

Governor McNair Oral History Project
South Carolina Department of Archives and History

Interview

with

Robert E. McNair

Interviewer:

Cole Blease Graham

Date:

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CBG: This is Tape 15, Side 1, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair as a part of the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Today's date is January 24, 1983. Governor, with the Highway Department's existence as a separate agency basically, did you have any problems in coordinating or planning highway development with them?

REM: Well, I suppose you'd have to say yes because they'd always operated autonomously and that for good reasons, when it was set up to get it out from under the so-called political control of the state. The Highway Department had normally done its own work and done it well. We had, supposedly and I think, admittedly the best highway system, the best maintained highways, because we had the funds to support that program and to pay as we went. The big problem we had was getting the Highway Department into a cooperative program with other state agencies and departments so that we could do more planning for future growth and development. They built highways and didn't have a planning division that looked at economic impact and things of that nature.

For instance, at the port in Charleston, to get them to use state funds was a very difficult matter. They had historically used Charleston County's allocation, and we were able to persuade them that that was a state port serving the state, and we needed real good access with the interstate highway system there. We always had cooperation in connection with industrial development. The Highway Department responded well, worked extremely well, with the State Development Board in working along that line. We then tried to pull in, you know, the Aeronautics Commission and the Ports Authority and the Highway Department into sort of a little interagency group to look at South Carolina and look at what each was doing and how they interrelated and then how one impacted on the other and how we could work together. I think from that came a very cooperative effort and from there on in, too, some rather long range planning.

The Highway Department was then confronted with the urban problems. How do you deal with the problems of Columbia, Charleston, Greenville, Spartanburg? That all caused them to get into more planning and I think led to a much stronger cooperation among the various groups. I have always said I enjoyed an excellent relationship with them, a lot of it because of my personal fondness and friendship with Sy Pearman and our ability to sit down and to work together and to travel together and to talk about the things that needed to be done, and by working with the commission itself on occasion, going over and visiting with, meeting with, and talking about what we were trying to accomplish and letting them know more about what was going on. I think that was important. They weren't always in tune with what was going on or what we were trying to do in South Carolina, so just putting it all together and developing good communications was about the most important thing.

CBG: Did key legislators get involved at all?

REM: Well, they were always involved.

CBG: Always involved.

REM: They were always involved because they were interested in the highway system naturally. Not only were the farm-to-market roads sort of under their jurisdiction, but they were interested in where the other roads went and how they were maintained and also were vitally interested in service to major industry and opening up areas for development and all of that. So they were very interested.

CBG: Were farm-to-market roads still a function of the [county] delegations?

REM: Yes, farm-to-market roads were always that. They were looked on as being, you know, that one cent that was apportioned out by the delegation. The delegations always sat down and determined, once they found out how many miles they had, where those roads should go and sent it on in, and without exception they were normally approved. Technically, it's been a function of the Highway Commission and the commissioner, but only recently I think has the commissioner begun to play a major role in the allocation of those funds.

CBG: As you worked with this group did you find that the distinction of earmarked funds made a difference?

REM: Yes, I think I should have commented on that. So much of their funds came earmarked. They had funds then coming for the interstate system, for the federal secondary highway system, the U.S. 301 and the U.S. 1, and then we had the state funds for the state farm-to-market roads. All of those funds were designated, and if the highway wasn't designated or didn't fit into that category then the funds couldn't be used for it. That served a good purpose in some instances, though, because it kept you from diverting funds for your major highways from one to the other, once it was put in a comprehensive program, which the department did have. They would develop a comprehensive highway construction program and in that allocate the various funds and try to maximize the use of those funds as much as they could so that we'd get as much out of it.

CBG: With the renewal, let's say, that occurred in the Highway Department, did the department experience staff growth or new types of employees?

REM: Well, yes. With the coming of the interstate highway system, highway departments generally had to staff up more. They had to do some planning in connection with that. The urban needs required substantial staffing for planning because there was an area where you couldn't just go build a road from point A to point B. You had to plan how you could best get from point A to point B and the impact that that was going to have and try to both lessen the impact and maximize the impact at the same time, which created a conflict. So highway departments had to establish planning, bring in professional planners, and get into that, and thus the staffs grew.

The amount of funds available under the interstate system also created an influence on them. With I-95, we've already talked about having built that from point A to point B. There was a lot of wrangling and a lot of politics in the location of I-95, a big war between Walterboro and Charleston. Everybody always felt the commission and Walterboro pulled that highway inland rather than let it go around by Charleston, but be that as it may, that caused more need for more advanced planning. When I-26, of course, was built from Charleston to Greenville-Spartanburg--and really you built those highways initially to try to go the shortest way to get to a certain point and to bypass as much as you could--the small towns felt that we were draining them completely. So you had to figure on how you could compensate for that.

I-77, I think, was the first planned highway, really, in this state. Then, the Department of Transportation came forward with a program for, I recollect, 90-10 planning funds, and that was the first time. Lowell Bridwell was then the head of the highway division in the Department of Transportation, then headed by Alan Boyd. They were both good friends of ours. We worked very closely with them to get I-77, and you know the story behind that was that we weren't entitled to all of it, but we were very fortunate that North Carolina got involved in a controversy and couldn't politically decide which of two highways they wanted. When they couldn't make a determination, we had zeroed in on I-77 and were able to get all the funds approved just before President [Lyndon] Johnson left office and Alan Boyd left as secretary of transportation. With that, and with Lowell Bridwell going out into a private consulting firm, we brought them in to do the planning, and they actually worked with the Highway Department in planning I-77. That was how we could maximize the benefits of I-77 in South Carolina with, you know, the properties along the highway, developing communities, developing recreational opportunities, developing industrial parks, or what have you. That highway was planned to come from Charlotte to Columbia and to minimize impact but to maximize the potential development for the future.

CBG: Who were some of the major sponsors of I-77? Wasn't it really added on as an afterthought that was originally terminated in Charlotte?

REM: Yes, terminated in Charlotte and [W.J.] Bryan Dorn, who was then in the Congress--and my recollection is that started way back during Senator [Olin] Johnston's time right on through, to get that added on, to bring it into Columbia rather than terminate it in Charlotte. We had such a terrific traffic in that direction that we needed to link it on in. Also it made Columbia and South Carolina more of a hub rather than Charlotte, we felt. So they worked very hard to get that added to the system and were successful in getting it. Bryan played a very important role because he was on the Public Works Committee of the House of Representatives.

CBG: Do you see that as almost a laboratory for economic development? If you go up that valley, its potentially one of the, I guess you'd say, still more rural, agricultural areas.

REM: We saw it as more of one than has ever developed. We envisioned it really as opening up an undeveloped region that we thought was going to have some new communities and new parks, sort of a model with industrial park areas all prearranged and set out and laid out and predetermined where they would go. We also felt that linking Columbia and Charlotte was going to force that section into substantial growth. I have been disappointed that it hasn't really developed as we had envisioned it, but there's been a lot along there, and we see potential now for it.

CBG: The Columbia end and the Rock Hill end have . . .

REM: Yes.

CBG: . . . been developing fairly generously.

REM: And that's probably natural.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We had hoped, you know, we might be able to stimulate a reverse of that. We had hoped by planning it as well as it was supposed to have been planned and laying all this out that we would, you know, do it a little differently than we had in the past. We would start development in the middle as well as at each end, which is just a natural growth, really, of the spreading of a so-called metropolitan area. Also with Carowinds, you know, coming out on the South Carolina-North Carolina border; if there is an area that just is a natural, a lot of people in that area, a lot of good small to medium-sized towns in that area, just a lot there

already to build on. It's not like trying to develop from Columbia to Charleston where you would almost have to bring in and populate and develop. In that area, your people are in the area, and it just needed development.

CBG: Could there have been a higher rate, do you think, of the application of public capital to leverage private investment along the way?

REM: Well, we talked about that as Governor [Richard] Riley is talking about it now. It's difficult to determine how you can use public funds beyond the point that we use them now without getting into direct-- and we have that old constitutional provision against direct or indirect aid. We used to, you know, do things in an indirect way, and the court has said, "You can't do those things." So we were operating under that. I think there has to be more that the state can do. We've labored under a lot of handicaps, you know. We've been very fortunate in getting a lot of growth and development. We've never had what is considered a major financial institution in South Carolina that is comparable to the Trust Company of Georgia or Wachovia or North Carolina National Bank, and we've had to rely on outside capital to come in and help us with growth, and that's handicapped us. We have done much with the industrial revenue bond program that was instituted early, with the program to put water and sewer and highways at least to the property line to assist in development. Where we go from there I really don't know.

CBG: Does county leadership make a difference?

REM: It makes a tremendous difference, the political leadership and the business leadership. Usually where you find one, you find the other. They seem to go hand-in-hand, and where you've got good strong leadership, you've seen more growth, and where the business community has exerted itself, where it's gotten involved rather than, you know, sit back and criticize and complain, you see more signs of progress. There are areas in the state that have had some real aggressive involvement in everything and still haven't developed, and it's mainly because of their geographic location and the population base and all of the problems that you find in a small, rural area, but political leadership and business leadership is absolutely essential.

CBG: Was I-77 the highway that was integrated with a lake or the construction of lakes?

REM: There was supposed to have been a major lake and around that was a recreation, resort-type of potential.

CBG: A little bit like Tega Cay on Lake Wylie.

REM: That was what was planned. I think that was what was visualized. There was the industrial park that was, you know, envisioned out along the area.

CBG: As you think about the financing mechanisms of highways, what role does bonded indebtedness play? I guess a parallel question to that would be why doesn't South Carolina have toll roads?

REM: I think it's political and philosophical. We only have a few places we need them, really, and that's in the Charleston area. I mean, we always thought of building bridges with tolls. We never dreamed of building highways with tolls. The turnpikes came, and that's a different sort of thing, a different animal. Toll was just a dirty word to us, and as fast as we could get a toll off, we would eliminate it because we felt that the people paid their money into the highway program through the highway user tax, all allocated to highways, highway construction and highway maintenance, and they shouldn't have to then turn around and pay another toll to use that road. In many states they didn't operate that way. Highways was a budget item just like everything else, and the funds were co-mingled, and then those funds were appropriated out. Here they were, by legislation, allocated to the department exclusively for that purpose. I think that's the beginning of it, and thus we took all the tolls off when we got all that in place.

That's one of the reasons the Highway Department has not used its bonded indebtedness. It was always fully funded to maintain a pretty strong and substantial construction program and to do a good job of maintenance. Only when we got into the urban problem did we run into that difficulty. I recall, during the first studies that we looked at, we needed, we said, over a period of time--and I've forgotten whether it was a ten year or a twenty year program we looked at--\$2 billion for the normal program and \$2 billion for the urban program. That shocked us all because none of us realized the urban problem had grown to where it was equal to that of the whole rest of the state. When we had begun to look at that, we said there's no way we can fund it with the revenues that are available. You just can't add that other layer on top. So then people began to look and talk and that's when the study committees came on toll roads. We toyed with tolls in Charleston, we toyed with a toll coastal highway to just bring people off of I-95 and pull them all the way down the Grand Strand through Charleston and back out down at Savannah again and let them get back to I-95 or to whatever Georgia wanted to put them on. Those studies went, and nothing unfortunately has ever come of them. I really felt that we would have been very wise either to do that or to develop better access to the coastal area. I think we really suffered because we never took I-20 into Myrtle Beach also. I think we should have gone from Columbia with a four-lane, almost controlled access, highway down to the beach

area, for several reasons. One is because of the potential that's down there and what that means to the state and because of the massive number of people that would come in and go on down to the coastal area.

CBG: Do you see any parallels between South Carolina and, say, a state like New Jersey, which gets this reputation of being a pass-through or corridor-state, like it or not, and New Jersey's use of specialty toll highways as well as interstates? If people are going to go through, at least that's the crowd that pays and not the locals.

REM: That was the motivating force behind the studies when we found out how many people went through South Carolina on their way to and from Florida and weren't doing more than having lunch or maybe spending one night along the way. Not all of them did that. We were missing a real source of revenue. I think properly done, public relations-wise, and properly handled politically, the people would have supported that. I used to get a lot of letters from folks who'd gone up into the eastern part of the country and to visit or travel by automobile and come back and write letters to the governor about why don't we have a toll. Why don't we make those people going through South Carolina help pay for ours. They would have kept very detailed records of how much it cost them . . .

CBG: [chuckles]

REM: . . . to travel up in that area. Then Virginia came along and put in a toll road, and, you know, as you go through there, going over to Williamsburg, you invariably hit that toll. So that was more to the point, but, you know, it takes us a long time. But after all that time Charleston has now decided to seriously look at it, and the Highway Department is in serious discussions over using the toll to build the necessary bridges in the Charleston area. There's no other way. There's just not enough money available even if you took all of the federal and state monies that are allocated to us, to simply take care of the needs there. So they're looking at it. I suppose we've pretty well abandoned the idea of a coastal corridor, but I'm not sure we ought not to revive that as we talk about the other and as we talk about new bridge projects in Charleston. In our mind, at least, and in our planning, we ought to link those things in, so that if in another ten years from now we decide to do phase 2 or 3 it will have sort of been preplanned. Then they would fit together.

CBG: Would a toll have hurt our selling of the port of Charleston to shippers and truckers?

REM: I don't think so. It sure hasn't hurt the port of New York to any great extent, and you wouldn't have had to pay but one toll going in and out because all of the movement of freight comes west. None of it went east . . .

CBG: [chuckles]

REM: . . . except by ship. So it came west, and at that time, the way we were studying it, there probably would have not been a toll because there was no major river bridge project that they would have had to cross over. They would have come straight out I-26 on out into the west and avoided tolls. Today they're studying tolling the peninsula, and the reason for doing that is that everybody benefits and everybody ought to pay. They've gotten a fairly good response to that down there now to that approach.

CBG: Of course, one of the interesting ideas of interstate highway planning is that local traffic wouldn't use the interstate, only the bypass. In this period of time with that kind of development and with urbanization, was there any talk or planning of public transportation?

REM: That naturally was coming because the Congress, you know, in some of its funding sort of put the pressure on to look at public transportation. We didn't have the reason for it that we had later on. Gasoline was still plentiful and cheap. The biggest problem was movement of people to and from jobs, and they were scattered. There wasn't the kind of motivation to get into it. I think that the public transportation movement really came when the gas crunch came and the gasoline crisis came and focused on it.

CBG: So it would have been the early seventies, really.

REM: The early seventies when that really hit. We toyed with it, we looked at it. Some of the counties, through some of their OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] and other public type of funds, federal funds, developed some public transportation for special purposes, and that was about the extent of it. As I say, that came in the seventies with the other need. We feel that there's several reasons for it. One is people getting to and from jobs, the high cost of transportation and parking, and we've developed all of those in South Carolina in the last ten years more than in that period of time.

CBG: Did you have any particular problems with citizens relocated by highway construction?

REM: That was always a problem. Generally, until the urban program started, you know, the major thing was going through a farm or taking five feet off of somebody's front yard or moving a house twenty feet, just moving it from its location back some.

CBG: Usually that could just be settled . . .

REM: That could be done. Then when they started with the major problems in the major urban areas, it was a serious problem because you were relocating people. You were locating people that didn't own the homes many times or most of the time because you were going around the perimeter in the so-called depressed areas, and you had to find a place for those people to go. So that's where that relocation program started, and fortunately there were federal funds available, or that was included in the cost. You could roll that in. Initially the states had to pick it up, and then it was rolled into the cost of the construction. That is a continuing problem, but it has made the cost of doing any kind of work awfully expensive, and I don't think the public understands that. You just don't say, "We're going to build a million dollar road." You've got to build in all those other things that figure in. By the time you get through, it's increased three to five times or more with additional things that you have to do in addition to just building a highway. Back in the fifties and sixties, we didn't have to think about those things, or at least they weren't a major part of the cost.

CBG: Were relocation activities done primarily by city agencies or did the state Social Services . . .

REM: The Highway Department got involved to a minimal extent. Most of it was done by the cities and their own housing authorities. I don't think social services got in it to any great extent.

CBG: In thinking of the impact of a highway on its environment, I guess that can lead into a discussion of broader environmental concerns. What about the state of the environment in South Carolina when you were governor?

REM: Well, I like to think all the problems developed during that period of time. [chuckles] Unfortunately they'd been here and other people had dealt with them, but they sort of came to the forefront . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . during that period, and I suppose, again, it's because it was a period of greatest growth and development. Everything was happening, and people were becoming concerned about overdevelopment, and

thus the environment moved out front and center. I think we were all concerned. We were primarily concerned about our rivers and streams, you know, hunting and fishing. That's what started it. When we began to do something that interfered with the fishing on the Santee or the Santee-Cooper lakes or the Wateree or the Edisto, people came out, and from that there was more and more publicity, more and more interest in the environment, and thus we moved from rivers and streams and hunting and fishing to the living environment. I mean it moved into the cities and places like that. So the environment really came forward, and that became a very, very, serious problem when you began to deal with almost anything, from the location of an industry to the building of a highway.

END OF SIDE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO

CBG: This is Tape 15, Side 2, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair, a part of the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Today's date is January 24, 1983. Governor, in managing this environment or the state's environmental policies, what major state agencies were involved?

REM: Well, we only had one, and that was the Department of Health which had what was then referred to as the Pollution Control Division. I don't think anybody really thought much beyond pollution control at that time. We did have the beginnings of some, you know, health-types of input in the Charleston area or some place like that where we would have substantial amounts of it, but they had almost exclusive responsibility for what's now known as environmental control. They had the air and water quality, mostly water. It all sort of stemmed from hunting, fishing, the lakes and the rivers.

CBG: Was that basically connected to ideas of safe drinking water for municipal government as a function of state?

REM: Yes, that was that plus the safe water for sports. With all of this we began to recognize that we had to broaden this because, you know, a medical doctor and somebody dealing with the environment weren't always totally compatible. So what I recommended was that we carve the Pollution Control Division out of the State Board of Health and create a separate department, and that was done. Then we recognized that we had potential problems with water, underground water, things getting into the drinking supply underground as well as the rivers and streams. So we created the Water Resources Commission and then brought in Clair Guess to begin studying and looking at this and working very closely with the Pollution Control Authority.

Then the Wildlife Department began to get involved, naturally, because of the impact on fishing and damage from the discharge of some pollutants that would destroy fish.

We had mercury in the Savannah River, I recall, coming from some plant up the river, and we had to close it to fishing for some time. There we responded by closing it to fishing because we didn't have all the technical equipment, and we didn't have the information to make good decisions. My recollection is we closed it to fishing, and I remember talking with the state health officer, then Dr. [Kenneth] Aycock, I think, and asking him about it and how much was there, and he said, "Well, you would have to eat fish for three meals a day for something like months, you know, to get enough to do you some harm." But as a precautionary matter we had to close it down.

We then got into monitoring, got into testing, got into all of that, air quality standards, all this coming from the federal government, too, as they moved into the area, and they began to set certain standards. The states either had to move in and establish good standards themselves, or the federal people would assume control. We always took the position we wanted to be out front. We wanted to do it ourselves, and as those things came, we would try to move and try to develop and establish standards that were equal to the ones they were coming with and get them approved so that we could administer and enforce the standards ourselves. I think we've managed to do that.

We had the nuclear--beginnings of that. We had the Savannah River Plant. We relied solely on the government because they had all the know-how, all the knowledge, technological knowledge. That's where it was. With the coming of the spin-offs, with the coming to Barnwell of what became Chem Nuclear, the waste burial facilities down there, with the coming of reprocessing, all of this started in the sixties, and the state wasn't equipped. So we had to reach out and that's where the Department of Health and Environmental Control [DHEC] came into place rather than Pollution Control. It was broadened to Environmental Control, and we got into some regulation of nuclear.

We had, you know, all the nuclear stuff that's used around hospitals and all. Nobody ever thought about it before, and we formed a regulatory body to police that. As I say, we had to bring in folks who had some background. If my memory serves me, when we got into the recycling, the potential recycling of spent fuels, we brought in the retired head of the Atomic Energy Commission at the Savannah River plant. He then came on to work for the state of South Carolina as one of the most knowledgeable people in the country, and he was really our adviser, who met with us. Every time I would get involved, he would be there. Bob Blair was then another little fellow on the State Development Board who was knowledgeable in that area, and he worked with those types of industries. These two really sort of gave us, at that time, some expertise that nobody else had. We had to rely largely on them.

So we got into all of this pretty quickly and pretty early because of not only the heavy industrial development we had, the major wood products, pulp and paper, but also we had a lot of chemical. We had

the fiber, which was chemically related, all coming into South Carolina, and then we had the nuclear development. So we had to move pretty rapidly into developing a way of dealing with all of this.

CBG: Was there much development, on the nuclear side, of nuclear electricity generation during this time?

REM: Yes, that was the beginning of it, and that was the reason that the Allied General facility is at Barnwell. Duke Power Company was one of the forerunners in the decision to construct nuclear generation and still, you know, has a major amount of its generation coming from its nuclear plants. They opted to choose South Carolina because of the lakes, the Lake Keeowee Toxaway project and then the others over in Cherokee County, and all of that. So that again got us into it very, very early.

CBG: Was nuclear power plant siting mostly a federal responsibility?

REM: Well, it was a dual responsibility. They naturally had to comply with all the federal regulations from the Federal Power Commission, and the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission at that time was set up to regulate the development of nuclear power. They had the expertise and the knowledge, but they also had to get certificates from the state authorities and be certified at the state level. So it was a dual type of responsibility, but from a technical point we relied heavily, almost exclusively, on the federal government for the regulation of safety and all of that. Then the Public Service Commission had to give them a certificate for construction and need and all of those types of things, but they weren't equipped, didn't have the manpower, weren't really responsible for it, and shouldn't have had to get into all of that. The Pollution Control Authority, which became DHEC, was in in the beginning and got involved in such decisions as whether or not there would be cooling towers or whether there would be holding ponds or lakes and such things as that, which were very important at that time.

CBG: As you look back on something like the Savannah River project, do see that as an example of the positive aspects of industrial development for South Carolina?

REM: I did and still do and wonder why we haven't been more aggressive and why we haven't been able to take advantage and make better use of the potential around it. I still think it offers a great opportunity. You know, when we got into that, we talked about the atom, we talked about the bomb, and immediately after the war it was the peaceful use of it, and it was a tremendous source, a tremendous thing. When it came to South Carolina, most people didn't talk as much about that bomb plant as they did the potential for growth and development and for a sort of a peaceful, private enterprise, atomic complex.

CBG: It put us at the forefront at that . . .

REM: It put us in the forefront.

CBG: . . . yes, yes.

REM: And I will never forget, as a young legislator, going down to the announcement dinner in Aiken when Senator Burnet Maybank, who had been governor, and old Senator Homer Capehart, who was the Republican leader in the Senate at that time, both spoke and both talked about the opportunity that this offered to this region of the country to develop and, you know, where the South was really going to emerge and we were going to develop around the peaceful use of atomic energy. Then the power plants began to move to give us what we had never had, a good reliable economical source of power.

CBG: Having been, in effect, cut out of the TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority], this was to be our Oak Ridge, wasn't it?

REM: This was our Oak Ridge.

CBG: With our Santee Cooper.

REM: Santee-Cooper was there, but Duke Power was moving out in the forefront, and I think the potential that Duke was showing was largely responsible for our getting so much of the major industry into the Duke Power territory at that time. Their rates were less. Their reliability was better. The future looked very, very good for major power users coming into that area. So, yes, to us we looked on it as an opportunity, and I still think it is. I still think there's some things there, once we get through this period we're now going through-- and I think it's a period we ought to go through, reassessment, reevaluation, being sure that we've reassessed, we've relooked, we've restudied, reexamined, and that it's not only something good but it's safe, it isn't going to harm health, isn't going to have any long-range adverse impacts. I think the federal government sort of operates in contrast itself. On the one hand, it comes down with all the mandates about all this stuff that has to be done to be sure of this thing, whatever it is, is safe. They rewrite the regulations, but when they do something themselves, you know, they want to be exempt from, and it doesn't make sense that they wouldn't want to set the example, that they wouldn't want to be out front in setting an example, in proving to the

public and assuring the public that it is safe and healthy and it's not going to have, you know, an adverse impact.

CBG: Were there developments, too, in what, I guess is now coming to be called hazardous waste, such as the dumping of chemicals?

REM: Yes, there was, and again the public doesn't have long memories. They don't realize that before this you just threw this stuff out.

CBG: [chuckles]

REM: Everybody just dumped it out, over the fence, we say.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Whether it be at the home or whether it be at the industrial plant or where, we were dumping a lot of stuff probably that was just as hazardous as it is now because it was a raw chemical, and we had no way of treating it. So, you know, when we think about that and then think about becoming aware and conscious in getting into hazardous waste disposal areas, that was a giant move and a constructive, positive move. I can understand why nobody wants one near them. Nobody wants a maximum security penitentiary in their neighborhood, and nobody wants a waste disposal dump. Properly done, you know, these are probably as safe places as you could be because you know they're safe because they're under the scrutiny of all the public agencies and everybody else, and they're completely regulated and have to comply with all the guidelines and all the mandates and everything that come down from the state and federal and local authorities.

CBG: Similar things were beginning to develop as well for municipal governments and county governments with waste dumps being converted into landfills and raw sewage being processed.

REM: Well, you know, you took it out in a dump truck and found some barren field or some sink hole or some old landfill that they'd taken dirt out of to build a highway, and you dumped it, and you just left it, and all that garbage and everything else was there to rot and created a tremendous health hazard. So that was part of all this growing concern about the general environment and health, and we got into that. You know, hospitals had an awful lot of waste, and a lot of that just went out. Now, they finally put that in incinerators where they burn a lot of their more hazardous materials, but until the incinerator came, all the little county

hospitals didn't have anything, and all of that waste was dumped. So you almost say, "How did we live through all of that?"

CBG: Yes.

REM: I'm amazed at the creative, innovative uses that are developing for it where it's being converted back into energy. I think that's one of the finest things we've seen develop where we're taking solid waste and making energy out of it. We're taking all the old waste wood products, bark, dirt, and chips and limbs and things of that nature, and making energy out of it. We're taking tin cans and aluminum cans and recycling. We're really doing things that eliminate a lot of the waste we used to have to bury or throw out in the woods. The thing that still makes you aware of it is there's not many places you can go and walk or ride through the woods and not find bottles and tin cans because for years, for all of history, that's the only thing we had to do with them, was to take them out in a paper sack in a horse and wagon and throw them out into the woods. A lot of that stuff still is out there.

CBG: Or try to cure erosion with it.

REM: That's right.

CBG: Would it be your assessment that during your administration a network of agencies was formed to be able to deal with all of these problems that became more prominent in the seventies?

REM: It arose during that time, the beginnings of it, yes. It's grown so since then both in size and in complexity, but because of some experiences, we had to then pull together all of the agencies, state and federal, to deal with some--we've discussed BASF. I still think that was a good experience for South Carolina because it caused us to pull it all together, and I think the procedure that is now used by the Budget and Control Board is something that evolved from what we tried to do then. The Water Resources Commission headed by Clair Guess became the coordinating state agency; that is, all agencies that had an interest or had an involvement submitted all of theirs into that one agency, and from that came the report that the Budget and Control Board or the state government had to deal with. They don't go off all operating independently with no real communications. We still have some problems. I think today dealing with the L-reactor is a good illustration of where all of the agencies weren't talking. That sort of erupted on us. My understanding is that Water Resources was concerned about its impact on the underground water supply. It was also concerned about the water source down in Beaufort and areas like that. DHEC was concerned

about health, but all of them were sort of dealing with it and had never been all brought together where they all sat down and really discussed this. Now that the Budget and Control Board has sort of pulled it all under them, the state speaks sort of with one voice. It is an example of the fact that we still have a problem of coordination.

CBG: What about the special problem of noise pollution and airport corridors? Had that come about?

REM: That was just coming, and noise in the factory.

CBG: Noise.

REM: That was the thing then. We had been concerned about that and had been concerned about the textile mills with all the renovation, modernization, and new equipment that had come in to meet competition and the problems that that created following the so-called cotton dust. That was part of the concern for the environment, the work environment which had long been a concern, but not a whole lot really done to focus on it other than in the plants themselves. Noise was a big thing. Noise in the airports was new. Nobody really was concerned because we really didn't have that much of a problem until the jet plane came right after World War II.

CBG: And nobody really had settled out there.

REM: Nobody had settled out there, nobody got concerned until these jets started flying over.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I think when the jet broke the sound barrier, and everybody thought the Russians were attacking us . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . the bombs were bursting in air, nobody paid much attention to it. But you'd see these things streaking through the air with the jet stream behind, and people thought that was pollution. Then the jets landing and taking off caused everybody to get concerned.

CBG: In sum total then, do you feel that during the time of your administration you achieved things which you wanted to achieve in environmental management?

REM: I think we began, sort of started the things. We established the Water Resources Commission, we formed the interagency councils. My feeling always was that it was very difficult to separate the water and the trees and the air and the land. If you put all that together, you had to have your forestry people, you had to have your water people concerned with water both underground and surface water, you had to have your soil conservation people all working together, because damage to one normally meant damage to the other, and then your public health people, and when you brought that group all together you pretty well had the people that ought to be concerned with the environment in which we live. As I say, focus was on the rivers and streams and the underground water supply once we got major industry coming in, once we got concerned about air, air quality, and you know public health was always there. But in the beginning it was only health. If somebody dumped something that turned the water green we knew we had a health problem. That was what we usually focused on.

CBG: Another area that comes to mind is zoning and subdivision regulations. Had this begun to emerge at all?

REM: We talked about it, as you recall, in the legislature. We had some state legislation proposed which would authorize zoning of the state itself. That just was repugnant to South Carolina and most of the zoning was confined to the incorporated municipalities. Subdivision regulations sort of surfaced, and people would use that sort of as a form of zoning, to say single-family housing, commercial, and things of nature, as best they could. We, through the State Division of Planning that was established, got into some planning and created a state planning subdivision. That worked with the counties and municipalities and then with those regional planning districts . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: Worked with them, trying to help them coordinate their planning effort. I don't think we had progressed too far with that, as I say, because politically it just was repugnant to South Carolina. Nobody's ever wanted to say, you know, we're going to go out and zone the state of South Carolina.

CBG: Well, I guess, again, this is the kind of thing that ten years later at least the more urbanized counties were beginning to . . .

REM: They moved to do it, yes. A lot of them formed countywide planning commissions, and they got into this extensively. I think some were doing it before, but it all sort of arose during that time. I felt we got started. It was a matter of priorities and how much you could devote to various things. We felt that you had to get into the environmental studies, you had to get into water. Water was a very essential thing. My concern was that we might wake up some time twenty or thirty years from now and find we had a real water problem. Thus we stimulated the Water Resources Commission and others to get into some serious studies on our water resources, where they were and what we ought to be doing and how we could prepare for the long term. That was one of the primary focuses during that time and working with the soil and water conservation people and pulling them all in. They had the resources then and the people and the technical know-how to work very closely and to contribute a great deal to that.

CBG: Did you have any vision of things like the Environmental Protection Act of 1972 when you were governor?

REM: I don't think so. No.

CBG: And the really comprehensive federal effort, I guess, is what I'm asking about.

REM: Yes, yes, well, yes and no. We felt there had to be coordination at the federal level because there was not a whole lot, I don't think, of optimism that the states would be able to develop uniform standards. We tried the compacts, and unfortunately compacts have never really worked like they could have and should have. I think the Southeast could have gotten into this and formed a real compact and probably established some regional standards, subregional standards, and been as effective, if not more so, at less cost to the public. When the federal government comes out with a bunch of uniform regulations that apply to everybody, there's great difficulty in trying to modify them or make them flexible enough to meet different problems in different areas or different needs in different areas. That's why we always tried to stay out front as much as we could and develop standards that were in compliance with theirs and that we would enforce. We felt we could do it better and we had a better knowledge of South Carolina, and that did give us a degree of flexibility. I can recall on occasions when our standards would be higher than theirs, and we were always urging them to move on Georgia because Georgia lagged behind us. Now I think Georgia's moved and gotten into it, but in the early stages they were sort of moving behind us in the development of those kinds of things.

END OF TAPE