

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 9, 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 August 23, 1982. Governor, we were discussing the general topic of reorganization of the management capacity of state government at the time you took office as governor. What happened in the area of the introduction of automated data processing equipment and improved fiscal accounting?

REM: Well that was something that was coming along with all the other change that was taking place. Government was discovering that it could and should use the computer like business did, so that we could get management information. At the same time we could keep up with what was going on. We could also, by putting a lot of information in, you know, get basic information that we needed for planning out of it. We did a little survey to discover what we had and discovered that several agencies had computers of one form or another. The shocking thing to us was that they were only being used about three or four hours a day. When we determined that we wanted to centralize this and share, we had the problem of convincing state agencies that a computer was different from a typewriter or a Xerox machine. They thought you had to have the hardware physically in your possession, in your office, or you couldn't utilize it when you wanted to or when you needed it. So it was an educational process. [chuckles]

As I say, we discovered they weren't making good use of them, and we set out then to sort of develop a system where we grouped agencies, compatible agencies. All the finance system went through the Treasurer's Office where they all got together. We took education and grouped it together with the State Department [of Education] as the coordinating agency again. That brought together all the basic information they had, what TEC had, and what everybody else had. We needed that for more than just getting a profile of people to determine what educational level people were at, but we needed it for the State Development Board. We reached the point where we could get a total printout of everybody in an area for an incoming industry that showed who they were and what their educational level was. We even added in then, with TEC and the Development Board's participation, what their job levels were and what their earnings were. In that way, you could tell how many people you had, you know, with more than a twelfth grade education earning less than twelve thousand dollars a year, for instance.

We then began to put together the criminal information system. We discovered that only the Highway Department had one, and they put only traffic violations on it. When you stopped someone on the highway for a traffic violation and called in to get his record if it was on the computer, if he'd robbed a bank or been guilty of murder, you didn't have that. So under the direction of [J. Preston] Pete Strom and with a grant from the federal government--just as was the case with education--we pooled all of these agencies together and developed what we now have and what was then one of the better, comprehensive criminal information systems in the whole country by combining everything from everywhere. We felt that the

magistrate in Horry County, if he wanted it, ought to have the benefit of a person's record just like the sentencing judge in the federal district court ought to have that. They had it at the FBI level. So we joined with them and got all of their information into the data bank and then began to require that the counties send in this information, when they held criminal court, to the central system. That has proven to be an extremely valuable thing because that information now is instantly available on everybody that we have in the system, and the system includes a hook-in to the FBI.

CBG: Where did all the expertise originate to perform these kinds of tasks?

REM: We really had to beg, borrow, and steal people. [James S.] Jim Konduros, one of those who had worked with Olin Johnston in the Senate, had left and who'd been with IBM in Washington, in their Washington public affairs office, though he hadn't been in computers as such, was familiar with it and had a good understanding of what you could do with them. So through him we would reach out and tap people whom we could borrow. We'd borrow people from Springs Mills and places like that. We brought in a fellow who was supposed to be a systems person to sort of be the first Information Service Division director. We tried to hire one of the Lytles from Southern Bell, but we couldn't quite reach him, and he determined that his future was too bright with them to leave and join the state. But we would reach into industry or through the federal government we would find someone who was good in coming in and doing those kinds of studies, and we'd bring them in in a consulting capacity.

CBG: How did the agencies respond? Did you get some turf responses that this . . .

REM: Well, yes, you know, to be honest, yes, we did. Again, the Department of Public Welfare, which had one, wasn't about to give it up. They had always been that way, very guarded and jealous about anything they did. I think we've talked about it; they didn't even want to share their programs with other agencies. So they weren't going to share their equipment. But we were able to pull that in under the Budget and Control Board and, in effect, take control of it. We did it in a way that encouraged support and cooperation, but we put in a proviso that nobody could reach out and order that kind of equipment without approval, and thus if we discovered that they didn't need one and could share one with somebody else, we would encourage them and if necessary direct them into a cooperative effort. We ended up with a system where finance had one, education had one central system, and criminal justice had a central system, which tied Corrections into it. We opted for that rather than to come in from the other end of the spectrum with a giant system and mandate it down on everybody. Fortunately we had the benefit of what some other states had done. West Virginia had tried it, and it just didn't work. So we looked around to see what hadn't worked or what had worked.

CBG: Were the various centers capable of interacting? In other words, could the finance computer people talk with the public welfare people?

REM: No. That was the end result that we were working toward, trying to get that. Now they could request and get that information from the agencies and then utilize it for their own purposes. So we were working toward the interconnection of all that, where finance could reach in. Whether they accomplished that or not, I do not know.

CBG: How did better information help in the usual problems of fiscal management, like idle cash management or the capital borrowing program?

REM: Well, I think you can notice that the state treasurer became very sophisticated in handling the state's cash when he had all of that information available to him. That's become a tremendous source of revenue now. That money's invested daily, and it doesn't just sit around and wait for something to happen. He earns with it and has improved that. Having all of the information instantly available helped everybody become better managers.

It also gave us information we needed. For instance we could not get the retirement system on because Mr. [Tatum] Gressette didn't think he needed one. He literally had everything at his fingertips. He had developed the system, he'd run the system, and he was reluctant to go put all that stuff on computer [chuckles], but my position was that if I needed to know how many redheaded, one-eyed, retired, female, school teachers we had, that I ought to be able to get that information. It might be useful to us along the way, so we gradually tied that in to give us a better and more instantaneous grip. I remember when we had some serious discussions about one group of older, retired people who lived on a fixed income and they were working the legislature to get all of that increased significantly. Well, we couldn't tell without thirty days of physical labor--and I remember authorizing the money to get some extra people to come in after hours to literally go in there and give us the information we wanted. I think that was sort of the convincing little thing that led to them also joining and getting on the system.

CBG: Were cities and counties involved at all?

REM: No, but we made information available, for instance, through the criminal justice information system. We made all of that available to them and encouraged their participation in it, that is, to send in their records of arrest, crimes, and things like that to the system. Then they could have terminals and get it back out. So

that was another reason we wanted to get into this at the state level. Cities and towns couldn't and shouldn't have to afford to put in independent systems that were duplicative in nature.

CBG: What about the research component? Did universities come in under this idea of coordinated . . .

REM: Yes, yes. We used them extensively. [James A] Jim Morris surfaced along about that time. He really came because we couldn't get a handle on projecting revenues, and we were constantly operating sort of in the dark with the best guess basis, and I asked Jim to come in as a consultant, and then pooled together a little ad hoc advisory committee that's now the Council of Economic Advisors to counsel and advise the governor and the Budget and Control Board to help us with the economic forecast. They helped set up a lot of that. You recall we brought [Thomas P.] Tom Evans, who was head of the Statistical Division with the Employment Security Commission, one of the top statistical men in the country. We didn't even recognize him until Jim Morris told us about him. We brought him over, and he set up a statistical division in the Budget and Control Board that now feeds all of this information out so that economic advisers can operate from good facts rather than just from how the wind's blowing.

CBG: It's gotten even more sophisticated, today, I think.

REM: Much more sophisticated, I understand.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We borrowed from the University [of South Carolina] through the Bureau of Government Research. I think it was at that time. We utilized those people extensively. Wherever we could find someone who was good in an area, we would use them. We used a lot of the Clemson people in connection with the agricultural program, but the university really was a source because of the people they had available, as much to sit in and talk with as to do specific work.

CBG: Yes. Did you envision the need to get some kind of an administrative apparatus to coordinate all these computer systems?

REM: We did. We established--I've forgotten the name--it probably was the Information Systems Division within the Budget and Control Board at that time and brought someone in to head that division and then plucked the people who were in the various agencies that had some background and some knowledge, and

they formed a little interagency council that worked on that and helped develop our policy and helped with the establishment of priorities and things of that nature.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I think the fellow may still be with the Budget and Control Board. He was a retired military man.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We discovered at that time that, like industry, they had perhaps the best background in the utilization of computers as anybody else because of the space program and then the bringing of what they had done into other government agencies.

CBG: Another part of your administration, apart from reorganization, was to develop an image of state government with the idea of appropriate facilities to house this new type of state. How did the Division of General Services come into all that? Was that your outlet for doing these kinds of things?

REM: Well, the Division of General Services had been created by Governor Russell. We had had the sinking fund and property management and all of that.

CBG: Insurance.

REM: Insurance. He pulled it all together in the Division of General Services, and that began to coordinate a lot of those functions that had been sort of fragmented and scattered and really forgotten about. We took advantage of it by building on that, but we also used the State Planning Division. We had [William A.] Bill McInnis do a study of our capital improvement needs. That was the format for the capitol complex and the criminal justice administrative center out near SLED [State Law Enforcement Division]. Prior to that, Corrections had been down at the prison. We thought it would good for all of them to have their headquarters in the same area, and thus Corrections, as you know, has their headquarters out there, Juvenile Justice has theirs, everybody related to that. We thought the health and welfare agencies ought to be grouped together, so we were able to get property that Mental Health was on, and that's where the health and welfare complex is with all of them right out in that area. That was the product of Bill McInnis's study, and we grouped all the fiscal offices in an area. We took the Wade Hampton Building then as the constitutional officers' building, and we moved them from wherever they were into that building where they would all be

in the same facility right there. We grouped everybody, as we thought, into good working, compatible areas and physically tried to locate them there. Then the various administrative agencies of government were to move into the capitol complex. That was the original plan, and I think that's been one of the better things that we were able to accomplish, to have a little more orderly plan for the physical growth of state government, to group agencies into compatible groups rather than just let them just go wherever they wanted to go, as had been the case previously.

CBG: Were other agencies folded into and built on, in the General Services idea, such as maintaining other state facilities like the State House?

REM: Yes. General Services took on the responsible for supervising, really, all the state-owned, general state-owned property. The Highway Department maintained its own, but General Services, really, became a viable, strong entity as far as planning for physical needs, that is, implementing the plan for the physical needs of state government. Once the planning was done, then General Services' responsibility was to implement that. Through them we studied space utilization and space needs. We, through Planning and Grants and with the cooperation and without cooperation from the higher education institutions--you recall, we brought in the Janus group, I think it was, which was then an expert group in utilization of space. We'd heard so much about the need for space, so we decided we needed to do an independent study and determine what they had and how well they were utilizing it, and we found some surprises. We found some interesting surprises. We found areas where there was a critical need, but we also found some areas where there was a shocking lack of use of the facilities available. That is, it would be for a single purpose, and it would be used two or three hours a day; and nobody else could share it or use it. It led to a better utilization of the physical facilities that were available. We did that in all of the state-supported institutions of higher education.

CBG: What about purchasing?

REM: Purchasing had already been a part of General Services and was beginning to function as it should, that is, to take on purchasing for all state government functions. That was delicate and difficult. It was hard for agencies to give up purchasing. They all had purchasing agents. They all had people they wanted to buy from. Policies had to be established. Bid policies had to be established. It really functioned rather loosely up until the coming of General Services. It was difficult to get some of them to yield that. It ended even up that even the cities and towns took advantage of the state purchasing division. They could buy in bulk and save considerable money. They'd all bought their automobiles from the local automobile dealer whereas they discovered they could save a thousand dollars or something like that per vehicle by purchasing through the

state system. Those things, really, once people understood that it was easy to utilize it and that there was tremendous cost savings involved--they began to cooperate much more.

CBG: That does trigger a lot of political outcry from the local merchants who've been. . .

REM: Well, the local merchants pay taxes to support the local government, and they felt that, "You should patronize us. We support you." We subscribed to that, but by taking it through some orderly organized way, they would get advantage of it. I'm sure that some of the local governments didn't even get the advantage of the discount given by the manufacturers because they didn't know about it. The merchants didn't know about it, but there was a discount where the state bought, and it could come through the local merchant really.

CBG: Just payment practices, like being able to pay within the cash discount period.

REM: Which was all part of it.

CBG: Yes.

REM: All of that fit in to really trying to get a grip on what was going on and trying to organize it better. We wanted to make government more efficient and thus more economical. We didn't just assault it to make it more economical. We wanted to work those two things together.

CBG: The bottom line, at least, was expanding service.

REM: Better services without a continual, constant increase in cost.

CBG: Having gotten a grip then from, I guess, what the administrative would call a staff perspective; that is, having the backup apparatus to manage and operate government, what happened when you began to look at the organization of specific agencies? This must have at least run afoul of some established practices.

REM: That was the time, again, with federal planning money available. Everybody was looking at government, the structure of government. Some states were going to a total reorganization of state government with cabinet-level agencies or entities.

CBG: Did that thought ever enter your mind, of developing a cabinet?

REM: It did, and frankly we looked at it very closely. Wisconsin was one of the first states to go to it. We watched theirs, and we didn't like the way it worked. North Carolina started toward it, and we didn't see it working. What we saw in that was just another layer of government. It looked good, it read good, like Georgia. Georgia got all this publicity from doing all these things while they were adding numerous employees to staff up this ultra, super layer of government.

CBG: Did you look at New York's idea of organizing by what they called functional areas?

REM: We looked at that, and we determined really that that concept was the best.

CBG: Yes.

REM: So [Nelson A.] Rockefeller was really an out-front governor. He had his own resources and had all of those people that he could bring in to do studies for him, and I think we all really benefited from a lot of the things he that he had done up there. We would improvise to sort of make them suit us. That's where we decided to go more with the interagency council approach of pulling the functional groups together into interagency councils and trying to make them operate that way rather than superimposing a secretariat on top of that.

CBG: So that you could get the work done without committing to an in-place bureaucracy. In other words, these interagency councils would assemble, but there would be people already . . .

REM: Already there.

CBG: Yes.

REM: They would be the department heads, and then the staff people under them would follow through on the various programs we set out to work on. Restructuring was more the word with me than reorganization for the reason that reorganization was identified with the so-called super-secretariat system that I didn't like and concluded would not be in the best interest of the state. We opted for restructuring some. We did some restructuring, not nearly as much as I would liked to have done, not nearly as much as needed to be done. The reason we didn't get more deeply is we had so many things to deal with that it forced us to give priority

to them. We ran out of time. As I said, we had to leave some other things for other people to do and that was one of them.

We did some. We, you know, we took what was then the Pollution Control Division out of the Health Department where it was not functioning properly at that time. The Health Board was then made up almost all of doctors, medical doctors. We thought there was a better way of handling the so-called pollution environmental problems, and we had a Dr. [H.J.] Webb, one of the nationally recognized people there. So we moved it out of what was Health and created a separate Pollution Control Authority and staffed it up and got it functioning. My ultimate objective was to have something like the Environmental Protection Agency where all related activities would be pulled into that, but, as I say, we got it started and then the Health Department, which is now DHEC [Department of Health and Environmental Control] continued to wage the battle, and they were successful in getting the legislature to consolidate it back and call them the Department of Health and Environmental Control and broaden the board. They changed, as you know, the makeup of the board there so that it's now made up of some lay people, non-professional people.

CBG: Was there much consciousness of the environment in South Carolina before the Pollution Control Authority?

REM: [pause] Well, I'd have to be honest and say not a whole lot.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Really, because I don't think we thought we could have problems. We had so much open space and undeveloped areas and so much water and so many rivers. We're real fortunate, you know, with all the rivers that we have flowing through the state going into the Atlantic Ocean, and I think we thought we could just wash it all out into the ocean.

CBG: Which is not atypical of a rural southern state's attitude.

REM: No, it was not. And I suppose until BASF, we weren't really conscious of it. We were, but we didn't address it as we should address it. If we had, we probably would not have the BASF problem. We would have done our homework first and been prepared for that onslaught of opposition from the national environmentalists. That was poorly handled, I admit, and a botched up experience, but there was some good and bad in it. We learned some good lessons. We lost a major industrial complex that would have added

significantly to South Carolina's economic development and particularly to that area. It was perhaps one of the most sophisticated at handling environmental problems of any industry in the world.

CBG: We still in this state don't have an industry of that heavy class, do we?

REM: No, that complex frightened everybody. When they first started talking about a plant, people perked up and listened, but then they began talking about that giant complex similar to the one over in Germany and that frightened folks because we just don't have anything like that. The one at Bushy Park has one of the big three. All three were coming to South Carolina. They had some plans for Bushy Park similar to that, and they quietly developed a complex down there and have never had a problem. I think that's illustrative of what could have been had we handled it properly.

END OF SIDE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO

CBG: This is Tape 9, Side 2, 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 August 23, 1982. Governor to finish up this discussion of pollution, was part of your motivation in creating the Pollution Control Authority to prepare South Carolina for, what shall we say, responsible industrialization, in other words, to have an agency almost in anticipation of EPA at the federal level?

REM: We knew we had to, and we thought this was the way to do it, to create one and pull in all the various functions that ought to be in it in a separate agency so that it would function as a separate agency and not be the tail on the dog of another state agency. We felt that things were going to start happening; that we were going to develop along the rivers. We were talking about chemical complexes, particularly along the Savannah River, which had been made navigable from Augusta down to Savannah. We knew there were going to be major developments in the Charleston area, around the port of Charleston in time, and we expected it to develop around Beaufort. You recall, in addition to BASF, we had Chicago Bridge and Iron and other major industries looking at that particular area. And we were opting to try to restructure.

I had a thing about creating new state agencies. At the same time, however, we did create several, but we normally pulled them from incompatible places, like the case of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. State parks were in Forestry. Forestry was interested in growing trees. They had no interest in tourism, and we thought that was totally incompatible if we were going to do something with parks and develop a state parks system, which we had the opportunity to do, really, and we did. Recreation was in Wildlife. Well, all they were building were boat ramps. There was more to outdoor recreation [chuckles] than just boat ramps

for fishermen to launch their boats, as important as that was, and they had control of all the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation funds coming from the federal government. Tourism was a division in the State Development Board, and if there ever were two incompatible operations, it was tourism and industrial development. They just didn't go together. So that's where we pulled parks out of Forestry, recreation out of Wildlife, and tourism out of the Development Board and created Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, all after a study.

We had had a study of tourism in South Carolina, and I think we were all not just shocked but staggered by the lack of effort that was taking place. Myrtle Beach had the only real tourism program going. Charleston, the Chamber of Commerce, thought they had one, but more tourists visited Brookgreen Gardens than visited Charleston, and Charleston, much to our surprise, didn't have a single public golf course in the whole greater Charleston area. The study showed that with families coming down, the kids wanted to go to the beach, and there wasn't a public facility on the beach, there wasn't a hotel or motel on the beach, nor a public golf course. Men wanted to play golf, and they didn't want to follow mama around shopping and looking at all the historic sites all the time. That was the justification for the PRT program and the staffing up of PRT.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Tourism at that time was contributing the same number of dollars to the economy as agriculture, but nobody knew it. We didn't recognize it as being that important to us. I suppose that's been, if you look at it, the smoothest implementation and the best new program that I can think of having started or seen started that did what it was supposed to do. Few of them ever reach the potential you hoped they would reach.

CBG: What about the whole problem of managing alcoholic liquor sales in the state? Was that connected with tourism at all?

REM: Well, it was, yes. And you know, before we get away from pollution control, the Water Resources Commission, we started that by executive order with a federal grant and brought Clair Guess in. We may have alluded to that, but my ultimate objective was to pull all of that together, and really we had in mind Clair Guess, who was a nationally known conservationist. He ended up as the head of whole program. I debated between a Department of Natural Resources and an Environmental Protection Agency separate from Forestry. I used to think that a Department of Natural Resources could have water and forestry and those things under it. I used to say you can't separate the water from the ground and the ground from the trees. So, you know, that just made sense to have it all together. We weren't able to do that, but you certainly

couldn't separate water. Most people thought of water as being the rivers but not the underground waters and the surface waters and lakes and all. So we wanted and I had a planned to try to pull all of that together when Dr. Webb retired under the direction of Clair Guess, but we ended up with different agencies.

CBG: Guess would have been uniquely able to pull together municipal governments and . . .

REM: Everybody. We made him the coordinating state agency for all of these studies and all of the various pollution control permitting. All of this was coordinated by him. Wildlife and everybody reports in to him with whatever they have to say, and then he puts it all together and makes the report back to the Budget and Control Board.

CBG: Yes. Was there much concern about the development of the municipal water supply during this time?

REM: Yes, there was. We did some studies and again found that we had some serious problems. We found problems along the coastal area. Beaufort had to backup with a canal way up the Savannah River and bring the water down the canal because of the intrusion of salt water. We discovered underground that we were experiencing some problems, and it was through the Appalachian program that we developed the big lakes up above Spartanburg as a source of storage and of water there. So, yes, there was a concern, and that's where Clair Guess came in because that was one of his strengths, looking at the underground water and planning ahead for some kind of water policy law we never have been able to get in this state. It was my feeling that we should get to the point where nobody should be able to just go down with a well and take all the water they want out of the stream underground and create a problem for the future. We ought to have some kind of user fee for that so that we can use that money to continue to study and be sure we have an available supply of water.

CBG: Moving on to this other area, what about the management of the sale of alcoholic beverages?

REM: Well, that was a problem as you recall. At that time, we had a constitutional prohibition against the sale of alcoholic beverages in less than half-pint quantities, and they couldn't be consumed on the premises. They could not be transported in the trunk of your automobile. You could only literally consume them in your home, but we had a common practice--it had gone on as long as there had been a Charleston--that we closed our eyes to Charleston and let them have their open bars and recognized that it was a port city and historically they had done it. Then we began to do the same thing at the coastal area, Myrtle Beach, and it wasn't long before places Columbia got to the point they wanted them. We'd tried numerous times to amend

the constitution to permit liquor by the drink, and it lost each time. We had a constitutional prohibition. North Carolina and Georgia had statutory problems to deal with, and we had a constitutional problem to deal with. It just really got to be a problem because we were constantly having difficulty in law enforcement in those areas and payoffs and things of that nature. They were constantly going in and raiding and prosecuting. It was sort of a selective prosecution and it didn't set well.

You say things happen because of little incidents, but a motel here in Columbia was raided, and the owner decided he'd go to court and attack the constitutionality [chuckles] of the constitutional prohibition, which nobody'd ever heard of before [chuckles]. But he attacked it on that selective enforcement. You know, that we sort of selectively enforced it, and he went to the state's Supreme Court. We sort of shook in our shoes because we anticipated what was going to happen. We'd already begun to think what if, what are we going to do now when the Supreme Court comes down with a clarification of the fact that it's unconstitutional. And, lo and behold, they came with a unanimous opinion.

I'll never forget when Miss Francis Smith, who was clerk of the Supreme Court, came rushing over to my office. The court was then in the east wing of the Capitol, and I was in the west wing. She came rushing over with a copy of the opinion when the ink was still wet so that I could have a little time to think before the press got it. When the press came rushing in, asking about the decision, you had to say you weren't surprised as a lawyer. And, secondly, what are you going to do about it, and I could only think of one thing, enforce the law. That was it. We set out to enforce the law, and the first thing we did was to advise all the members of the General Assembly, as you recall, that we were going to enforce it and that we really intended to enforce it because we had to and warned them that there wasn't going to be any in the hotel and motel rooms. We couldn't close our eyes to any one little segment or any one area, and we advised Charleston and the coastal area that this was it. We set out to enforce it through SLED, which was a terrible thing to have to do. It caused SLED all kinds of problems. They didn't like to get into it, and I didn't want them in it, but I couldn't put it on the backs of the local law enforcement people because they just couldn't do it.

Then we went to the legislature with what was commonly referred to as the brown bagging law. That was the only thing that we could come up with under the constitution that we thought we could do legally, constitutionally. The idea came from West Virginia. If any of you've been to the Greenbriar, they have in the Greenbriar, I think it's the old White Room, where you bring it in and check it, and they use yours to mix a drink and bring it to you at the table rather than having it sitting on the table. I just didn't like liquor sitting on the table, but there was no choice for us. So we passed a law patterned after West Virginia, which allowed hotel, motels, and restaurants with a certain number of seats or more and private clubs that were approved, that maintained the right certificate, to have lockers and to allow people to keep it in the lockers in

the private club, to bring it into the hotel, motel, or restaurant dining facility and check it and let them mix it for you. So it worked similar to that up there.

The legislature passed it, with the governor saying, it's this or it's nothing. I tried to take the full brunt for them knowing the political problems they had by voting for something like this. We were able to do it. We got a lot of support from a lot of sources by being honest about it and putting it right up front.

The Bishop of the Episcopal Church and several like that came to my defense and rescue, really. Some of my own Baptist brethren at least gave me credit for being honest and forthright about it.

I almost got uninvited from the state Baptist convention because of it. I had been invited to address the Baptist convention, and several of the more independent rural churches and some of the more conservative groups decided that I should be uninvited. And I'll never forget the discussions. I was speaking to the Baptist convention and flying to California that afternoon by coincidence--a lot of people thought by design--with Wade Martin, who was director of Technical Education, on an industry trip and to speak out there to the Aerospace Management Club. Archie Ellis, who was my pastor, my adviser, and my prayer leader and everything else through all the civil rights problems counseled a little bit against my addressing the Baptists on the liquor question, but I felt I had to. So we worked long and hard and labored over it, and I went out and made that forthright speech to them. I remember what I said in the beginning, that I had to remind them that I was governor of all the people, not just of the Baptists or this group or that group or the other. My responsibility was to the state and not to any one denomination.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I then proceeded to talk frankly about the liquor question and what we intended to do. We were going to enforce the law. I think that helped us. We then took what was the Alcohol Division out of the state Tax Commission Enforcement Division where it should never have been. Again, it was incompatible. We separated ABC from Tax and formed the ABC Commission and took Otis Livingston, who'd been chairman and who was called sheriff and who loved to be the sheriff--and I think that satisfied everybody in the state that we meant business--and made him the first chairman. [Robert C.] Bob Wasson became chairman of the Tax Commission, and later Mr. Walter Lewis--who recently died--from Winnsboro, who was very active in the Methodist Church, a lay leader and just a grand person, succeeded Otis Livingston as chairman. It worked. We really enforced the law, we stayed tough on it and when we did this, we were rigid in our enforcement. If you didn't have a license, you just didn't operate. I got to the point I couldn't go to Charleston for a little while.

CBG: Why is it that these attitudes about liquor are felt so strongly in South Carolina? It's a two-way feeling, isn't it? I mean, some people are as adamantly in favor as opposed to those who weren't.

REM: You know we used to talk about it, that the piedmont was just, for some reason, extremely conservative and adamant on the liquor question. Every time we had a referendum, it would pass in the lower part of the state but be overwhelmingly defeated in the piedmont. Greenville, for instance, would overwhelmingly defeat it, and that was a surprising thing, a sophisticated area like Greenville with all the development that was going on up there. People put it on the Baptists, and that was largely true.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Baptists just--they're against liquor.

CBG: The old Methodist book of discipline was, too.

REM: You put the Methodists and the Baptists together and it was a pretty potent political influence. We said they voted dry and drank wet, and expected us to close our eyes to it. I think once they really felt comfortable that there wasn't going to be a bar on every street corner and a dive in every rural area dispensing it out to the kids it was better, and finally we got that kind of support. What we did was much, much better than what we had. We legalized legitimate operations that we'd been accustomed to, and we just strictly forbade everybody else from fooling with it.

CBG: Did you engage in some kind of direct campaign?

REM: We had to, and I recall getting the legislature and saying, "Look, now, I'm going to get out front on this. Put the blame on me." You can just put the shoulder on the governor.

CBG: Yes.

REM: My feeling was we were right and in time everybody would see that we were right.

CBG: Yes.

REM: At the same time, I was running for that full term, and--I'll never forget. We had Oliver Quayle do our polling, and we got the first report in, and Bob Hickman was telling me how bad it was with all the white mothers of elementary school children over the integration of schools. But he said and his quote was "He doesn't know what you're doing on the liquor question, but whatever it is, keep doing it because it's working."

CBG: Is that right?

REM: It shocked everybody.

CBG: I bet.

REM: It really did.

CBG: What about some other areas of potential reorganization now? We were talking about Dr. [Archie] Ellis and his role in [the Department of] Social Services. Was he playing a role at this point?

REM: Well, he was to a limited extent. What we had was several basic areas. We had education in which we worked on trying to get TEC with adult education in TEC and get that adult literacy program going in all the public schools and get TEC and vocational and public education and higher education beginning to communicate and work together. We had tourism, which was a major part of the economy, and agriculture, where we formed the Agricultural Commission and brought the defunct, nonexistent, marketing system, which just ran the farmer's market into that so we could develop a good marketing program for agriculture. We had the commission sort of coordinating the efforts because Clemson was going one way, the Department of Agriculture had only weights and measures and didn't want to get involved in anything that required a lot of work. We then began to move on into these other areas, yes, into other activities.

CBG: Do you think a department like Agriculture might be constrained because the department head is elected?

REM: To some extent.

CBG: Yes.

REM: The commissioner of agriculture is the only non-constitutional one of those, and we toyed with the idea several times of making it an appointed office. People in this state like to elect their public officials. That was so embedded that we determined politically that it really wasn't worth what we would experience to try to do that. Thus we created a good strong Agricultural Commission and, in effect, sort of umbrella it over the Department of Agriculture. You couldn't do it because he was elected, but we sort of umbrella'd it over and got extremely strong people to serve on that commission, the folks that were out front in agriculture and who appreciated the marketing program. That worked pretty good. Things like that, though, will only work as long as the governor is prodding and pushing and a part of it because it had no real power. There was no way to give it power because of Extension being at Clemson and all the other functions legally being in the Department of Agriculture.

CBG: Did an association like the Farm Bureau provide a focus of leadership from the outside?

REM: It tried, and, of course, it was the base of support we had for this. I'm not sure that Clemson or the Department of Agriculture--in fact, I don't think either one wanted this commission because they saw it as something that would be meddling in their affairs, but the Farm Bureau was very supportive. But the Farm Bureau went through a period that it became almost an insurance agency.

CBG: Yes.

REM: You know, it lost its farmer support. The soybean association, the certified seed group, the livestock group were formed, and those were the groups that I worked with primarily although the Farm Bureau really was coming back at that time. We were trying to revitalize it. I remember going and speaking to a Farm Bureau convention as governor and coming back home and saying, "There wasn't five farmers there."

CBG: Yes.

REM: Really, the only people there were Farm Bureau insurance agents and the tire dealers and people like that.

CBG: Yes, yes. Thinking of agriculture and farmers, did the rural coops enter in, the Public Service Authority?

REM: Well, the cooperatives were always supportive of anything like this. They were strong. Bob Bennett, who headed the coops, was a very valuable fellow to have around.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We discovered that, and we used him. Bob was one of those who you normally got in to confer and consult with when you got into something like this. He was vitally interested in the rural areas. You recall we inherited the big battle between private power and public power. It had reached the zenith, and we started there getting them in, meeting in the office, to try to resolve that age-old problem of the private power companies putting full page ads in the paper about Santee-Cooper. I had come from the rural coop country, so I was sympathetic, but I was also sympathetic with the private investor-owned companies, too. We were able to sit down by making [Robert S.] Bob Davis chairman of Santee-Cooper, instead of somebody who was just vehemently and bitterly opposed to private power. Bob Davis, Arthur Williams, Bill McGuire, and Sharon Harris began to sit in the Governor's Office, together with Bob Bennett and Brick Lewis, and they worked out a resolution to their problem. We got away from all that constant battle.

CBG: Did that become the Territories Act of 1968?

REM: Yes, right.

CBG: What about your concern of preserving the history of the state with all this change beginning to bubble up now? Was there some reorganization in the state agencies that had to do with history?

REM: Yes, we had the movement to create a historical commission, and we opted to broaden and expand Archives into Archives and History. My feeling was it was compatible. It also fit with my policy of not wanting to create new agencies. Put them somewhere they ought to be or either pull them and consolidate them. Charles Lee was the ideal person to head it because Charles, naturally, was the historian, had a strong interest in preservation. I'd come from Berkeley County where I was steeped in the history of that area, even riding by brick pillars and saying, "This pillar came from [laughter] some French Huguenot Church," and things like that.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Where I live is probably one of the oldest wooden-frame, typical old farm homes on the Santee River. We had an interest in that. My wife, really, though not steeped, but she came--and most people don't realize it--from the Calhoun family. She was a Calhoun, and so we had an interest in the history of South Carolina. She was a motivating force in this part of it. We needed to do something to really capture the history of the state and get it where people recognized it and appreciated it and did more for it. Charleston was doing its thing on preservation. We thought more ought to be done, and we found plenty of people out front of us. Jennie Dreher here in Columbia was a moving force,

We took advantage, through PRT and with the Tricentennial coming up as a vehicle through which we would motivate and even help areas and communities identify and fix up and help them preserve historic places and sites. Charles Lee worked diligently with PRT, and we had that interagency council, you recall, with some surprising people on it. On the PRT board was the chief highway commissioner and the State Development Board director and Archives and History. My attitude was we needed the Highway Department because we needed access. Charles would develop these trails where people traveled, and the Highway Department would cooperate and mark them, and PRT would promote them.

Then Josephine got involved in more than just the buildings and the historic sites, but in redoing the mansion and making it in itself a place of historic significance by putting pieces of furniture, everything in there, either by or about a South Carolinian, so we set out to acquire furniture that was from families of prominent South Carolinians, paintings by or of prominent South Carolinians, to make it sort of a museum in itself, the downstairs part.

CBG: Yes.

REM: She was very active, with others around the state, in promoting that type of thing. We felt South Carolina was so rich in its history.

END OF TAPE