

Tape 61A, Side 2

June 11, 1998

CH ...with Governor Atiyeh. This is Tape 61A, Side 2. [sic.]

You had mentioned about the Northwest Power Planning Act, and that was also referred to in the Oregonian as one of your major legislative achievements, and I'm wondering how satisfied you've been with the conservation end of that. Actually, wasn't it called the Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Act? And it was supposed to have a lot to do with the fisheries and the - I know you've mentioned fisheries.

VA It did have, because we were the ones that introduced the fishery part. I don't recall the title that way, but that doesn't mean it wasn't. I just don't recall it that way.

Am I satisfied? Not really, but on two counts. I'm the one that insisted that there be equal representation between the states. The state of Washington, as we were doing our Kissinger thing, they wanted to have actually more representation than maybe even Oregon, but certainly more than Idaho and Montana, and I said no, we have to have equal representation, two members from each state. However, it's turned out to be more political than it really needed to be, because each of the states had become very provincial about their own thing, and very provincial, incidentally, in terms as to who's going to be chairman or not chairman. And I think that Montana and Idaho ganged up on Oregon and Washington in the process, so I'm not very pleased about that, because that's not what this was designed to do. It was designed to benefit all of the people in the four-state

area.

Second, they spent a huge amount of money on the fishery without any really good result. And that could very well be because, you know, bureaucrats, when they've got some money to spend, they're going to spend it whether it's going to be useful or not, and that's probably what happened. And there were no practical solutions or no practical judgments, they just go ahead and spend money. So to that extent, it just didn't work as well as I'd hoped it would.

CH Part of the formula that's been put forth by the region in terms of representation was what they've referred to as the "three sovereigns," being the federal government, the state government, and the Native American groups. And recently there have been attempts, I think by Senator Gorton, Slade Gorton of Washington, and maybe Gordon Smith, of sort of changing that formula so that - I think that Gordon Smith wanted to add representatives from industry, which would, in effect, dilute the influence that the states or the Native Americans might have. And I think that Slade Gorton didn't want to have anything that would - he's sort of dragging his heels on some of the resolutions that have been postulated or put forth to solve some of the problems regarding the dams and the fisheries problem.

VA Slade Gorton has his own views about the Native Americans, which is not necessarily to their advantage. I didn't know what Senator Smith was doing, I didn't know that. I read in the paper about the three - what do they call it?

CH The "three sovereigns."

VA The "three sovereigns." However, now that more - there's a question even in today's paper about what's the future of the Power Council because of the "three sovereigns," and that question is legitimate in terms of what they're going to do and how they're going to do it. But if you're going to get rid of a legal entity and create something else, well, I guess the first thing is you get rid of it. I mean altogether. Don't keep the Power Council and have the "three sovereigns" at the same time, because then you really will confuse the issue and you won't get anything really done. So have one or the other. I mean, tell the Power Council to shape up or have the "three sovereigns" take over, but don't have both going at the same time. In the morning paper the Power Council was figuring, okay, if this takes precedence, then we'll do something else. Well, now, wait a minute. No. That's sunset.

CH Sunset?

VA Sunset means go out of business.

CH Oh, I see. In other words, you think they might just be just trying to enhance their survival.

VA Well, you know, there's continuity of things. Once you get something, you can't get rid of it. My idea is that if the federal government - incidentally, the federal government is involved on the Power Council, as well on these sovereign things. Just get rid of it, if they want three sovereigns, or give the Power Council the authority to

go ahead and do some things that need to be done.

CH Some people have talked about adding the Native Americans onto the Northwest Power Planning Council to sort of combine the two groups. You have - already on the Power Planning Council you have the representatives from the various states, and if you added the Native Americans to that, then it would - along with the federal government, it would sort of create that three sovereigns in one entity.

VA Well, I don't mean it quite the way I'm going to say it, but the Power Council really was - it's called Power Council, and the whole thing, as I told you initially, was to deal with the regional power for all of this area. And when I say I don't mean it quite this way, "And, oh, by the way, why don't you take a look at salmon?" It wasn't quite, "Oh, by the way," but it was not the major element of the Power Council. Now, it's become a major element, but it wasn't the major element of the Power Council. If they want to deal with the fishery, they can deal with it separately in some other entity and remove it from the Power Council, if they're not satisfied with what the Power Council has, and I'm not particularly satisfied. As a matter of fact, I'm not satisfied with whoever is working on the fishery issue. Anybody. Obviously, it's not working. Whatever it is, it's not working.

CH And what should they do about it?

VA [Laughing] Well, you're asking me for a solution. I have no doubt that the dams have had a huge impact on the fishery. And, at the time, I don't think it was ever really

argued, but if I were to express it, probably I'd say, Well, are we going to have power so we can get jobs up there in the Northwest, or are we going to have fishery? Oh, well, the hell, we don't want the fishery, we'll have power and we'll build the dams. I don't think they ever had that kind of a conversation, but that's a result of what it is.

Now, I don't know what to tell you, because Idaho wants the fish, which means you've got through at least three dams to get there, and, you know, what's the purpose? We keep trying to - you know, we're going to try to haul them up and haul them back, that is, the fish. Maybe we can let Idaho have some of it, I'm not sure, but if we just save Bonneville Dam and do everything we can to enhance the fishery, at least it makes a lot cheaper sense. But you're asking me for a solution that's much more technical than I'm...

CH Well, I mean, the big decision now is whether to breach the four lower dams of the Snake River in Washington state to allow the salmon - apparently a lot of the groups feel that if you breached those four dams - and they're not the biggest dams on the system, they're breaching the earthen part of the dams on the side of the dams - that if you did that, just that in itself would allow so many more fish to get up, that they're - that that impediment and the impediment of the lake behind the John Day Dam are the two major areas that are causing the decline of the salmon, even though many other things are factoring into it, including all these other dams, that since those dams were put in, that's what's had the biggest impact, and if you got rid of that, it would return it back to the state where it was back in the late sixties or early seventies, before those dams

were in place.

VA Well, I can't respond to that. I don't really know. It may be more nonsense, because up to this point it's all been nonsense. Maybe I shouldn't be that negative, because I don't know. Maybe that is the answer.

CH But you think there's a balance somewhere there between dams and jobs and irrigation and all that?

VA I have no idea.

They jumped on everything. They jumped on forestry practices, they jumped on irrigation, all that sort of thing. But those are only important - well, let me put it another way. If the dams were not there, none of that would have had any effect on the fishery. But the dams are there, so it's fragile, and so anything else becomes more important.

I don't really know the answer, you know, sitting here and figuring out what we ought to do about it. I do recall, as a governor, there was a compact between, actually, the Northwest states - I was involved in the state of Oregon - Canada, and Alaska. And my problem really came about with Alaska, and I was telling then the governor of Alaska that, you know, "Look, we're not asking for all the fish, we just want some of our fish back," because our fish were going up out of the Columbia and going up Canada, around Alaska and over toward Japan and coming back. "We're sending you a lot of fish up there, and we're not getting our share back."

We finally did get a compact, but even that isn't working all that well.

CH It's been a very awkward relationship with Canada, too, over the years, hasn't it?

VA Yeah, but we finally did get with Canada. That was part of the compact. But, you know, still, whatever it is, isn't working.

CH One thing that we had talked just briefly over lunch was the accomplishment of your establishing the Land-use Board of Appeals. You had talked a little bit about land use, but I don't know if you had actually mentioned LUBA or not.

VA No, I didn't, and I recall that. It was just a matter of getting it out of the contentious arena of LCDC into an area in which at least the citizens thought they had some opportunity to have a review with their place [?]. It's been sort of a pressure valve. I think it's relieved some of the pressures.

CH You were talking about a few other things. In your view of the legislature - and this is what I - I know we hadn't talked about this part of it, but you had said at one point, The quality of the legislature is not nearly what it was in 1959, and the ones to blame Oregonians, the voters in districts, the electors. The decline concerned a matter of experience and the ability to make quicker judgments.

Since that point - this was in 1985, and, of course, now we're in 1998. So how do you view the legislature in those terms now?

VA I don't think much has changed. I hear continually

that things are more complicated, that we need to have annual sessions. I hear all of that, and, yet, my own personal response is, that's nonsense. What we really have is a lot of people - well, there's two things at work. One is a lot of people who have no, really, background or experience in order to be able to make judgments or to make decisions. Their inability to make a decision comes from two places: one, inexperience, the other is politics. You know, which way does the wind blow on this issue? And so that's - it isn't a matter of things are more complicated, it's that the legislators are not able to respond and make a decision. And that's not changed from the time - I got in trouble making a speech like that, and - it was in Arizona, I think, somewhere, but it's something that I've been saying over and over again before I went down there, and since then, too.

CH Well, one thing that had changed was, since we've last talked there was the initiative that passed regarding limiting the terms of representatives.

VA Yes, but that, to me, is - that's a mistake, a serious mistake. It's interesting how these serious mistakes happen. For a long time there was this single-member district thing. Let me give you a for instance. When I was running, I was running in entire Washington County, the whole county, and that was for ten years of my twenty years. Then the single-member districts came in, and so my district was sized down to, let me call it, Beaverton, Tigard; roughly the east end of the county. In my case, because for ten years I ran in the whole county, I still felt I represented the whole county. But I knew full well that the

moment I left, whoever was elected, was elected from that district.

So single-member districts became an impediment in the process because all of a sudden everybody got provincial as hell. In my case, when I was running in the whole county, I was running from the urban east end to the rural, agricultural west end, so I had to have a whole picture of my service as a legislator. My replacement, all they had to be interested in was the urban east end. They didn't have to care about or even have any interest in the rural and agricultural west end. That was a mistake. That was a serious mistake. So provincialism is part of the this speed bump in the legislative process. That's one of them.

Now to term limits, and let me very personal about it. For a while I said, you know, they really don't need somebody like me now. I'm, what, fifteen, sixteen years in the process, when my mental process was going. They don't really need - what they need is some younger people or some new faces and changes. And then I said to myself, well, they don't need a whole legislature of people like me, but they need some of me around for institutional memory. Now, you're getting rid of all institutional memory. They've just got a huge junk - you know, term limits, you just got rid of a whole of institutional memory, and that's going to be not a good deal for the people of the state of Oregon.

They don't look at it that way. They've got these superficial views, and they voted it in, and that's the way it is. But I'm at the real world and the practical world, and I'm saying it's not getting any better, it's getting worse.

CH Plus, people always have the option, if they don't like

their legislator, they can vote him out, right?

VA Well, we keep hoping that's the case [laughs].

CH Well, one interesting quote that I found here was after the inaugural in 1987 and you were leaving and you came back to your home. There's a quote here. I think it was from the Oregonian. After the inauguration the state-assigned chauffeur dropped Atiyeh off at his Raleigh Hills home. That was it, Atiyeh said. His near-constant companion for eight years was gone, his political days were over.

How did you feel at that moment? What was that like? Can you recall that?

VA Oh, sure, you bet. On that last day - we had two state police as our security. It's not like it is today; they've got a whole bunch of them. We had two. Actually, we had one, and the other was relief driver for the one I had, and also a driver for Dolores, and they're both just neat, wonderful people. So on that day they both wanted, obviously, to be with us all that day, Dolores and myself. And Lon, Lon Holbrook, who was my number one aide and the one that I was with, I can - it's just like a photograph. They pulled up to the driveway. Actually, I don't remember that, but apparently backed into the driveway. And so Dolores and I got out, and they came in the house, and we said goodbye, and I said goodbye to Lon, and it was just - no words, really, because it was tough on us. I probably spent more time with Lon than I did with Dolores in those eight years. Just shook hands and said goodbye, walked out there, and then the car pulls away.

Now, it was a sentimental moment to me, but, having

been around as I have and seen what's happened, you know, when it's over, it's over, and so I was mentally prepared for it. I used to kid people, and they didn't understand it. I said, you know, when I left office, I got a ride home. You know, do you get a pension, do you get security, do you get...? I said, No, no, I got a ride home. That's what I got. And I was mentally prepared for it, but emotionally it was a tough deal because I liked Lon and we spent so much time together, and that was it. It was just, it's over. When they pull out the driveway, that's it, that's the end of it.

CH Well, have you been involved in many activities, political activities, since leaving office?

VA Not that many. I've worked with some candidates, some ballot measures. Oh, I will tell you something that's happened since we were together. I got involved in that tobacco...

CH Oh, have you?

VA I did, yes.

CH We have to preface this by saying that you were a long-term smoker. I don't know if people realized that.

VA Well, I was, but at that point in time I had stopped, at that point, but, yes, for fifty years. But on that ballot measure, I was an opponent of that, and, of course, it passed. But I will tell you that in my twenty-eight years of public life, the mail and phone calls that I

received were the most vicious in my entire twenty-eight years. Mean, vindictive, and vicious. It was - they were cruel, the proponents of that measure, and were cruel to me and to Dolores. They had Dolores in tears. Now, whether that's indicative of the times, I'm not sure, but, anyway, I think I - this has all been since we were last together.

CH And to you attribute it to just the issue or the change in times?

VA I don't know what it is. Yes, it's it's a change of - I really don't know. It's hard to tell why people are that way. I do know that it's - they've been more abrasive, less tolerant, and less understanding as the years have gone on, but I've never had anything like that. I mean, they were just genuinely mean, cruel, and vicious. It was awful, it really was awful. So, you know, I didn't know I was getting that much involved. But anyway, that's an aside.

CH Well, another thing that I think we talked about at the time, which has continued, has been the control of the Republican party by sort of the right-wing, fundamentalist-religious type of advocates and people that don't seem to be part of the Republican mainstream. What's been your view of all this?

VA I ran, finally, for national committeeman. Someone who was sort of right-wing - I mean, he was right-wing but not as militant as some others - was retiring, and I thought, okay, I want to make sure that we get some moderation, and so I ran for national committeeman. I finally, after not too long a period of time, a year or so, decided I can't go

this distance. My problem was that the right wing said, We want to be included. And I have no problem with that. But they say they want to be included, which means they want me excluded, and that I have a problem with.

They also have - I'm not sure I'm going to pinpoint it by giving you names, because I don't think I could. But, you know, Dave Frohnmayer could have been governor of the state of Oregon had it not been for these folks. I have no question he would have been governor of the state of Oregon. But, they had their own candidate. They didn't like Dave. I said to them, Look, maybe Dave isn't on your wavelength, but the opponent is even further away from you. I mean, if you want - you'd at least have a door open with Dave; with his opponent, you have no door open.

So I am - I'm only intolerant of them because - mostly because they're exclusionary. That's where my intolerance comes from. I believe that the Republican party should have what we call liberal Republicans, moderate Republicans, and conservative Republicans, and I believe that, and I don't believe we should exclude any of us. But that's not the way they feel. They say, you know, We are the right arm of God, and you guys are all bad.

CH A few days ago they had the memorial service for Barry Goldwater, and I think a lot of people some time ago had considered him to be quite a radical right conservative, and in retrospect, with everything that's gone on, he's seemed like quite a moderate. Is that the kind of thing that you're talking about in terms of the changes in the Republican party, that it's just - it may have been conservative at one time, but now it's just - in comparison to what it is now, that there's just no moderation?

VA I'm not sure I'd be quite that - you're right about Barry Goldwater, but I believed in what he was believing in, and I believe he was right at the time. I, incidentally, marveled at what Reagan did, because he was really slowing down a huge train coming down the track; that is, we were really heading toward socialism in the United States, and I believe that.

CH And, yet, you had major disagreements with him over the budget deficits and military spending.

VA I did. Only in military spending in that it was too much. It wasn't a matter of cutting it out. I was not on the side of eliminating military spending, like some of them were, I just said that nobody could spend that money well, they're just going to waste it. I had no doubt about that part. I was talking about it in terms - I've forgotten now the percentages, but I had a percentage less increase than what was proposed, and it was merely because they couldn't spend it. If they had that much more, they were going to waste it. [laughing] That's my view, a generic view.

But anyway, in terms of those that are controlling the party, I just think that there needs to be - the party face needs to be one of broad base, and the party face right now is not one of a broad base.

CH So what other kinds of activities have you been involved in since then? I know you've had a long-standing involvement with the Boy Scouts. Are you still involved with them?

VA Yes. Not as much. They know now - I said, Guys, look,

I don't need to go to anymore meetings. If you want something done, just tell me, and I'll go ahead and do it, but I don't really need to go to a meeting to get it done. But I'm still involved with scouting, yes, and I enjoy that very much. I've cut back considerably on my volunteer efforts.

I was on the board of Pacific University for eight years, and, actually, it turns out mine was a ten-year term. My first year it was six, and then they returned it to ten. But anyway, I figured eight years was enough, and I - although I enjoyed it immensely. And my last major duty was chairing the selection committee for a new president, and we do have a dandy. She's a good one.

CH Really?

VA Oh, she's good, yes. That was a good choice.

And so those are among the things. I've just sort of scaled back going to meetings. I'm home more often - most often, I should say; not more often, most often. And I protect my evenings. People say do you want to come to an event in an evening? They're awful hard to get a hold of me on that basis.

CH What do you do in the evening?

VA Watch television, watch "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy," and then I switch over to the Discovery Channel or the History Channel.

CH And what about your business activities?

VA That's scaled down, too, but that's not because it's necessarily something I wanted to do. I was hoping to do more business than I have done. But I come to work early, seven, seven fifteen, seven thirty, something like that, and I'll go home early, one thirty, two, two thirty, whenever. You know, I'll go home early.

And I've got a few things. I'm working on some projects. Now, - oh, here's a good one. Somebody came to me because this 81,000 cases of vodka - this is interesting how you get involved with things. Eighty-one thousand cases of vodka, and there's twelve bottles to a case, so you figure that one out. But the reason they came to me was that this is a distillery that packages vodka for different labels for domestic companies. So this has to be sold outside the United States because they don't want to compete with their current customers. So that's how I came into that. I don't know what to do with 81,000 cases of vodka.

CH What did you do?

VA Well, I'm working on it. You know, you check a few things to see if - I'm not spending an awful lot of money or time on it. I talked to my son. I said, "Do the Chinese drink vodka?" Well, he didn't know, but he talked to somebody else. Actually, I've talked to a person I know, and she wanted more information, because either China or Taiwan, I'm not sure which, had some interest. I don't think in 81,000, because that was - the minimum was five containers, either twenty- or forty-foot containers.

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