believe the one before that, and I have no knowledge of the ones before that.

Marcello: Well, Leonard himself was at one time Speaker of the House, was he not?

Blanton: Right, in 1942. But I think it's likely that Mutscher's home district had as much to do with his decision as any pressure.

I do know a number of beer wholesalers who personally asked that the fight be called off and beer be put under the sales tax that they were tired of hearing about it. And they would have been affected as much as anybody. So that's about all I can tell you about the connections; now if there is a connection, of course there is, any good lobbyist is going to have connections with the speaker. That's his business to have. And I would like to say at this point about the lobby that without the lobby, as poorly staffed as the House of Representatives is, we would at often times be at a loss to know all we needed to know about an issue. And I can say without fear of being the least bit wrong that if you want to know one side of a question ask the pro-lobby, and if you want to know the other side ask the anti. And you'll get the truth. Neither one will

tell you anything he doesn't want you to know. But what they tell you, you can rely on. Lobbies simply cannot exist if they do not tell you the truth.

Marcello: I'm glad you brought up this point, because I think many people, when they hear the word lobby, they automatically think of some sort of an underhanded operation or something which is a rather sordid operation of sorts.

Blanton: Well, a lobbyist is a salesman; he's hired to sell a product, and as I said before he'll tell you the truth about it. And if you ask him, he'll even tell you the other side of it. But you have to question him to get him to tell you anything he doesn't want to tell you. But I think in almost every case, certainly every case that I know about, that any information that the lobby gave you, you can absolutely rely on as being the truth.

Marcello: What were some of the more powerful lobbies in the past session of the legislature?

Blanton: The most powerful lobby in any legislature is the Texas State Teachers Association. The beer lobby is a powerful lobby. And, oh, there are a number of others. Of course, liquor has a lobbyist there, and by the way, so does TANE. And . . .

Marcello: Excuse me, I didn't . . .

Blanton: TANE, Texas Alcohol and Narcotics Education, and the lobbyist up until this year has been Tex Culp, and he was succeeded by a young lawyer, a very good friend of mine from the firm

Brady, Drake, and Wilson in Dallas, Don Cates. And if you want to hear both sides of a question, ask Don about the statistics applying to the state after liquor-by-the-drink has been introduced. And then ask Price, who is head of the Texas Restaurant Association. You won't recognize them as being statistics on the same subject. But this is what the lobby is for--to inform. Now all this stuff about the lobby taking you out and threatening your life or your political future, if it exists it's because a member is weak enough to let it happen to him. That's all I can say. It's never been made manifest to me.

Marcello: Did Mutscher himself put any pressure on the individual members of the House to vote in a particular way with regard to putting beer under the sales tax?

Blanton: Well, he certainly made it known to the House, and you have to understand he was strongly supported in his position of speakership by the House . . . strongly supported by the House members. And there was no question in anybody's mind how Gus felt about the beer tax. I'm sure he talked to some people that he thought were wavering that could be saved if they had been against it and could be brought over if they had been for it. I'm positive that he talked to those people as I would have done had I been a speaker and had a position on it. But everybody in the House was aware of his feelings on it and to the degree that we had supported his stand on

that up to a point. And a great many people when they felt that it had gone on too long changed their position.

Marcello: How did Governor Smith feel about the whole issue?

Blanton: I don't recall the governor having made his position clear, but I'm sure he did. I don't recall what it was. I'm sure the governor enjoyed the condition that the Legislature was in at that time. Had I been in his position and had I put the Legislature into a special session after their having in a sense slapped me down . . . well, then I feel that he enjoyed that position in which he found himself while we were in special session. And this is just being honest with you. If you win the marbles, you take them home with you, you know, you don't give them back. And the governor felt that he had been rather roughly treated, especially the Legislature's showing complete disregard for his tax fund and his widely known position on the annual sessions or the one-year appropriation. And then after the veto of the Appropriation Bill, there was no question who was governor. If there had been some before there was none after that.

Marcello: Did you care to explain that last comment about the fact that there was no question about who was governor?

Blanton: Well, you understand that Governor Smith had been six years in the House of Representatives, six years in the Senate, and six years as lieutenant governor, before he

became governor. Now the six years that he was lieutenant governor corresponded exactly with the six years that John Connally was governor of Texas. At that time and particularly after the assassination in Dallas, John Connally was a knight on the charger. He had, by elevating the Speaker of the House to the position of railroad commissioner, and placing Barnes in the position as the Speaker of the House, he had you might say, virtual control of the House. There are only thirty-one Senators, many of them who were Senators by virtue of John Connally's campaigning for them. And he was a powerful campaigner in the state of Texas. So that he didn't need the lieutenant governor. And he could go directly to the Senators. Nothing was handled through the lieutenant governor as far as that administration was concerned. Now if you were lieutenant governor for six years and watched the governor with his own man in the House, particularly the last two terms . . . with his own man in the House and at the same time by-passing your position in the lieutenant governor's office . . . there may be some excuse after you had won an election which nobody thought you could win, which was widely predicted as nothing but a disaster for you if you undertook it, and suddenly you wind up and you're governor. And there is nothing so "ex" as an "ex-governor" by the way. And the man who was sponsored by the ex-governor then succeeds

you as lieutenant governor. If most of us as individuals were placed in this position, we would want to make it known rather definitely who really was the governor. And I think that may have had some bearing in this case.

Marcello: In other words . . .

Blanton: I hope I made myself clear.

Marcello: In other words, you're referring to some friction perhaps between Ben Barnes and Preston Smith.

Blanton: Well, to some extent, yes, there was some friction . . . is some friction . . . there will always be some friction because they're from two worlds . . . two different worlds. Preston is the old school, hard-working, knowledgeable, but never flashy type of politician, and Barnes is the opposite. Barnes is knowledgeable, don't misunderstand me, Barnes is as knowledgeable and competent as anybody that I have ever seen in any public office in Texas. Outside of the fact that both are very knowledgeable about state government, there could not be more differences between the two than exists, so there will always be friction. But I think more than anything else was the fact that the system which was supposed to have defeated him . . . the "ex-governor," the "ex-speaker of the House," who was to be his successor as lieutenant governor, the whole political system which was supposed to have defeated him and now he sits at the top of it and can direct it. And he can kill its actions with

the stroke of a pen and call them back into special session, almost to do his bidding.

Marcello: But Smith never was really a part and never has been and still isn't a part of what one might consider the Texas establishment. Is that a fair statement?

Blanton: Well, I don't know whether you can say that or not because an awful lot of the establishment supports the governor. But he's been more of an individual--of plodding persistence but continually trying and most often successful. Very few people have had the length of public service that Governor Smith has had.

Marcello: Okay, getting back to the Legislature again, while the Legislature was mulling over the question including beer and liquor under the sales tax, the whole problem also arose, did it not, about the inclusion of food under the sales tax.

Blanton: Yes.

Marcello: What was your position with regard to the inclusion of food under the sales tax?

Blanton: Well, I could just simply say that if you'd look at the voting record it was 147 to 0 against in the House. And . . .

Marcello: Yes, but that was . . . that was . . .

Blanton: That could be the conclusion of the conversation.

Marcello: Yes, but that was before the tremendous public outcry came in. Was it not? In other words, the Senate went on the line first of all with regard to the tax on food, and

and is it not true that members of legislators received quite a bit of mail and so on and so forth with regard to the inclusion of food under the sales tax?

Blanton: Well, let me say here now that my decision was reached not because of the mail that I received, and I say that in all sincerity . . . although anybody can say now what causes them to do things.

Marcello: Yes.

Blanton: I happened to have been out of town from the time the bill was before the Senate . . . as you recall the Senate reached its conclusion in the middle of the morning sometime over the weekend. And a number of men . . .

Marcello: Now Mutscher in the meantime had adjourned the House. Isn't that correct? By the time . . .

Blanton: We were in adjournment . . .

Marcello: That's right.

Blanton: . . . when the Senate voted, that's right. Now a number of people got busy and did a lot of work to get people to send telegrams to the House members, and they claimed credit for having defeated the food tax. Actually, I was out of the city of Austin, and Representative Braecklein and I had returned to Austin together in my automobile the morning that the House was to vote on the proposition. We walked into the House floor without ever having been in our offices whatsoever. And later we discovered stacks of telegrams

and letters that . . . I can tell you Representative Braecklein and I voted . . . made our decision to vote no on that bill on our way down there, never having seen a single telegram or letter that was in our office in Austin at the time.

Marcello: Now apparently, if my facts are straight, Mutscher and Barnes had worked on this proposed food tax together. And apparently Mutscher had assured Barnes that he could scare up the necessary votes in the House to pass it. Somewhere along the line Mutscher must have miscalculated, is that the only way you can describe what happened?

Blanton: Well, now I don't know what kind of a deal that they had. I'm sure that there was some understanding that if it could pass the Senate, it certainly should be able to pass the House, it being widely considered that the House is more conservative than the Senate. And it's our belief that usually . . . and this was . . . would come under the classification of a liberal-conservative issue . . . and I'm sure that most people felt that if it did pass the Senate, it would pass the House. At what time the break down occurred I don't know, I'm sure that the speaker polled the House frequently Sunday, and I'm sure that it was polled a number of times Monday morning. But no word reached Bill Braecklein or me because we were traveling down Highway 35 together in my automobile. We were not aware of the results of any polls or anything. When we reached the capitol, and we had talked to each other on the

way down there, and had come to the conclusion that we were not only going to vote against it, but that as soon as we arrived in Austin, we were going to the speaker's apartment and inform him what we had concluded . . . and as I said before we had not read the mail; we had no idea of the volume of it. My secretary was not on duty, except during the hours that we were traveling down the highway. She had not seen the volume of mail. I had not seen it. Nobody had contacted me. I was out of this city (Dallas) on Sunday, and I was on my way to Austin on Monday. And when we reached the capitol, we went immediately to the speaker's apartment asking for an audience, were granted an audience, and told the speaker that we felt that we could not vote for the bill. And shortly thereafter, the bill was called up and received 147 negative votes.

Marcello: What were your reasons for voting against the bill?

Blanton: Well, the only way that I could ever agree to passing a bill of that nature, and I don't know how this would be worked out, would be some way to put back either through assistance to the aged or needy or something like that . . . \$12 per month. This is based on a \$3,000 poverty figure and \$3,000 times four and a quarter per cent figures out roughly \$12 a month, if my arithmetic is correct. To those people it would be a real factor on items that they have to have. And I thought we were hurriedly doing something that needed more

time for deliberation.

Marcello: It seems to me by this time also was . . . rather were the members of both Houses becoming rather desperate to get some sort of a tax bill passed . . . I mean, they had been wrangling over this for some time. What was the atmosphere in the legislature?

Blanton: Well, the atmosphere was not one of desperation, particularly, because if you recall one of the things that enraged the Senate more than anything else was the House's bill to reduce all expenditures by a certain percentage, and I have forgotten what the percentage was, and let it continue. Of course, that brought out all the college regents and the college presidents and school teachers and everybody else who thought they were going to operate on only a percentage of the basis that we could do by extending only those things that were in effect at the time. It greatly enraged the Senate for the House to make this proposal. Mostly I think the attitude at that time was that we were tired, and we'd been down the road so many times and back, and nobody was getting his way. Actually we passed the bill that I don't think anybody really liked.

Marcello: Eventually, of course, the legislature settled on the compromise solution which was mainly the brainchild of Senator Hall. Is that correct? Generally speaking were you in favor of that compromise package that he proposed?

Blanton: Yes, yes, I think that was the best thing that could come out of the situation that we were in and the mood that the members were in, and the mood and the misunderstanding that prevailed at home. I think that was as good a bill as we could probably come up with.

Marcello: What features of that particular bill appealed to you?

Blanton: Well, the sales tax feature was one. And, of course, as I said before, we increased the "sin taxes." And I think probably if this franchise tax works out to be all that it's supposed to be, it will be a fine feature. It does put our local firms on a more or less equal footing with out-of-state firms that do business here. And I think it will be a feature that down the years will be an important influence.

Marcello: That's all the specific questions that I have on the special sessions of the Legislature. Are there any other particular topics or any occurrences that took place during these two sessions that you would like to bring up at this particular time? Mr. Blanton, earlier in the interview, you mentioned the fact that you were a conservative on most fiscal matters or financial matters. Would you care to explain what you meant by this statement?

Blanton: Well, as I told you in conversation, I'm not necessarily a scorekeeper, and I don't look to see who's in the gallery before I vote. But judging by the score sheet that I received from AFL-CIO on which they rated us, I believe, over 29 issues

I had 27 anti-labor votes, one pro-labor vote, and one absent. I don't know what the issues were. I could look it up. They sent a list of what the issues were, but somehow or other they failed to point out the issues on which you've indicated that I had a liberal stand. I frankly don't care for the label one way or the other. It's all right if it helps to identify somebody if you want to make a decision on whom you should vote for. I suppose it's just as well to be a liberal-conservative division, but I find that a great many people who are conservative in fiscal matters are much more liberal, if you will, when it comes to a matter of education or when any human values are under consideration. And on that basis I really don't know what I am except that I think John Connally probably gave us the best definition of the kind of a member I would like to be, and that's a "constructive Democrat" rather than a liberal or conservative Democrat.

Marcello: Let me ask you just a couple of general questions with regard to the Legislature. How would you assess Preston Smith's first term as governor? Did you think he has done a good job? Do you think he's done a fair job? A poor job?

Blanton: Well, I think in most cases he's done a good job. The governor has a great facility for errors either in grammar or pronunciation that a lot of people like to jump on. But I don't think that his correct pronunciation of the

Notre Dame coach's last name is nearly so important as I do operation of the state government. I don't know that anybody is particularly mad at the governor. He's done a great deal in the field of education, of course, partly I'm sure, because of his medical school in Lubbock. He had more interest in education than he might otherwise have had because of that, but I don't know anybody that's particularly mad at the governor when they get right down to it and try to analyze the reasons for being unhappy. It usually goes back to some insignificant grammatical slip or omission on the governor's part, but I think by and large he's done a real fine job.

Within the limits of the Texas Constitution, the governor can do so little aside from calling the Legislature into special session, or he can veto bills. He can present a tax plan and a budget plan to the legislature. He can appoint boards over which he has no further control. And he can cut ribbons and that's about it, because his job is so very, very circumscribed by what I consider to be an archaic constitution, and incidentally, one that he views with great promise. The governor does not believe in annual sessions, and he does not believe certainly, in annual appropriations. But I think that our constitution could stand quite a bit of upgrading. And I'd like to see something on the order of a cabinet system with the governor appointing

a great many people that are presently elected. And . . . over whom he would have some control after they were appointed. And then if you don't like the job that's being done, that they are doing, all you would have to do is replace one man. There is no possibility of building up a dynasty as we very often have in the appointive situation. And I think that would be one phase of improved state government. I'd like to see annual sessions. A lot of people talk about an annual session with a regular session coming as it does now, the first 140 days after the second Tuesday of an odd number year, and then a shorter session which would deal only with fiscal matters in the even number years. I would prefer a more or less equal session possibly 140 days in each session. But I think the Legislature should be allowed to discuss anything that's on its collective mind. I don't think that it should be circumscribed to the extent that in the even number years it could consider only fiscal matters. Other things may come up which need handling and should not have to wait an additional year. There again if you have a Legislature and give it legislative duties, if you don't like what it does, it's a simple matter to replace it. The House of Representatives must run every other year, and they are very easily replaced if they're not satisfactory. But I think the House should have more freedom. The bulk of our state funds are earmarked funds . . . we have some funds with a great many

dollars in them that we can't touch. It's much like a man starting a business, and if he has income of "X" dollars from a given source, and he dedicates it to the purchase of pencils only for all time to come, and shortly thereafter then a traveling salesman starts leaving these ballpoint pens on his desk and he doesn't use pencils, he may be up to his ears in pencils and out of carbon paper, but he can't transfer the funds. He has to buy nothing but pencils. Now we have state funds in that same condition. I think that we can trust the Legislature to handle our funds in a more general manner than we do now. And as I say, if you don't like the way that they do it, well, they're not hard to replace.

Marcello: How would you assess Speaker Mutscher's conduct during the past session of the Legislature? Do you think that he did a good job?

Blanton: Well, yes, I think he did a fine job. He had a couple of unpleasant situations which I thought were unforgivable. But he nevertheless forgave people who were unable to attract attention or support in any other way than to jump on the table or call the speaker a "whore." I thought he handled both of those situations as well as could be done under the circumstances, as far as the decorum was concerned.

Marcello: What particular incident are you referring to?

Blanton: I'm referring to an incident where one of the representatives

had jumped on the press table and exclaimed in loud tones his feelings on a matter in which he had not more than a half dozen followers in the House. And then another occasion where a member approached the back microphone and addressed the speaker as "the worst whore I know," I believe were his terms. And in both cases I think the speaker did behave with a calmness, and in both cases the speaker had all the support that was necessary to censor the member, had he decided to do so. I mean in the operation of the House for the most part he was pretty much in control of it which we expect of a leader. He had the support of the House in most instances . . . and with the two exceptions that I mentioned, had very little trouble in administering that. A couple of times during the heat of the tax bill, the House was unruly and . . . a couple of times his control waivered, but never to the point that it wasn't retrievable.

Marcello: Now there is a lot of talk during the past year about the so-called taxpayers revolt. How much credence do you give to the so-called taxpayers revolt in Texas?

Blanton: Well, I haven't seen a taxpayers revolt. Now an awful lot of people were stirred to write letters when the food tax was being considered. Most people are very sincere about wanting taxes to be held to an absolute minimum. At the same time a great many people are willing to follow a leader who indicates to them that they have been exploited, and

they're quick to jump on this type of bandwagon. This was done . . . and like we say people who did it claim credit for defeating the food tax whether or not they did, I don't know. As I told you before, I was enroute to Austin, not available to receive any messages. However, I am of the nature that when threats are made, particularly when I think that there are not really the spontaneous kind . . . the mob action for instance . . . then I tend to get my hackles up and firm up my position in opposition to theirs, just because I don't like to be threatened. Now I don't know what I would have done had I read the letters, because it was a new question after we voted 147 to 0 against the food tax bill.

Marcello: How do you think all the bickering which obviously was so prevalent in the 61st Legislature affected the stature of that body with the voters?

Blanton: Well, I hope that it didn't do harm to the stature although with some people it did. I would think that the people would be much better off if there was bickering, as you call it, or discussion or even shouting among the members rather than a group of 150 people down there meekly accepting anything that was handed to them in order to get out of the session and come home. I prefer the active . . . not violent but very, very active and vigorous discussion of questions rather than just rubber-stamping and that sort of

thing. I think the discussion's certainly good for the people of Texas although it may not have been good for the Legislature.

Marcello: I had a specific case in mind to which I was referring, and that is that several months ago the voters, of course, rejected a referendum which called for increased legislative salaries. Do you think this was indicative of their discontentment with the Legislature?

Blanton: No, I don't think it is. I think they've done that for years. I think this is one case . . . well, there are a number of reasons why the voters would turn it down. Number one, it's the only salary they have a chance to vote on, and naturally it's a very good target for being voted down. Number two, a great many people do not realize in the first place what a legislator makes. In the second place, they do not realize the expenses he has in maintaining his job. I don't think there is a man down there that does not make financial sacrifices to hold his job. But I don't think people are aware of it. In fact, if you asked a person today . . . walk down the street and ask ten men what the salary of the members of the legislature or the lieutenant governor are, and you'll come out with something like an average of \$10,000. This is an average of what people think . . . \$10,000 for the members and \$25,000 for the lieutenant governor. Actually, of course, you know both make less than

\$5,000 per year. Of course, they have some expense money for the first 120 days of the session. But most of us have to return to our homes over the weekend to try to keep a few groceries coming in. And the expense money that's allowed barely covers the transportation back and forth to home. Now, you know, there's all sorts of argument there. Why don't you just stay down there and don't come home? And if you're not willing to give up your business, well, you don't have to run for the Legislature. All these, of course, I agree to, but nevertheless, until the committees started holding their meetings at night . . . which is usually about six weeks after the session organizes, the first five or six weeks of the session, I commuted daily by plane from Dallas to Austin in order to be able to keep some business matters alive up here, and not jeopardize any legislation that I was seeking to pass in the House of Representatives. So daily I just took myself to Love Field and flew to Austin. In the evening I returned by plane every day until the committees started meeting at night. And after that I stayed down there until the weekend.

Marcello: Do you ever get discourage by the amount of flack that I'm sure you must take from some constituents? Perhaps want to just give it up altogether?

Blanton: No, I suppose that the only way to get me out of that legislature is to beat me or . . . oh, I say to beat me

because there's no way to promote you out of the legislature. Anything else is a demotion as far as I am concerned. I have no interest in any state-wide job. I have no real interest to serve in Washington in Congress because I don't want to lose touch with my home district, and I think they do of necessity. I don't want anything that keeps me tied up in Austin all the time as another state-wide office would necessarily do. I'd just like to stay in the Legislature. And I suppose I'll stay in the Legislature until one of two things happens, either the voters decide to retire me, or I'd decided I can no longer afford it. Until one of those two arise, I'll expect to be in that Legislature.

Marcello: Just one last question comes to mind. Many people have said that most of the problems in Texas are of a liberal versus a conservative nature. Others have said that this isn't so, that the problem concerning taxes are usually urban or rural in nature. What is your feeling along this line?

Blanton: Well, for the most part . . .

Marcello: In other words, do you divide most differences as being liberal-conservative differences or urban-rural differences?

Blanton: Well, for the most part, your rural-urban is almost a liberal-conservative division in itself. I'd say that almost without exception your rural delegation is a conservative delegation. However, there are a great many conservatives also in the

cities, and depending on what cities you're talking about, the number is greater or less. This brings up this question, and I don't know whether you intend to get into redistricting or not.

Marcello: Well, I was going to follow through with that question.

Blanton: Or whether we will have individual member districts. Whether we will continue as we are, and we don't know what the courts are going to say on this. Or whether we may have multi-member districts in which the individual must live in a certain geographical area but are voted on by the entire area. And I like that myself. I think that would be fine if it were required that a candidate had to live within a given geographical area to run for a job. But there are two groups of people who want individual member districts, and they are the liberals and the group that claims to be the most conservative of all, and that's the Republicans. Actually, the only reason that either one of them wants Dallas divided into individual member districts is because they're simply not getting elected to positions, and it's the "out" versus "in" situation rather than liberal and conservative. And by the way, in the division of the Texas government, the liberals find themselves in the same bed, shall we say, with the Republicans more often than not. And it's the "out" versus "in" cause rather than liberal or conservative that causes them to get under the same blanket.

Marcello: Well, obviously the one-man one-vote rule is going to favor liberals. Isn't this true in most cases?

Blanton: Well, let me see, I couldn't tell you that that will be true, because in those areas such as Corpus Christi for instance, where I believe they have four representatives and all of them are liberals. If we get individual member districts there, Corpus may send two and two up here. In Houston where you have the three congressional districts . . . the silk-stocking group that usually sends a Republican to the national Congress, they have I believe three Republicans and three or four . . . three Democrats and three or four Republicans in that group. One group is more or less evenly divided, and one congressional district has nothing but the very most liberal members to offer. Now, if you put that on the basis of individual member district, I don't know that it would change the ratio at all, it may. It certainly would in Dallas County. There's no question about that in Dallas County, because the general feeling . . . I would say that the average of Dallas County is to right of center. I don't think that there is any arguing about that if you just shake everybody up in Dallas County and divide them by whatever the population is, you'd come out with an individual that was somewhat to the right of center. I don't know that the liberals are disenfranchised, because if that's the case, then as long as I was ever represented by the liberal, I

would be disenfranchised. And I don't know the answer to it. I do know this, that Dallas has by far the most powerful delegation in Austin, and you don't have to take my word on that. The speaker will tell you that; the lieutenant governor will tell you that. Dallas has fifteen men elected-at-large; we all must be responsible to and responsive to the entire section of Dallas County. Personally, I think that's the way it should be. I feel that although Lewisville, Texas, which is in Denton County is only eight miles from my hometown, that I'm much more closely tied and have much more commonality of problems with Garland, Dallas County, which is twenty miles east of here. I think that all of Dallas County from its borders look in toward the central city, and therefore we have problems that are common to Cedar Hill which is as far across the county as is DeSoto . . . as far across the county as you can get from me. And yet, I feel closer to the people in that area than I do to the ones that are immediately north of here, because they look toward Denton and more or less resent "Big D" frankly. So I think that Dallas County has a better representation, because it does elect-at-large. You can see the problem. If we had individual member districts, and I had 85,000 people or whatever it is up here in this part of the county, then I could've managed to be elected and represent only them. Then what we do if we wanted to create this University of Texas in the Dallas area? A lot of the votes

that came for the University of Texas in Dallas came because people, although they were reluctant to vote for it, knew that they couldn't get their legislation through if they fought it. Now if I was the only representative in the district where this was being done, and I was the one that wanted it, I would not have had nearly the support for it as I had. The same thing is true of anything else that effects Dallas. No controversial legislation can pass the House of Representatives without the Dallas delegation. That's just a simple matter of arithmetic, and that's because we are fifteen members-at-large and most of which will join together under any given situation that effects Dallas. Otherwise, we may not swab the Dallas delegation, and you're familiar with what I mean when I swab the delegation. We may not swab the delegation a dozen times during the session. And the rest of the time, we're just individuals who are not working together at all. But if you let a bill come up that effects the University of Texas in Dallas, or the canal down the Trinity River, or Southwest Medical School, or anything like that, and your votes out of Dallas will be like never worse than 13 to 2, usually 14 or 15 to 0. And that's not true of any other city in the state. And I think it's good representation. I think Dallas is damn well represented by the system itself. We have some liberals on the delegation, we certainly do. We don't have just stock conservatism.

Marcello: Oscar Mauzy, for example.

Blanton: Well, you're talking about the Senate.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Blanton: I'm in another world. I'm in the House delegation. Senators are all in individual districts. But I think it's pretty generally agreed upon that Dallas County by and large is to the right of the center. Yet, when they redistricted the Senate and left three complete senatorial districts within Dallas County and one partial . . . very small part of one, we wind up with one conservative Republican Senator and two liberal Democratic Senators. And I do not believe that anybody can say that that is true representation of Dallas County. It just is not that proportion. So I don't know that whereas before the liberals may not have been represented certainly the conservatives are not now represented in the Senate. If my estimates about the nature of Dallas County are anything like correct, and I suspect that I'm right that Dallas County is more than 50 per cent conservative. Yet we have only the one out of three.