

CH This is an interview with Governor Atiyeh. This is Tape 13, Side 2.

VA So the strike continues to go. When it's over, Meier & Frank's has some season left, if we want to use that term. In terms of the farmer, he's got a harvest time, and that's the time they're going to strike. You know, there's no point in striking in the wintertime; they can hang on until harvest time. So that's when they were going to strike. And if they're unable to harvest their crop, their whole year is gone. See, Meier & Frank still has some part of the year left; the farmer doesn't have any part of the year left. And so, okay, collective bargaining, let's talk about it, let's see what the problems are, let's see if we can iron them out, that kind of thing; but in terms of striking, you just kill off the farmer, and, obviously, that's not what we want to do. The guy's badly enough in debt as it is. And so in terms of my personal philosophy, I was willing to go part of the way, but I wasn't willing to go all the way. But that's the reason for it.

CH Part of that issue also was in regards to letting public employees and teachers have the right to strike as well. How did you feel about that?

VA Well, that's very difficult, because, again, I think, in terms of bargaining, it's an important thing and it should happen. At the same time, there are services that are required by Oregonians. We have to have prison guards; you know, you can't have them walk out. Of course, that was never the case. Whenever they talked about striking, those kinds of folks couldn't strike. The people on welfare need assistance. You

know, there's things that have to keep government going. So again, I was willing to go part of the way, maybe even to allow striking and - well, we call it nonessential, not life threatening or that kind of thing in those areas, and that's not too bad. Of course, they had the power to strike, and they threatened strike while I was governor, and we had a contingency plan all drafted up in the event that it ever happened. But by and large, there are things that you can't - you know, government is there - I've said many times that the business - you say run government like a business, and I think by and large you can do that, but there are some exceptions. For example, I would say, you know, a company might go broke, they close their doors, but government can never close their doors. We don't have that option. We've got to stay open; no matter what happens, we've got to stay open. And I guess basically the same idea in terms of striking. We've got to stay open. We're serving the public of the state of Oregon for many things. So to make it operate as well as possible to do the things that Oregonians need, at the same time give a public employee - just because they're a public employee, to deny them opportunities to bargain, to - you know, to talk about what their problems might be, I don't think they should be denied that.

CH One of the biggest issues that came up during this session was Senate Bill 100 on the creation of the Land Conservation and Development Commission.

VA Not '71. You've got to be in another year.

CH Was that in '73, then?

VA Well, '73 was Senate Bill 10, and '75 was Senate Bill 100.

CH Oh, so maybe, then, I'm off a session. Maybe that was in 1973, then. You were on that committee.

VA I was on the committee, yeah.

CH That was Hector Macpherson, wasn't it?

VA That's correct. Well, Hector was Senate Bill 100.

CH Senate Bill 100, yes, that was...

VA Senate Bill 10 was the session before, and Senate Bill 10 said, You have to - Local government, you have to have land-use planning, and if you don't, we will. That's what ten said. I'm obviously paraphrasing it. And they didn't do it to somebody's satisfaction, and so Senate Bill 100 came along.

CH Why was there resistance on that? That was by county, wasn't it?

VA Yeah, cities and counties, right. Well, you know, we'd operated for a long time - I have to tell you that in a very practical way, I would say to people - you know, they over-dramatize it. I'm glad we have land-use planning, and I've defended it, and it's been on the ballot, and I've opposed eliminating it. All of that is all history. And, yet, I would say to them, Well, tell me about the rape and pillage out there. You know, we've been operating since 1859 without Senate Bill 100, so where's the rape and pillage that's going on? Well, maybe Eighty-second Street; certainly Raleigh Hills, where I live, but, you know, I mean; by and large it's been responsible development in the state of Oregon. What we've done with Senate Bill 100 is to assure there won't be disorderly development, and

that's good, and that's why I've defended it, and why I voted for it, incidentally. But I was trying to put it in the right perspective. Yeah, we've got a problem and we've got to deal with it. But, you know, the way the whole message came is, We're going to hell in a handbasket and - Tom McCall, again talking about his charisma, he talked about Charbonnitis. And so it - but there was a need for what we had to do.

CH Well, there were some controversies at the time about places like the Twenty Miracle Miles, which people were [inaudible] the ² TWENTY miserable miles.

VA Hatfield said that.

CH Out on the coast by Lincoln City.

VA Yeah, Lincoln City.

CH And wasn't there also a land speculation deal out in central Oregon, near Bend, that became very controversial because it was...?

VA In this case it did not fit, but it is true, if you look at the history of some of the things that the state does, and probably more what the federal government does, but the saying "hard cases make bad law" is indeed true. I'm not saying that really applied to - these were just used as good examples of what bad things could happen, meaning Bend and wherever else we're talking about. But it didn't mean that that was proliferated all over the state of Oregon. In this case hard cases made good law, I think. But quite often hard cases do make bad law. They point to one thing, and then they're going to solve that one thing, and they make some pretty bad law out of it.

CH Redistricting and apportionment was an issue that term, and the Oregonian said the Senate President Burns had certain goals for the session, and he only lost one of the big ones, and that was reapportionment. Is that just sort of a - not a perennial issue, but an issue that comes up at least once a decade?

VA Every ten years, yes.

CH And everything is the same about it, or does it change from decade to decade?

VA Well, it changes. It seems to me that in '71 - I'm sure I'm right - there'd been some supreme court cases, one man-one vote, and they never really defined it. In other words, how big an error could you have? Could you be 1 percent off, 2 percent off? And so you got a little bit more mathematical with '71 in making sure that as the districts were developed, number one, that they were - I think - I don't recall. We thought probably an error or 1- or 2 percent was okay, because you can't make it just precisely perfect. But it was very mathematical, but always - particularly legislative. It wouldn't make any different statewide. Statewide is statewide. But you have two things involved: the house, the senate, and Congress, and those were the districts you were trying to put together. And the Democrats were looking for what the registrations are, and the Republicans are looking at the same, and you try not to get too much out of whack. The Republicans were kind of looking over the shoulder of the Democrats and the Democrats of the Republicans, and at the same time, those that are now in the legislature are looking as to what's happening to their seat and whether they're going to be - district lines are going to boot them out. So this is all the energy that's going on during the course of the debate of reapportionment.

CH There was another issue which came up from time to time, and during this session, and that was fluoridation of water. It seems like that used to be a really big issue, and you don't hear anything about it anymore.

VA Yeah. I suppose it's because fluoride toothpaste. Well, that one really was a hot issue. There's been a lot of unremembered but at the time really hot issues, and that was one of them - we talked earlier about sex education; that was another one at one time - and whether or not we should put things in our water, and there were those that thought we ought not to do it. There were those that would give examples of what could happen if people were drinking fluoride and what terrible things to your body; and the dentists, on the other hand, said it was good for your teeth and you ought to have it. It was kind of a big issue, because we don't have too much fluoride in our water in Oregon, and certainly we don't in this metropolitan area because there's Bull Run. So it got to be emotional. We started dealing with our bodies and what goes in them. And I can recall a fellow from Newberg, he was very uptight about this whole thing, and it brought a variety of people into the foray. It didn't pass. We finally decided no, we're not going to do that.

CH How did you feel about it?

VA I didn't think we ought to do that. You know, you can take your children to the dentist, and they can fluoride their mouth. Why force everybody that - there was a way you could get the job done if you really were concerned about it.

CH Going back to some agricultural issues, there was Senate Bill 294, which would limit the liability of agricultural landowners in 1971. It would allow owners to allow the public to

come on to private lands for recreational purposes, and representatives Keith Burns and Keith Skelton said it would abolish the legal doctrine of attractive nuisance by removing liability. Was this part of what was happening around the issues of the Willamette greenway?

VA Willamette greenway was one, but, by and large, this was indeed the case. In trying to get people to allow the public on their land, they were, as we are today, concerned about being sued. If you slip and break your leg, you can get sued because I'm on this guy's property. He let the mud stay there, or whatever the - and, of course, these plaintiff attorneys, they're looking for ways to sue people. But in order to really open up an opportunity for a lot of land that wasn't public land, but for the public to go on, I think it was essential that we limit that liability. Then, we say okay, they - then, the guy doesn't have an excuse, except I don't want you on my land. But other than that, he can't say, well, I don't want you on there because I don't want to be sued; ergo, it's all blocked off. And so that's not bad legislation.

CH Were there other issues that you recall during that session that were of great significance that you were particularly involved with?

VA I can't recall.

CH There was a senate bill in 1971 to merge Portland with Multnomah County. That's an interesting concept in terms of what now is happening with Metro, the regional council, and people just passed an initiative regarding that. What were your feelings at the time on this issue?

VA I think, again, if I recall our discussion, that government closest to the people is the best government, and the more remote you make it - or, put it another way, bigger is not better. It's hard for me to remember all of what we said, but I happen to believe that a democracy is not an efficient form of government - they were talking about efficiency - so you have to live with some inefficiency in order to retain a democracy. That's my personal philosophy. I know we talked about it, because we talked about philosophies.

CH There was also a senate vote to give eighteen-year-olds the vote. What happened with that?

VA If I recall correctly, that was made into initiative - referred to the people to the vote. There were a lot of arguments about that. It was another controversial subject. I think the people turned it down.

CH I remember part of the issue was the - and I think that we did talk about this a little bit because Burns went on to be the governor in absentia, and Harry Boivin took over as senate president and tried to manipulate this issue on the eighteen-year-old vote as the president pro tem, and he appointed two extra members to his elections committee. One regular member of the committee leaves when the topic is announced, leaving the committee without a quorum. It seems a rather odd set of circumstances. Do you remember when that happened?

VA I don't recall, but I do recall a great deal of controversy about the eighteen-year-old vote.

CH Were you in favor of that?

VA Yeah.

CH I believe, then, it was then ratified.

VA yeah. I can't recall sequence of time, but I do recall it was extremely controversial in the legislative body, and I was supportive of it. I was not supportive of the next step, which was drinking at eighteen and that sort of thing. But in terms of vote, I thought that was an appropriate thing.

CH There was also a bill to delete constitutional prohibition of gambling and lotteries. Of course, this was long before we had a lottery. But where were you on that?

VA I voted no on every single gambling, lottery, whatever. I'm, in this case, pure as the driven snow. I oppose it, I've always opposed it, I opposed the lottery when it was on the ballot when I was governor. I don't think that a state should be a beneficiary of people gambling, and I think that there's an awful lot of people - I don't think it's exclusive, but there are a whole lot of people that have this great yearning to get out of the fix they're in, and they're going to do it by gambling, and they can least afford it. So I've been opposed to it.

CH There was another bill to eliminate the concept of fault in divorce. I'm not sure if this is one of the ones that Betty Roberts sponsored.

VA Probably. No fault - appropriate, I think, legislation of creating equality between men and women.

CH Burns called the '71 session the people's legislature, I think in part because he felt that a lot of things were passed

that were of consumer orientation, and there were certain changes that were taking place in the legislature at that time. How do you look back on that session and that period?

VA I can't - one merges into another, Clark. I can't recall. Everybody tries to designate things as puts the best face on it. I can't dispute it or confirm it.

CH Did you work with Bob Smith very much? I know that...

VA You mean now Congressman Bob Smith?

CH Now congressman, but who at the time was in the house, wasn't he? He was speaker of the house.

VA Um-hmm.

CH What is the relationship of a Republican speaker of the house to a minority leader Republican in the senate? Is there sort of a cooperation between the two?

VA Yeah, there is, and, of course, we've got that now. We have a Republican speaker with a minority senate. In my case, it's not just the typical. I know Bob very well. He was one of the Turks, as we talked about earlier, and we'd talk as friends as well as what's going on. I do remember - I don't remember the bill, but I do remember some bill that Bob Smith couldn't hang on to that he didn't like at all, and it was now in the senate - no, it was a senate bill he didn't like. He didn't want to have it in the house. That was it. And I said, "I'll take care of it. Don't worry about it." So when the vote came on this particular bill that Bob Smith didn't want, I went around and talked to all my Republicans, except one [laughter].

CH Who was that?

VA Tom Hartung, who really didn't have any strong feelings about it, but it was his vote that got the darn thing passed out of the senate after I had assured Bob. I talked with Tom later, and I said, "Gee whiz, I just never have thought -" I didn't talk to him because I never believed he'd ever vote for it. He said, "What? I didn't really care one way or another" [laughter].

CH In that case can you vote for reconsideration?

VA Well, yeah, but I went over and told Bob. I said, "God, Bob, I - I mean, I really had this thing nailed. I would never have believed that -" I've forgotten what happened, but he got a bill that he really didn't want after I assured him, you know, with great fervor that I was going to take care of it. And it was just because I talked to everybody, but I never thought that Tom would ever vote the way he did. I just thought, well, I'm not going to bother to talk to Tom. There's no point in talking with Tom, and Tom's the guy I should have talked to.

CH When you decide that you're going to do something like that, prevent some bill from going through, what is your strategy? I mean, I'm sure it depends on what it is, but are you only speaking with Republicans at that point, or are you trying to - if you're a minority, do you...?

VA It depends on how you size it up. You say, okay, if it just needs the Republicans, that's all I would talk to. Then, my next step would be to talk to friendly Democrats - and I obviously have quite a few of those - and I'd appreciate it if you'd vote no, you know, and explain to them what my problem was, and get some assurances.

And, incidentally, this would be a good time to talk about it because of the gradual changes that happened. In my early days, and for a good part of my tenure in the legislature, if somebody said yes or if they said no, you could take that to the bank. Later on, and particularly the years I was governor, that no longer existed. I can recall when, as governor, I was asking Lee Johnson, "How many votes do we have?" He said, "Eighteen." Whether it be against or for, I don't remember. And my answer to him was, "That's not enough." Now, clearly, eighteen is enough. All you need are sixteen in the senate. So things have changed that much. You could not depend - when somebody said they were going to vote one way or another, you could depend on it. Now that's not the case anymore. That's too bad.

CH In the case of trying to develop a strategy from preventing some bill from going through, do you run the risk, when you cross over and talk to Democrats, of perhaps generating a partisan opposition to it?

VA Oh sure, but you understand all of that. And it all depends on what your approach is, to whom you talk to; those that you have confidence in and can trust. It's not necessarily Republicans. You know, a Republican can go south on you. When I say south, in terms of what my views would be versus what theirs would be. So, you know, you develop a friendship and understanding and trust among people. And there are some that you don't because they just are much too partisan, but you know who they are, so you just - that's the beauty, incidentally, of the senate. You only need sixteen. See, in the house you need thirty-one.

CH Right. How much of your honor do you feel is at stake when you commit yourself, say in this case to Speaker Smith, that

you're going to accomplish something in the senate as minority leader or just as a friend? How much do you feel is at stake there?

VA Oh, all of it. I mean, very much like if I commit to vote. That is a commitment. Your own credibility is at stake, and, you know, one slip is all you need to eliminate credibility. If a legislator doesn't keep their commitment once, their credibility is gone; I mean, henceforth. Once is enough. The same thing with lobbyists. If a lobbyist deliberately gives you the wrong information, that's it; it's finished. I don't need two, one's enough. So I apply that to myself. You see, in other words, it works both ways. I feel a commitment is a commitment.

CH Who were some of the people that you worked most closely with during that period in the legislature, while you were minority leader?

VA I'd really have to...

CH I would think that as minority leader you were probably an integral part of working...

VA Most, if not all, the Republicans. There were some that were hard to convince. Certainly, John Burns and Mike Thorne - I think Mike was there at the time - I had a good relationship with Dick Groener. I can't recall all who were there. Those were Democrats I'm talking about now. If I had a list of who was there at the time, I could tell you.

CH How did you communicate with your own constituency? Did you have a newsletter or did you have meetings planned that you would go to?

VA Some of them have their town halls once a month or something like that. No, I didn't have anything like that.

CH Were you often invited to town hall meetings?

VA No. Oh, once in a while. It wasn't eliminated altogether, but I didn't have any particular routine. I'd go back and talk to a Republican forum or the local rotary or chambers, and when I was invited to come, I'd go do that. [I'd] talk to the newspapers, the Hillsboro Argus and the Forest Grove News Times and the Beaverton Valley News and things of that kind, but it wasn't formalized in the sense - I would go, and whenever I was invited, do it.

CH Were there groups that you were closely involved with?

VA Pardon?

CH Groups or organizations that you were closely involved with...

VA No.

CH ...legislatively?

VA No.

CH How did you feel that your relationship with the media was while you were in the legislature?

VA Oh, always good. Always good. I always liked the media. I'd get mad at them every once in a while, but that's just sort of the routine. But I always enjoyed them.

CH Were there places off the floor that you went to, to discuss with legislators various topics?

VA No particular designated place. I'd go to wherever they were. You know, there's a lot of - well, if you're in committee, you can talk about whatever it is you have in mind. Wherever you have a chance to meet with them, you just - if you have something in mind. Sometimes you'd go look them up wherever they were.

CH Were there setbacks or controversies or disappointments you had as a senator in the legislature?

VA Oh yeah. The answer is yeah, but if you're going to say when or what time or when, I couldn't answer it. But, sure, that's always the case, always the case.

CH I know that you've mentioned several times your disappointment in not having been chosen to run for the senate presidency by your party. Were there other things like that...

VA Yeah, but I - the answer is - in terms of that particular one the answer is yes, but I don't want to overplay it because it was more embarrassing than it was any particular anger. It's very hard to rise me to anger. That just happened to be my own physical or psychological makeup. As a matter of fact, I hate to get angry, in the sense that I kind of lose it a little bit, and I don't like to lose it. I like to always be at least somewhat in command of myself, and if I get really angry, I lose it, and I don't like that. So in terms of that particular instance, I'm sure a lot of it was done vindictively toward me by people that really became very close friends of...

[End of Tape 13, Side 2]