

VICTOR ATIYEH  
July 23, 1993  
Tape 48, Side 2

C.H.: This is an interview with Governor Victor Atiyeh. This is Tape 48, Side 2.

When the vote finally came on SB 100 you voted along with Ted Halleck and Stafford Hansel and Hector McPherson.

V.A.: Well, Stafford was in the House with Hector in the Senate.

C.H.: And John Burns voted against it, isn't that right?

V.A.: I think so, I can't remember who

C.H.: And I can't remember the other people on the committee.

V.A.: Well, it was Mike Thorn. You mentioned Mike Thorn and John Burns. Hector and Ted. Myself. There was more than five. I don't recall who else was on the committee. But I have some real strong feelings about land use planning and how you go about it. And we were talking about wasting land. Out in Clackamas County they'll let you build a house in certain areas but it has to be on 20 acres. Well, I don't understand that. That doesn't make any sense to me at all. We have to preserve space for housing and we have to make it as efficient as we can because Oregon's going to grow. And if you use up land like that, all of a sudden you don't have any place to build a house and that puts pressure then on the farmland, you know, political pressure on that farmland. You want to keep that pressure off. So those kinds of things don't make any sense to me at all. [indiscernible] would agree. They call farmland something that is absolutely not farmland. I can recall vividly driving out between Bend and Redmond and the county

commissioner out there was saying LCDC says this is farmland. I am not a farmer, I know that's not farmland. I mean, you can see rocks all over the place. That's not farmland. And so you see that doesn't make common sense that's acceptable to people. Yeah, farmland, yeah, we need to preserve that. You know, I don't care what law you write. Unless the people find it acceptable it won't work. Even if it's a law it won't work. And so you try to make it acceptable at least to the common sense of most people. Then it'll work. And those are the kinds of things. We weren't ready for it. We passed SB 100. Okay, cities and counties, you're going to have to plan, land use plan, you have to zone, and it has to match the statewide goals.

There weren't that many planners in the U.S. You know, qualified planners. I know one young man, a very bright young man, he was a planner for one of the counties. He had no background in planning at all. But you had to get a planner. Those kinds of things. That doesn't mean you don't do it, that doesn't mean you shouldn't have it, and I believe in it. I met with LCDC a number of times. The people, the planners, in the agency that were acknowledging plans. And they didn't like my message, but my message was Look, when you put that felt pen down, green or red or yellow or whatever, there are people under there. But they don't want to be bothered with people. People get in the way of doing what in their mind should be done. You've got to understand that there's people under there. I thought to myself a number of times in spite of everything I'm telling you, I'm supportive of it, I don't want to get want of it, I think we ought to have it. But there has to be some recognition.

I live in the area called Broadmoor. Broadmoor has - oh gosh, what's the term - restrictions. When it was developed, its restrictions are applied there in Washington County for what you can do in my neighborhood. I didn't make a nickel's worth of contribution to land use planning. Whatever they did didn't affect me one nickel's worth. But there's farmers in Washington County. In their mind they were getting old, the kids didn't to farm, okay. And there's a subdivision coming. This is my deposit in the bank. When I finally decide I want to retire I'll retire, sell the property, and that's my retirement fund. And all of a sudden we said no, wait a minute, we're taking half of your bank account. They made a huge contribution to land use planning. I didn't make any contribution to land use planning. And I'm using that as a comparison, there's all in between. And so you have to understand, you know, what you're doing. At least be sensitive to what you're doing.

Back to when you put that pen down, there's real live human beings underneath that felt pen. And I tried to get them to think in terms like that. Not to back off, just to understand. When I talk about size of lots I walked around our residence in Salem. There are house in back - excuse me, homes in back of homes. In back. And people are perfectly happy. They like where they are. They are not psychotic, and so what's the problem? You know, you create space for homes and don't waste it. We need it. I don't want apply pressures where pressures ought to not apply. I'm just saying that I have it and I have this little thing I've acquired, things I saved over the years. I call it wit, wisdom and whimsey. And in there it says <sup>"WHEN IT IS NOT NEEDED ZONING WORKS FINE; WHEN IT IS ESSENTIAL IT ALWAYS BREAKS DOWN"</sup> ~~when you don't need it, zoning works. When it's essential, it doesn't work at all. I'll get the most quote.~~

But you see, when the pressure's on it doesn't work. So you know, when I see a statement that I'm opposed to it - In my letter I said, you know, if he says that I didn't go along with everything that he wanted, he's right. I wouldn't disagree with that. If he said that I wouldn't buy this bill as it was put down lock, stock and barrel, he'd be right about that because I didn't. But to say that I was against land use planning, that's not true at all.

C.H.: The other people that were on that committee besides the ones we've mentioned - McPherson, Thorn and Burns were Ripper and Windgard.

V.A.: Oh, okay.

C.H.: George Windgard, I presume, voted for it.

V.A.: He was the - Halleck, McPherson. Whatever you say is okay with me, boss.

C.H.: And would Ripper have voted against it?

V.A.: Ripper basically was against it but I think he was finally a supporter, sort of a swing on it. But he was pretty quiet. I was, well, as I always was. I participated. It's interesting. I'll tell you another story for the tape. Senator Jackson of Washington had a bill for national land use planning.

C.H.: I was just going to ask you about that.

V.A.: And so we went back - we was Tom McCall and me - we went back to Washington D.C. to testify before the committee. I was asked to go back by the National <sup>ASSOC. OF STATE LEGISLATORS</sup> ~~Legislative Association~~, I don't know what the name of it is, because Oregon had it and I was to appear as a legislator. Tom McCall went back, he was a star, he was on early. I was on late, I was worried about catching my plane to go back home.

But the interesting story was that we were there and Tom McCall, who now is the champion of land use planning, he'd say to me, Senate Bill 100 does such such such. No, Tom, it does this this this. Oh. But Senate Bill 100 does such such. No, no. I'm briefing him on Senate Bill 100 in the Capitol Building while he's getting ready to testify on behalf of the bill. But he's -

C.H.: Is this another - careful, you're being misunderstood by ...

V.A.: He was the champion.

C.H.: He was the champion.

V.A.: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And how did you feel about the national bill? Was this going to be controlled by a national body?

V.A.: My testimony I don't remember exactly, but I'm sure I know involved I think it's a good idea, I think every area in the U.S. should have this, but you leave the actual planning to the local level, that kind of thing.

C.H.: Local being -?

V.A.: City, county.

C.H.: But not necessarily state.

V.A.: Well, certainly the pattern that Oregon had was we established goals so that any planning has to match the goal. Now it doesn't mean you have to zone by lot by something, but it means that the principles of that goal have to be matched by the actual zoning.

C.H.: And that bill did not pass of course.

V.A.: It didn't go anywhere. No, but it was a big show. But I was really worried about getting my plane to go back home, you know, because I wanted in the afternoon after all the TV people had

left listening to Tom, and I think there was a governor from Colorado, a very popular governor. Anyway, they were the stars.

C.H.: This is what year?

V.A.: Oh goodness. I don't remember.

C.H.: Before you were elected?

V.A.: Oh yeah, before I was elected governor. I was a state senator and Tom was governor.

C.H.: Tom was governor.

V.A.: Tom was governor, yeah.

C.H.: So it would have been -

V.A.: Well, he was governor - I have to figure it out - through '75.

C.H.: Though '75. Well, to the beginning of '75.

V.A.: That's right. Wait a minute, have to figure it out.

C.H.: Straub would have been elected in '74 til '78, and you were ...

V.A.: That's right, that's right, yeah. So it would be before '74. Yeah.

C.H.: Well. Going on to another burning issue during this session.

V.A.: Yes.

C.H.: There was a bill calling for annual sessions of the legislature. I don't know if we've talked about this or not.

V.A.: No, I don't recall that we did. I opposed that vigorously. There's no need for annual sessions. There is a need for a competent electorate to pick competent legislators. But there's no need for an annual session.

C.H.: What about reducing the length of sessions?

V.A.: That is also cosmetic. <sup>STATE OF</sup> Washington has limited sessions. But they always have - What happens over there is that they adjourn and then the next morning the governor calls a special session. I mean, you're fooling yourself.

C.H.: So what is the best way of dealing with that situation?

V.A.: Well, of course, the best way is the electorate to make the right decisions <sup>with</sup> ~~when~~ they pick people for office. I'm not sure, I think that's an unachievable dream. To dream the impossible dream. But the problem basically is that people are going down there - It isn't really that it's more complicated, because it really isn't. What's occurring is that you have legislators that aren't used to making decisions. They have no background to make decisions. This is not being mean to them, it just happens to be the way it is. And so they take longer to make decisions. Or oftentimes because they're running for re-election really don't want to make a decision, put it off as long as they can. That's what's happened.

When I was first down there, I mean, there were decisions made. And you know, oftentimes a lot of people would get really upset about them. But there was a decision made and the sessions weren't running nearly that long. You know, you can't reinvent it. Another impediment is <sup>SINGLE MEMBER</sup> [~~indiscernible~~] districts. And I think we may have talked about that because people became very provincial and that's an impediment, that's a divisive thing. By that I mean you divide the body up between urbans and rurals from whatever. I think I mentioned earlier that <sup>THE FIRST 10 YEARS</sup> I represented all of Washington County, which meant the very urbanized east side to the very rural west side. And I had to know and appreciate and understand the whole, the whole of it.

But then all of a sudden my district became Tigard and Beaverton or parts of Beaverton - no, the east side of the county. All urban. So obviously that person represents urban people and that's the way that person's going to vote. That is an impediment. But the question what can you do about it, it's just not something - Well, you're not going to solve it with annual sessions because these same people are going to be there, indecisive. So what are they going to do every year. They're going to do the same year every year that they did before.

C.H.: There was another concept here which was defeated which I don't understand at all. It was using coupons instead of dollars for some political contributions. I'd never heard of such a thing. Do you know what that was about? It was defeated.

V.A.: Sounds like a warrant system of some kind.

C.H.: A what?

V.A.: A warrant system. Paper instead of money. I don't remember that.

C.H.: It seems so odd that I can't imagine. I didn't have any more information on it, but I thought ...

V.A.: I can't help you.

C.H.: Okay. Well then, going on to some of the other issues at the end of that session. You urged removal of a law prohibiting public officials from receiving gifts over \$100, a feeling that all gifts should be reported, and we have talked about this before. Was there anything else that came up during the session?

V.A.: Well, they constantly came across to the checkoff off of your taxes for contributions to the political parties. And we talked about that too. I don't believe in public funding of political campaigns.



C.H.: And you said that you would support a program restoring aid to two-parent families, but only for six months but not a full year, and we did talk about that. Was there anything else on that? And you signed a bill - I don't whether we talked about this or not - you signed a bill for the country's first state-run wine cellar?

V.A.: I did what? For the state what?

C.H.: You signed a bill for the country's first state-run wine cellar?

V.A.: Oh. Oh. Yeah. This was to help the growing wine industry. Yeah. Yeah.

C.H.: And it was just for bottles for ...

V.A.: You do silly things.

C.H.: ... for when you had state dinners.

V.A.: Yeah. I don't even know where that cellar is. If it even exists. I have no idea.

C.H.: Then there was some reaction to Pres. Reagan's proposal for federal tax reform. Charlie Hales from the Home Builders Association would eliminate future sales by the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs and Commerce Department. He said that the program treats these bonds not as tax-exempt and therefore taxable like other investments and most worrisome is the proposal that the state and local taxes not be deductible from federal taxes telling people that property taxes are a discretionary purchase and cutting more people out of the housing market that would force owners of rental housing to lose rents by about 20 percent to 30 percent. Where did you come down on that issue? Do you recall?

V.A.: I followed you for a little bit. You better read that to me again. About Charlie Hales.

C.H.: Yeah. Charles Hales. Charlie Hales, who was president of the Home Builders Association at the time, would eliminate future sales by the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs and the Commerce Department. He said that the program treats those bonds not as tax-exempt and therefore taxable like other any other investment.

V.A.: Is that what he's proposing or is that what he's saying what it was? Veterans bonds are tax-exempt, I know that.

C.H.: But wasn't the federal government going to change that?

V.A.: You mean to make them non-tax-exempt. Oh okay, yeah, yeah. Go ahead. Okay.

C.H.: And he was concerned that the state and local taxes might not be deductible from federal taxes.

V.A.: No, I follow you. The whole thing was an incentive to have low-interest loans and that's what's being tax deductible are. The deduction for your property taxes, same thing, that would make it possible for people to acquire homes, and I would agree with that. The federal law was really not conducive to that.

C.H.: Kevin Kelly, who was the Oregon business forecast panel on that, said we are a high income tax state and this would mean no break for state and local income taxes or property taxes on second homes. I didn't have your view on that.

V.A.: If the question was second homes, then that was a matter you known whether or not to have that as a deductible expense, thinking that would be either recreational - you don't really need that one - or you were renting it and getting money back from it. And I have no problem with that. The interest of the state is really to help people own a home, not homes plural,

and I think that's an appropriate role for the state to do everything you can to make home ownership possible.

C.H.: Another concern was raised by Reverend Rodney Page from Ecumenical Ministries. He deplored Reagan's failure to authorize deductions for charitable organizations by taxpayers who do not itemize their returns. He felt that while the president is telling the private sector of the economy that government will be less for poor people, the plan makes it less attractive to donate. In other words, he wanted there to be a charitable deductions for all taxpayers.

V.A.: Yeah. Well, that's standard deduction, we talked about that. And I do think that's unfair, the standard deduction. That's making a presumption that people are making a contribution and probably, I don't know this for a fact, but I'd have to guess that those that take a standard deduction, I bet you a very large percentage make no charitable contribution at all and yet they get credit for it in the standard deduction. So in this case, I don't think that would prevent anybody from giving. They might say I won't give, but they don't give anyway.

C.H.: What was your feeling in general about Pres. Reagan's tax reforms?

V.A.: I don't remember it that well, but from everything you say, I would generally oppose it.

C.H.: Another issue which came up which was kind of interesting. It happened around the states in different spots. In Eastern Oregon, Neil Dockwarner, recently chosen to head the ship of state of Eastern Oregon of an independent state of mind according to the new state official, challenged you to a porcupine race during the annual Miners Jubilee Celebration which you turned down?

V.A.: He may have been deadly serious, I didn't take it quite that seriously. There was a state of Jefferson down in ~~KLAMATH FALLS~~

C.H.: Right.

V.A.: ... and Harry ~~Boyvind~~ <sup>BOVIN</sup> was the governor of that state, and for many years has been just to talk about even in Northern California. It would be Southern Oregon and Northern California was the state. I think out in Eastern Oregon they were just going to have a state all by themselves. I don't think they were going to join with Idaho, I'm not sure. But that's just a general - sometimes they laugh about it, but I think there's some deadly seriousness in their thinking that they really feel isolated from the most populous part of the state. A lot of complaints. We talked about land use planning. You know, they'd say that's fine for Portland, Oregon, but why do we have to be sophisticated in Fossil? And I can understand that. So, you know, that's how this agitation happens. This is not new. This has been going on certainly since 1859.

C.H.: Do you think it's getting any worse nowadays?

V.A.: No. It crops up from time to time. I think the latest cropping up was in Northern California, not necessarily in Southern Oregon.

C.H.: Well, they're still looking at possibly ceding from the rest of California, aren't they?

V.A.: Northern California is more serious about it right now, at least from what I read. But this is not going to go away and it's going to continue and you know, you've got all these big gorillas of Los Angeles, you know, so the people up in Northern California figure hey, we've got nothing in common with those people. And they don't, they really don't. And you know, the

people in Southern Oregon - although Southern Oregon now with Medford is a pretty large community. But they just feel like you know you guys don't understand us. And in most cases that's true. I've used the word description and I really believe it, that people in let's say Eastern Oregon - I use the word they've got their heads screwed on real good - they got some real common sense, you know. And you get over here and we get all these great ideas, you know, that really don't make any sense at all. And yet you've got most of the votes here coming forth for these things that don't make any sense at all.

C.H.: How do you try to mitigate that as governor?

V.A.: It's awfully hard, you work the best you can. That's part of why I was so proud to travel about a quarter million miles inside of Oregon. I kept going, and I kept going, and part of it was just to make them feel that somebody does care. But still you can't overcome it all together, no matter what you do.

C.H.: You by this time had vetoed more, and we talked about this a little bit, vetoed more bills than anyone except <sup>Gov. Oz. WEBB</sup> Oswest back in the early 1900s.

V.A.: Well, I vetoed more than he did.

C.H.: He vetoed about 40 percent or something like that.

V.A.: He vetoed a third, about a third of all the bills passed, and then the bills passed for a little over 200. So that was quite an enormous record. I always claim now that mine is the modern-day record. I accumulated, I'm not sure I put it on the tape, I counted the vetoes of Governor Holmes, Governor Hatfield, Governor McCall, Governor Straub, and they vetoed 112 bills. I vetoed 108, four less than those four governors.

[End of Tape 48, Side 2]