

Tape 29, Side 2

CH ...Tape 29, Side 2.

There was also a referral to the voters of a proposed limit on oil and gas extraction taxes of 6 percent of market value. Do you know what the issues were behind that?

VA Say that again.

CH There was legislation which referred to the voters a proposed limit on oil and gas extraction taxes of 6 percent of market value. It seems like a rather complex issue to send to the people. I didn't hear about it in the election.

VA I can't remember that exactly. I can vaguely remember, but that's the best I can tell you. I think that oftentimes people forget the cost of exploring for gas and oil, and they think about how much is coming out of the ground and you're selling it, not thinking about how much you have to recoup, or at least an incentive to go look for some more. There's been only one discovery, and it was ^{wasn't gas or} ~~in~~ Mist, Oregon. Oregon is not a good place for gas and oil. That just happens to be our geology. But I can't remember that exactly. Certainly, that didn't become a law, even if the people voted on it. I think it failed.

CH There was a ban on shutoffs of heat and electricity to residences in the winter months. I don't know if there was a provision specifically for certain types of people, but was there much opposition to that? Or do you know if it referred just to elderly in the city or anyone?

VA Elderly and people with children and that sort of thing. Hard cases, again bringing up the law, whether it's good or bad

in this case. Again, you're meddling with the market out there. It would seem to me that it would be good public relations for companies to not shut it off, and, yet, if that were a policy, then a lot of people know that they can do it and won't get charged for it. It gets back to what I said - you're going through a litany of things. I think I told you earlier on that Oregon seems to live perfectly well for eighteen months, and then the legislature comes in session, and everything's wrong with the state.

CH Well, looking at a few things that were not passed, there was a referral to the voters of a proposed ban on construction of nuclear power plants, and I know we've talked about this before, but that was not passed, then, so the legislature actually - I had thought that the sentiment in the legislature was not in favor of nuclear energy.

VA Well, I think basically it was, and, yet, you don't know what the future holds, and we shouldn't close out a source of potential energy.

CH One issue that came up quite a bit, off and on over the years, was - and I'm sure we've talked about this - a requirement that all school districts provide kindergartens. This failed. I believe Betty Roberts actually had been active in that in the late sixties, early seventies.

VA Yes.

CH Did you - how did you feel about that?

VA I get back to local control. If the people are willing to pay for it, then I certainly believe - and I would, incidentally,

lobby for it in my school district, kindergartens, but that was not a decision for the legislature to make.

CH There was also regulation and notification of shipment of radioactive materials. That was not passed. Was that something that - was there a problem with notifying...?

VA No. There was a perceived problem, but there was no transportation of - now, we're talking about a high level of nuclear waste, and there's no transportation of high level nuclear waste. You remember we're still trying to find a place to put it. We went through the whole matter of transportation, storage, and the safety of nuclear power plants during the discussion on the moratorium in nuclear power plants.

CH There was a requirement, also failing, that all motor vehicle passengers wear seatbelts. Of course, that became an issue later on, too, and there was a measure that was passed. How did you feel about that in general, because I don't think we talked about that?

VA It's strange, you know. I say to myself, Why do we have to pass a law on that. You know, if you're really concerned about your children or yourself, buckle up. Why do you have to pass a law on that. It goes way back - we did talk about it - when Mark Hatfield had this property tax exemption for fallout shelters, and I'm saying to myself, They're going to build it if you give them property tax relief and they won't if you - is that why they're building it, for property tax relief? They should be building it because they're concerned about a nuclear war, someplace to hide out. So you wonder about it. Yeah, we do have to pass laws on it. Then people will function in that fashion. You hate to see it happen, but you keep wondering - the real

motive is to save yourself and to save your children. That's the important thing, which leads me to something else which I think is very funny. These things happen. There was constantly, during the time I was governor, the pressure to increase the speed from fifty-five.

CH You were always against that.

VA I was always against it. I got this letter. Really, it's marvelous to see how people think. It really is, it's just marvelous to see how people think. Very serious. This guy was not trying to be funny. He said that with the speeds that they are now, if there's a collision, someone's likely to get injured seriously and for life, and that the state is likely to be responsible for that person for the rest of their life. However, at sixty-five, you're going to go crashing through the windshield and get killed. And he was serious about that. That was his reason for increasing the speed.

CH So it's better to...

VA It's better to kill them than it is to [laughter]...

CH Well, I'm sure a lot of people would rather be dead than maimed.

VA Well, I know that's true, but, you know, I'm reading this letter, and I'm saying, Now, there's a different view on the subject of sixty-five.

CH You know, there was an extension failed of the lobbyists - lobby disclosure law as to persons who appear before rule-making agencies, and there wasn't anymore information on that that I

could find. Do you recall?

VA I recall, not maybe that specifically, but there's been discussion about that all the time, and not only that, but when the state agency itself, obviously, gets before another rule-making body. So this comes down to we don't trust these folks, and we're going to have to pass a law to regulate them.

CH Is this identifying who they represent?

VA Oh, they always do that anyway. Actually, the lobby in Oregon is controlled strongly by the - what they call the Capitol Club. That's the club of lobbyists. And, really, they do a better supervision job on lobbyists than anybody else, than we could do or the legislature could do.

CH There was a failure to provide a prohibition on abortions for minors unless a doctor received written proof that the parents or guardians knew of the abortion request. I'm not sure if we've talked about abortion as an issue or not, but where do you stand on that?

CH My position is one that's not pleasing to either side. I do not believe in unrestricted abortions. I remember very specifically the bill that sprung the door open for abortions in Oregon. I can't recall the year just now, but anyway, I was in the legislature, I was in the senate, and the law at that time was that legally you could have an abortion if it affected the health of the mother, physical health of the mother. One word was added: mental health, and that is the one that sprung the door open. The following session we asked for a report. A doctor came up from Eugene and with some great degree of pride was saying that he performed three hundred abortions. I was

offended by that. So, I don't believe in unrestricted abortion. However, as a governor I did fund abortions and welfare, and my theory was that it's the law in Oregon. You can do it legally. It's not a law that I like, but the fact is, it's the law, and so why should just those who could afford it get it and those who can't, cannot. So that's my position. The one thing I don't do is apologize for it. That's who I am. I know the position, as I say, is not pleasing to either side. That just happens to be where I come down. If I were to vote on the bill that you just talked about, I would have voted yes, about the child having to get the parents' consent for abortion.

CH There was an attempt to refer to the voters a proposal to repeal the death penalty that voters enacted in November. Of course, that did not go through. So did you actively get behind that referral?

VA I supported the measure when it was on the ballot. It was on the ballot at the time I was running for office and did pass that year - I mean 1978 - and I did it because I thought it was a very good law. First of all, I said, and believe, it's not that I want to take the life of anyone, it's that I want to prevent the life of anyone being taken. So I'm on the side, and do believe, that there is a deterrent to the crime of murder by the presence of capital punishment. It's never a statistic you could ever get. No one's going to say, I would have murdered you except it's against the - I had a chance of getting executed. You can't get that statistic, but I still believe it's possible. So it's a matter of not taking a life but saving a life. In addition, this bill said that it had to be aggravated murder; the jury - and they described what aggravated murder was - the jury had to be convinced that this person would likely to commit that crime again, and that there was an automatic referral to the

supreme court. Now, that's a pretty small sieve to go through. I made up my mind early on, and told publically at the media when talking about it, that if it ever came to that point - which I never believed it would, not in my term as governor - but I made it clear that if it ever came to that point, I would not be pardoning, because if it goes through all of that: it was aggravated, they had to determine it was likely to happen again, and there was an automatic review by the supreme court, and it passed all those tests, that's as far as it should go. So I made it clear. Now, the law was declared unconstitutional - I've forgotten for what reason - and then was submitted again and repassed in its approved form, and that's the one we operate under today.

CH At the same time, the legislature failed to pass a bill which would allow for the administration of capital punishment by injection of drugs rather than a gas chamber, which the state didn't have. Why was that? What was the feeling against the injection of drugs?

VA I don't know. I can't remember that. I'm supportive of drug injection. I support that. But I don't know why in this case.

CH So now the only options for the state are what?

VA I think now the...

CH Now they have it?

VA Yeah, injection. I think that's the way it goes, is injection. I don't think there's a better choice.

CH Didn't that issue just come up recently with the execution of Dodds, Gary Dodds, from Vancouver?

VA It could have. Well, they have a different law up there, and you have a choice, and he took the hanging choice.

CH There was a failure to have a ban on discrimination in state hiring practices against homosexuals. Where did you come down on that, because I know this comes up later, and we'll probably talk about it on this more recent Measure 9 that you were active in?

VA Well, this wouldn't be bad as a background, because my position on nine is - might appear to be at variance with what I'm going to tell you. Let me go back, now, take one step, and then I'll explain to you where I stand on it. Before I left office and after I was elected, I had gotten word that Bob Straub was going to write an executive order in regard to discrimination on homosexuals. I sent the message back to him - I didn't have a direct communication with him on this subject - that he's governor; he can do whatever he wants. I respect that because he's still governor. However, I did let him know that as soon as I was sworn in I was going to void that executive order. I thought a lot about it, and I think we can talk about it now because nine - it was a different reason in why I was opposing Ballot 9.

I told you earlier that I try to think about things that I know are going to be coming up and will become of some consequence, and so before the heat builds up, I'm going to think about it and see where I - so I thought about this particularly, and then I said to myself, Well, now, why should we be writing any special laws on sexual preference? Why should we be doing that? To me it boiled down to sexual preference. Why should we be doing that? If we do that, then why wouldn't we be passing

laws as to how you do it? It makes as much sense to me. So basically I just came down that I didn't know why we should do that.

I had a long discourse several times recently, meaning a few months ago, and I still had not yet had a good answer, and I'm still curious about it. Recently a friend of mine in New York - and they're wanting to write a statement about homosexuals and wanted me to be supportive of that statement. There's a couple of paragraphs, and I said, I don't have any problem with the first paragraph, but the second paragraph I want to think about. But then I said to him, because he's a very intelligent man - he's written books and - Andy Tobias, his name is - why did ^{they} he feel compelled to tell me? I'm not anxious to know. I've asked that question several times. I thought, well, now I'm going to get something from Andy because he's a pretty thoughtful guy. I still didn't get a satisfactory answer, satisfactory to me, because I don't need to know. Nobody has to tell me about it, so why do they have to tell me about it? That's the thing I don't...

CH Why...?

VA Why do they have to say...

CH Why do homosexuals have to say that they're homosexual?

VA Yeah. Why do they have to tell me that? I don't need to know. I have no strong desire to know. I don't really care.

CH But in this case isn't it a situation where homosexuals are afraid that they would be found out and, therefore, discriminated against once that happens? Or at least in some of those...

VA Well, but you know - this may sound a little crude, but I remember a saying one time that it's better to remain silent and be thought stupid than it is to open your mouth and remove all doubt. Maybe that's not a good - but, you know, the fact that somebody may think so, still even people are - most people, 96 percent, are at least good enough to say, well, I think so, but I don't know that, and I'm not going to make a presumption beyond that point. There'll be a few really, red, red, red, red necks, but they're not in a major number. It's - to me, it's personal. I no more would want to tell people how many times or how or - you know, to me it's a personal thing. They don't need to know. I don't even tell my closest friend, my dearest, closest friend, nor does he tell me, but we don't get into the conversation, but the point is, this is very personal. So why tell me? And, then, to get up and pronounce that I'm gay or I'm a lesbian, why? Why tell me that? I don't need to know.

CH Isn't part of the issue that they believe it's not a matter of preference but a matter of orientation that that's the way they are, regardless of what they would want otherwise, and, therefore, since they didn't have anything to do about it, there's nothing that they should be ashamed about and making it stand out is not...

VA I would buy that 100 percent. Just don't tell me. But there's an attitude out there that - oh, you get to the OCA types, you know, this is - really gets God and the Bible and everything else. I mean, they get quite uptight about the whole thing. And as I say, I can live without knowing. I appointed someone, at least one someone, that I was quite sure was a lesbian. I didn't ask, she didn't tell me. She did a great job. I have no problems. They're a human being like I am. They have a preference, it's a sexual preference. That's okay. That's

their thing, it's not my thing. But just don't tell me. That's the thing that still buzzes around in my head. Why do they have to tell me, why do I have to be told? They use the word coming out of the closet. Why? Why do that? It doesn't certainly help them. It's clear that it doesn't help them at all to do that, and then they get - having done so, they get very righteous about it and then they have parades and - oh, that's even another thing. I don't think that a lot of these people that go out in parades represent homosexuals, and, yet, that's what the public sees, these weirdos out there, and they say, Ha-ha, see? Look, I'm telling you, they're - and they don't help a bit.

Well anyway, that's kind of a long discussion. When we get to Ballot 9, we're talking about - and we'll get to that, but now we're in a different atmosphere altogether. But I think I needed to - we got through abortions pretty well, a little longer on homosexuals. And I still want to know someday why the need to tell me. I think that we'd be better off for them and for me if they didn't tell me. For both. That's my opinion. Somebody that's involved would have to think it through. I was really kind of hoping that Andy Tobias would really kind of turn the light on for me because I was - you know, I respect his intelligence, and obviously he felt very keenly about what he wanted me to do, and I thought, well, he's initiated, so he must have some pretty good feelings about this, but I still didn't get what I consider a satisfactory answer.

CH Well, there was also an attempt to limit access by the general public to criminal record files of the state police. Was that pretty controversial?

VA I'm trying to remember why that would come up. I can't remember, I can't tell you. Not enough so, anyway, that I'd have a memory of it.

CH I guess I'm somewhat surprised that the general public has any access to state police criminal records.

VA I would think so. That would surprise me, too. I suppose there might be some access, but I would think there would be a lot that would not be accessible.

CH There was an attempt to create a commission of the status of Black and Hispanic affairs.

VA Yeah, I remember that.

CH Tell me about that.

VA To begin with, I do believe, very strongly, that we should not segment people. I may have talked about it, about I don't want to be a senior. I expect to live, but I don't want to be called a senior. It's just that I don't want to have somebody put me in a corral. Or Blacks or Hispanics or young or old or, you know, whatever the corral might be. Italian or Irish or - during the convention in 1972 - I think I may have covered this for you, I think we did, but remember I told you I was noted for getting an amendment in the platform. Well the amendment was - this was Main Street of American life, and the amendment was to say, just much like I'm saying right now, we shouldn't corral people. There should be no boundaries. Everybody should be an American. Not an old American, young American, Black American, Hispanic American, but American. Everybody should be the same. However, having now told you that, I do believe that you need to push it. You have to move it forward. You just can't wait for it to happen. So I came up with the Hispanic commission and Black commission, because they do need understanding, they do need support, they do need to move it forward. I have no

question about that. The legislature, I think, gave us one dollar, or something like that, and said, Now you've got a fishing license. Go out and raise your own money. That shocked me, that surprised me. The Democrats controlled the legislature, and they're supposed to be the party of the people, and all the rest of that. I was quite shocked by that. But we took it and did the best we could with it and got it going and tried to raise some money and kept it going, and it's going today.

CH So even though the creation of those commissions did not take place, you found a way of...?

VA Well, they legalized it by giving it a dollar, so now it's legal. There is a commission, it is passed by the state, but you don't have any money. What they did was to give us a fishing license.

CH Also failed was a requirement that labor negotiations involving public agencies be open to the public.

VA Yeah.

CH I imagine there was a lot of concern...

VA By labor unions.

CH ...by labor unions.

VA It's still suma ¹[?] public, and I think they ought to be.

CH Here's another issue that generates a lot of heat. There was a failure to remove the ban against self-service gas pumps at retail service stations. Gee, that comes up a lot. I don't know

how many states now - is it just two states that don't have self-service gas? Oregon and New Jersey, or something like that?

VA Yeah. Well, first of all, I'm not convinced that you are going to get the benefit of that. The whole idea is, you pump it yourself and you get gas for less. I don't think you'd get gas for less than the state of Washington. I've been up there to tank up. But I don't think so. I don't think you'd get gas for less in California, and you can pump down there. In addition, it's true - I think of my wife. It would be very difficult for her to go out and pump her own gas. Even today, the gas stations no longer check your tire or put water, if you need water. There is a place for that at my gas station, but you've got to drive over there and take your car over there and do it yourself.

CH And sometimes you have to pay for it now.

VA But I think it's a matter of convenience. I can do it, you can do it, most people can do it; a lot of people can't. Because of that, and because I'm unconvinced that you really benefit - by that, I mean getting the lowest gas price - then it's not worth it.

CH There are also safety issues that are...

VA I think that's more specious than real.

CH There was an attempt to reduce the age for drinking from twenty-one to nineteen, and you've always opposed that, haven't you?

VA Absolutely.

CH We've talked about that before.

There was an attempt to ratify the proposed U.S. constitutional amendment to give Washington, D.C., residents the right to elect their own congressmen, and apparently that failed in the legislature, at least.

VA I have no great - I'm not a champion for that. If it happens, it happens; if it doesn't, I'm perfectly happy. I have no strong feelings about that.

Momentarily back to the eighteen-year-old drinking - only momentarily - I said to those that were supporting it, I'm not stupid enough or blind enough to think that eighteen-year-olds or sixteen-year-olds don't drink. They do. But if you lower the drinking age, there will be more of them, and drinking and driving, and there are going to be more people killed. It was that simple. There's drinking drivers at age fifty. I know that. I just didn't want to put more...

[End of Tape 29, Side 2]