

This is an interview with Marshall Harris, Florida state representative and chairman of the Florida House appropriations committee. The interview was conducted in Tallahassee, Florida on May 17, 1974 by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries. It was transcribed by Joe Jaros.

Jack Bass: You're saying that the things we outlined in the book really weren't problems in Florida.

Marshall Harris: No, no, it's not that they weren't problems, and there is no doubt that Florida has changed dramatically and that those things reflect it. But Florida, in my opinion, since I've been in the legislature, which is the political scene in the last eight years, it seems that the change in the political scene in the last eight years has been primarily reapportionment as ordered by the court and the fact that with reapportionment and the emergence of the two party system, you've ended up having a total remake of the power structure in the state of Florida. The old power structure isn't dead, but it's dying much quicker than it would have if we had never reapportioned and if the Republican party had remained basically a small, token party in the state. Now it's a viable party, it elects statewide candidates, Hawkins and Gurney. You know, like Claude Kirk, that's I think, what is fundamentally different in Florida. Growth, reapportionment, and two party politics. Industrialization, I don't think so. Black voter registration, not particularly. Desegregation, well it has had its effects, but not a pronounced effect in Florida.

J.B.: How about organized labor?

Harris: Organized labor in the state of Florida is a patsy.

J.B.: Is it a political force at all?

Harris: It is in my community, but on a statewide basis, though it flexes its muscle, it flexes it most often I have found in conjunction with business.

Walter De Vries: In what way?

Harris: They sit down together. Associated industries and the AFL-CIO sit down together and decide . . . when I first came up here, that was how they played it. It's changing now because at a given point, labor's demands, not because of the unions, not because of the leaders, but because of the people under them, the demands of labor are going to outstrip the ability of management to play along. And so, the management oriented organization is now taking positions tcontrary to the union side of the issue. But that was not the case until the last several years. The last several years, this year, they changed the formula base in workmen's comp, the increases over the last several years in workmen's comp, employment compensation, the broadening of coverage to agricultural workers, at least to some exceptions, well, there's the best case that I can think of. Here we tried to free agricultural workers like everybody else, what, eighteen states do right now, Florida the eighth largest state in the nation, supposed to have a high degree of organization, for organized labor, and there ain't no way that we get much help from organized labor for farm laborers. So, I tend to think that organized labor . . . well, a better example. Organized labor could never have passed collective bargaining bill in this session of the legislature or any other session of the legislature for public employees but for the fact that the Supreme Court of the state of Florida said, "You don't fellows, we are going to." They said that last year and even in face of it, we couldn't pass one. This year they said it and appointed a committee to set forth the

guidelines that they would set, and the guidelines were so pro-labor that the court commission had adopted, that because of that, a bill passed, but it wasn't because organized labor was able to wield any force in the Florida legislature. Organized labor doesn't wield any force. It has, you know, a few people who are very close to organized labor and work well for it, in addition, it has a large group from the two major urban areas, Tampa and Miami, who relate to liberal causes in general and thus tend to be on the side of organized labor. But organized labor, in the sense that it is in Michigan and Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania . . . it's just a different ballgame. One of the things that is different is that we don't have any party structure. And I mean that as Republicans and Democrats, the party structure is virtually non-existent. I go off and lecture on the appropriations process in Connecticut and I listen to how they run their state and I walk away and say, "Well, there's nothing that I can tell you guys that would make very much sense, because you are dominated by your party structure. And as long as you think that party is more important than the emergence of the legislature as an equal partner in government, then my lecture is just a waste of time. Forget it." I come back down here and I feel very happy that I am in Florida, because at least we don't have party dominance the way that they do in so many of the Middle Atlantic and New England states, which just ruins state government.

J.B.: Would you like to see a larger influence for the party?

Harris: No, I like it the way it is. I like it as a free for all. The first time that I ran for office eight years ago, I had eight opponents, I dropped in on top of them. Nobody asked me. I didn't check with anybody. I just decided that was a good race and I ran it alone. The party didn't help me then, and it hasn't helped me since. As a matter of fact, I've done

a lot more for the party than it has ever done. Four years ago, I ran the party's campaign for all of its statewide officers in all of Dade County. The get out the vote campaign, the registration campaign, the whole bit. The party will have to work a number of years before it ever does anything for me equivalent to what I did for it. You know, it makes some token gesture at supporting . . . and by the way, I say this for both the Democratic and Republican parties. The parties are poorly organized in the state of Florida, and I think that's great. I don't like to see somebody sitting up there saying, "This is the party caucus position and no matter what your independent judgement on a matter might be, you either vote that way or you are persona non grata in the party." That's nonsense. I like having no party structure. As a matter of fact, if we could all run without labels, I would think that was great. I don't see why we have to have Democrats and Republicans, except the party structure on a national level requires it. But I could have non-partisan elections on everything. I voted for non-partisan elections of judges. I've tried to get non-partisan elections of schoolboards. I'd love to get non-partisan elections of tax assessors and I think that the next thing . . . sheriffs, obviously. I can't figure out why a Republican sheriff is better than a Democratic sheriff or vice-versa. And the next thing, I would love to have non-partisan election of legislators too. I don't think that it really helps to have partisan elections. You lose some very good people just because the nature of an area changes and the guy has the wrong label when it changes. In this state, many of those people just change their label. If they got beat as a Democrat, they just wait two years and run as a Republican. And they win. John Winters is one of our finest senators. He's been a great Republican senator. He was a Democratic house member. Pinellas County changed and he decided to change his label. He's not the only one that has done that. That's an obvious thing that will



happen all over the state more and more. It will become more and more Republican, despite what happens in Washington. Florida is, I guess next to South Carolina, the strongest pro-Nixon state in the nation and that's logical that it will continue to be so. Because we have got tons of new people, you know, most of whom are mid-Western retirees in the center part of the state and New York and Boston retirees in the southeastern part of the state. So, we will continue to have a very interesting political mix and we will continue to have a fundamental change of area one after the other. You've seen Florida. It started in St. Petersburg and Palm Beach and gradually went across the middle of the state and hooked up in Orlando and then dropped down and took over most of Broward County, or at least down in the northern half of Broward County. Republicanism is now moving north into northern Pinellas, into Pasco, moving south, hopping around Manatee, moving south from Pinellas into Sarasota and Charlotte and will soon, I think, probably be completely Republican in the southwest. I think that we have two Democrats out of three and the only reason that we have those two Democrats in the house in the lower southwest is because they are long time house members. One of them is dean of the house. He'll stay on until the tide is two to one against him and then he'll get wiped out and we'll have a Republican there.

J.B.: Is there more division in the legislature between Republicans and Democrats or between rural and urban?

Harris: There is presently more division between Republicans and Democrats because . . . (interruption on tape) . . . I think that there has been times in the past when the urban areas have understood that they had some value in standing together. We did this in governmental

reorganization under Schulz. We did it to a large degree on the corporate tax issue. We did it in the Article 5 issue, the reform of our judiciary and in constitutional revision in general. So, we did it on those kinds of issues. And we do it when it is necessary. We pulled the urban coalition together on environmental land management study, the local comprehensive land planning act. We pulled a number of those kinds of coalitions on other land use planning legislation. But generally speaking, that's an ad hoc group and it doesn't have any formality to it. The process in this state has been, and I think will continue to be unfortunately, a process where party does mean a great deal and so what happens is, the urban Democrats use the urban Republicans as a threat to the rural Democrats, there being almost no rural Republicans, to say, "O.K., fellows, we either do it this way or we go join the Republicans and do it to you anyway and wouldn't it look better if we did it as a party." And that is interesting, because that requires some compromising, because we can't take position A, which we can pass with a coalition of Republicans and urban Democrats and go to the rural Democrats and say, "Let's pass it with our coalition" and have A still be A. We've got to water it down. But that's just because the party, basically, the Democratic party is split in half. Half the party represents the urban thinking of the state and half the party represents rural thinking. The Republicans are the third force. And they are almost exactly equal, there are almost about forty of each one of those three forces. So, it is eighty to forty on almost every issue. There have been times in this legislature where I have been in the forty and the Republicans and the rural Democrats, especially when we had what was known as the conservative Democrats, which was a formal organization of those forty rural Democrats, including a couple who were

urban . . . well, we've got a strange situation, we've got the cabinet involved in all of this on top of everything else. So, we theoretically on where they are from, have forty urban Democrats, forty rural Democrats or semi-rural Democrats, and forty Republicans, give or take a few each way and give or take the fact that we've got some rural Democrats that think urban. And we've got some urban Democrats that think rural, but they are the aberrations, they're not the bulk of the problem. And it's always a question of which two team up. Generally speaking, the Democratic leadership decides what it is going to pass and then when the leadership starts to come apart on such things, and this year it was on such things as financial disclosure and on such things as land use or any of these sorts of issues, then we have to go back to the people who are more logically akin to the thinking of the urban Democrats and pick up an urban coalition. But that's an ad hoc coalition, it's used more as a club than as a working vehicle. I've never understood why, because I've always thought that it was the logical thing to do, but it is very hard. That's one reason that I would love to get rid of parties. The party thing doesn't do any good in this whole . . . if you want to approach the problem logically, people of a similar interest, regardless of party, ought to vote together. But that doesn't happen.

J.B.: Why did you run for the legislature?

Harris: I ran for the legislature for three reasons. One, I'm Jewish and my father always taught me that the credo of Judaism was to build the kingdom on earth. That was what you were here for and it was not reward in the hereafter or anything else, but that it was to do God's work here. I've been involved deeply in my own community and came to the conclusion

that voluntarism as a way of solving most of the problems that I saw was just not a sufficient answer. There weren't enough voluntary dollars to do it and we ought to get into the state as a mechanism to do some things. You've got to understand that at time, eight years ago, the state was doing nothing. I mean, we were really providing no social services. We were really not much out of the nineteenth century in much of our attitudes. Secondly, the reapportionment decision had just come down and it became obvious that the balance was swinging to an urban, more enlightened viewpoint. And thirdly, I found that a great number of people who I respected to a very large degree, were running for the legislature at the very same time. So, I knew that I would be comfortable in the group. Sandy Dahlenburg, Bob Graham, Bob Hector, people like that were running all at one time. And I thought that we could sweep the whole place clean, which by the way, we did. My hunch in that regard turned out correct. I had no great political ambition and no great idea to render political service in that very limited sense of the word. It was, as far as I was concerned, just an extension of my work on United Fund and the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. It was just another way to do the same sort of thing.

J.B.: What prompted that group of people, those individuals that you said you respected and who were people of genuine ability, to run at that time?

Harris: I really don't know. They had a variety of motivations. Dahlenburg and Graham, quite clearly were both highly political animals. Bob's father was a former state senator and almost governor of the state of Florida. Sandy was very, very close to the Kennedy organization and had been a big help in that and had always been very active politically all

through college and law school. They had a lot of people that they knew who were already in the legislature. Dick Pettigrew, Murray Doven, Don Reed, who they respected and could get along with and although I didn't, I knew Murray very well, we were the best of friends, I didn't know the others terribly well, I knew who Pettigrew was, but not much more than that. And I did know, however, that a lot of them ran because of who was already in. And I ran because of the people who were running, in addition to some degree of the people who were already in. It was just a wave. And it did not only happen in Dade County. But when you saw the new legislature in '66, '67, when we got finished, with the exception of those, and there were a lot, where areas flip-flopped into a Republican column for the first time, in Orlando, we got some people up here who didn't know . . . you know, they filed their fifty dollars and they were elected. And they were Dave Lindsey, Bob Shadley, people like that, nice people, but they had no business in being in the legislature. They were not really interested in being in the legislature, they did it as a lark and unfortunately, ~~they won~~ for them, they won. Lindsey went bankrupt as a result of winning. So, they weren't prepared to do anything other than having their name known a little better as insurance men, or whatever they happened to be in. But, there was a large number of a different kind. There were talented people not only from the urban areas. I'm thinking of Gene Shaw from Starke, one of the more rural consitutencies. Gene is one of the more able legislators that I've served with. He was the speaker pro tem, as a matter of fact, under Pettigrew. And in the new . . . in those areas where the Republican party was obviously the party, in Pinellas, they started to give us some people of real talent for the first time. So, I think that it wasn't located just in Miami or Tampa or Jacksonville,

across the whole state. My freshman year, I remember that we had a four man delegation from Escambia County. Gordon Wells, Phil Ashler, Warren Graves and Jimmy Reeves. As fine a four man delegation as you have probably had in the history of the state of Florida, representing any given area. Phil Ashley, I would say, was far better than the electors of Escambia County deserved. And with some of the people who now represent Escambia County, I've got to believe that it is getting closer to what they probably really deserved all the time. But that's typical of what was happening. It was a group of people that just decided that maybe government could work. Warren Graves and a few others like him had to drop out, because they found that yeah, it could work, but they couldn't make a living and have it work at the same time. (interruption on the tape)

Walter De Vries: . . . the basic influx of new legislators in 1966. What we hear about Florida is that more changes in terms of legislative procedures and operations occurred in that four years, say from '66 to '70. Why did that happen in Florida and not in other states?

Harris: Well, one thing is that we had a kook for a governor, Claude Kirk. From the other party. And he managed, in a very delightful set of circumstances, to expose what was wrong with most of our governmental procedures, by finding loopholes and ways of doing things that he wanted to do, which most of the people got kind of aghast at. And then we had a pay hike, which he vetoed, and we overrode the veto and we ended up with a posture for the first time, I guess, almost anywhere in the country, where the legislature said, "To hell with it. We are going to be an equal partner." And it was a Republican-Democratic coalition on that issue, nothing else. And that became a very, very important difference. Everywhere I have gone in

the United States, they say, "But yeah, but how did you put it all together? Didn't the Republicans oppose the Democrats and didn't these people oppose these people?" We just decided, mainly urban, that the time had come to make the legislature other than a stepsister. The time had come for year round staffing, the time had come for standing committees, the time had come for adequate compensation. The time had come for new facilities, the time had come for all of the things that automatically . . . there's a great theory, Allan Rosenthal from Eagleton is, I think, the primary exponent of the theory. You give a group of people the tools with which to do the job, and pretty soon, they are going to be embarrassed into doing the job. We keep on trying to spread this word around the United States. We've done it to Arkansas now, they are starting to move forward. We've seen some progress in Tennessee and Kentucky, some progress, not terribly much, in Georgia and some progress in North Carolina. Where the legislatures are beginning, although nowhere near with the spurt that we had, are beginning to decide they ought to be equal. We are the only state up to a short while ago who ever changed a governor's budget in the southeast. I mean, six years ago, there was nobody in the southeast doing anything but passing the governor's budget. But with the Republican governor, for the first time in the history of the state, he gives us a budget and there ain't no way that we are going to listen to that. We instead decided what we wanted to do. So, we ended up having to develop the budget capability, the competence in our own chamber. We had to end up, since we disagreed with so many of his substantive programs as well, the few he had, we had to develop our expertise in that area. We had a lot of help. A lot of people wanted to see a legislature like ours move forward, we had a lot of outside

help from Eagleton and from the group out of Kansas City and a lot of others. But more than anything else, we also had some amazing people, Lou De La Parte, Fred Schulz and most particularly, Dick Pettigrew, who had a great idea of what it was that a legislature should be and how to get there and through all the thick and thin and all the battles back and forth, just kept right on plowing down the street. We were one of the first legislatures to come in with a program budget bill, we went theoretically over to a program budget. It got somewhat sidetracked and it hasn't been as successful as possible, but at least we tried. We were one of the first legislatures in the country to start thinking about total governmental reorganization. We did in six months what it took Wisconsin three years to do. We did it with about a quarter of the money that Wisconsin spent, and we did one hell of a better job reorganizing state government than Wisconsin did. We brought the guy down from Wisconsin down to assist us and he kept on saying, "Well, if you want to do it right, what you will do is this, but we couldn't get away with that." "Well," we'd say, "we'll try." And so we tried to do it and we made some compromises, I'm not suggesting that the plan is foolproof. What worries me now, is that we did so much quickly that year by year, they are chipping away at what we did. We decided to have a structure where we didn't have the agents set apart from everybody else, but to treat them as people with problems who ought to be served by a broad-spectrum social service agency. Last year, we created a division of agents. I voted no, but it was a voice in the dark. I thought that it made sense to have children's services under vocational rehab because the money flow was appropriated in that fashion. Now, they are pulling children's services out and now we have a division of children's medical services. Now we are talking about redoing the reorganization that effects veterans affairs. They've been a separate



department. We have 216 separate department boards and agencies. We consolidated them down to whatever it is, twenty-three or twenty-four, and now they are going to be a separate department. Maybe I can stop that, because I think that everytime I get the prime sponsor of that bill arguing for it, I pick up a couple of more votes against the bill, so maybe I can kill a separate department of veteran's affairs. Now, they want a separate division of blind services, because they don't like where blind services are under voc rehab. It goes on and on, so my prognosis is not that great.

W.D.V.: How were you able to overcome all the special interests at the time that you did the reorganization?

Harris: Well . . . .

W.D.V.: How did you get it through then?

Harris: Well, because we had a lot of people that said, "To hell with you fellows. We are the legislature. We make laws. We think this is how it should be done." And we did it and we just took them by storm, is what it amounted to. And although there was an awful lot of cooperation down at the senate end, it was the wave, it was the white hat issue at the time. Everybody wanted to be a white hat, fine. They went with reorganization. Oh, the battles were strong, there is no doubt about that and we made some very bad compromises. We located certain functions in the places where the lobbyists could get the pressure on them the most easily as opposed to putting them where they ought to be. You know, you can't win everyone of them. But we did an awful lot more than most anybody else has done. What worries me is that we are losing that scheme. We don't have the kind of leadership. As a matter of fact, this next time around, we have a guy who is the speaker designate in the house by the name of Tucker and another guy by the name of Barron who is the senate president designate, both of whom were in the anti-reorganization forces. So, that does not presage a

great deal of progress for me in the next two years in the Florida legislature.

W.D.V.: Is that why there is another candidate for speaker?

Harris: That's one of the reasons. There are several other candidates for speaker, but that's one of the reasons why Jimmy Redmond and I are deciding . . . I take that back, that really isn't a major consideration. The major considerations are the ways of doing business. As we went through this eight year period, we kept on opening government up. Government in the Sunshine, resign to run, open committee public hearings, no proxy voting, a set of rules that guaranteed a hearing to any bill, you know, a complete opening up. This year, full public disclosure. And the leadership, it appears, in these two cases, will take a position contrary to that, but at least as far as Tucker is concerned, a large number of us in the house feel that his position will be contrary to a rule of openness, a rule of evenhandedness, a rule where everyone has a chance to participate. It will be more the structure of the strong party state, except it will be the speaker's group of boys going around saying, "Hey, by the way, we told you not to vote the way that you did on that last bill and we are just going to pull you off the finance and tax committee and next time you'll learn." We've been blessed in this state with some great leadership. Pettigrew, Schulz, Covington, Sessums, completely honest people, completely aboveboard, completely willing to hear out both sides of an issue. I guess that you can't have that forever.

W.D.V.: Do you think that the wave of reform is dying off, slowing down . . . that's a bad metaphor.

Harris: Well, we had a lot of steam and we did an awful lot and now,

the test is no longer reform in the structural sense, but how well is it now. You know, you can go through all the structural reform you want, but now what have we done substantively? Well, substantively, we've done a ton of work and now the question is are we going to undo some of the technical reform, the structural reform and thus slow down the process of substantive reform? But we've passed no fault divorce, we've passed no fault insurance, major issues one after the other. Vital bills, collective bargaining for public employees. We've gone tremendous distances in this legislature. First, in the first four years, the years that you have concentrated on, in the area of procedural reform. And then in the second four years, in the areas of substantive change. The probate code, you know, an amazing amount of reform in the second four years, more in substantive areas. I think that is going to slow down. I think that the result is going to be some retrogression in the procedural reform. For example, we tried to consolidate committees so that there are fewer committees. The new speaker intends to have fewer yet, but he intends to have subcommittees with the power to kill bills and he intends to appoint the chairman of the subcommittee as well as the chairman of the committee. Which means that we have more committees. You can call it whatever you want, but in fact, it is just more committees under another title. It makes him look like he's progressive in these terms. It's a frightening thought. We've done an awful lot in eight years, I hate to see it all go down the drain and it may well do that.

W.D.V.: Let me just follow up on that. That means that any subsequent power of the legislature, say vis-a-vis the cabinet, has increased greatly in eight years. Look at the reorganization bill, so has the power of the governor.

Harris: That's true.

right now. So, it's no big deal as I see it. But you know . . . everybody sees this as an anti-cabinet set of indictments, and I don't think that's true. They are just some bad guys. I don't think that anybody . . . as a matter of fact, somebody has told me that we are going to have two great advantages out of the current set of problems. One advantage is that we are going to improve the cabinet so that I'll like it. Because the people who replace the ones that go will be much better. Secondly, we will also improve the caliber of the inmates in the institutions, because we will send some of the cabinet members there and that won't be a bad idea.

W.D.V.: But you don't see a diminution of the power of the cabinet, you say that it might increase.

Harris: It might. I don't think that it will ever . . . you're right. I think that the indictments will have a certain restraining influence on that. But Tucker and Barron are both very strong pro-cabinet people. And Reubin Askew realigned with them will make it very, very tough.

W.D.V.: Is Askew strong pro-cabinet too?

Harris: No. But he has been fighting religiously to see that the basic reorganization plan, which in which he played a rather large role, is . . . he continues to oppose when he has a fighting chance those issues which he thinks are tendencies for cabinet officers to achieve more power. Now, by the way, don't get confused by the cabinet's power, which may not grow as a cabinet as opposed to the power of the cabinet officer in his individual role, because that's the one that I think will continue to grow. The department of agriculture continues to try to cut out the department of health from anything related to the field of agriculture. So . . . .

W.D.V.: I was thinking about the unique collective decision making.

Harris: Well that, I don't . . . I think that in that area they may not grow too much in power, but they will continue to try to expand their power in their individual field.

W.D.V.: As independent elected state officers?

Harris: That's right. Agriculture is the best example. Doyle is very good at every year being sure that his power broadens just a little bit else. And since basically, we are not talking about new powers, we are talking about his taking something away from what is presently under the governor. Because the cabinet does not tend to take it away from each other. They are a rather closed shop, a fraternity.

J.B.: What do you think is going to happen on this move to limit cabinet members to two terms?

Harris: That's a pie in the sky. There is no substance to that bill at all.

J.B.: What is the basis of the cabinet's strength in the legislature?

Harris: The fact that they have a campaign organization that reaches statewide, that it is an automatic organization. Extension service officers out in every county, agricultural employees and bank examining employees, education department employees and when those people get together, they form in many of the rural areas, and less than highly urbanized areas, one potent force. They are by definition, politically sharp. They are able to help a man or hurt him. They don't help or hurt me, but in the rural areas, they are important people. The rural legislators have got to listen when they say something.

J.B.: Because of the cabinet members, each member with his own sphere of influence and control, he has a built-in organization. It is his?

Harris: Yes, of course.

W.D.V.: And it is governmental.

Harris: It's governmental. And you put two or three of those working together, as has happened in this state . . . .

J.B.: Does it usually happen that way? Is that the way that it functions?

Harris: Certainly. "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

J.B.: So, if legislators from a non-major urban area shows anti-cabinet tendencies . . . .

Harris: He's got problems.

J.B.: . . . . alienates one, then two or three or four gang up on him in effect?

Harris: That's why . . . .

J.B.: How about in other statewide races, such as the senate, governor . . . .

Harris: They are really not an effective force. They are usually running with the governor's race. Generally speaking, they have some kind of token opposition, so they are usually watching their own shop. Although they have a program, their team is able to go someplace else, because most of the time the Republicans don't offer very viable candidates. They will this time. (interruption on tape. Harris's son enters to take his father to a plane) I had better get going gentlemen. Is there anything else? Did I give you enough background?

W.D.V.: Thank you. One quick question.

Harris: Sure.

W.D.V.: And that is this, (192) The election of the speaker designate and the president of the senate designate by the legislature in advance of the one over which he is to serve. What is the source of that and why?

Harris: History, tradition, silliness.

W.D.V.: Why does this whole movement of reform not effect that situation?

Harris: It has for next year.

W.D.V.: You're saying that the one-term tradition will knock that out?

Harris: No, I'm not trying to get at that. I'm trying to move the secret ballot back so that we don't have the promise bit running back and forth at all, so that we might someday elect some more talented people.

W.D.V.: That's really a caucus matter, though, because one says that you cannot bind another one.

Harris: That's right, that is a caucus matter and we may get that in the next organizational session. When we come back from the organizational session, all we have to do is pass a new rule of the house that the speaker will be elected by secret ballot by majority vote. That will be the end of that caucus problem. But that's kind of hard to do.

W.D.V.: Do you know of any other state that does that?

Harris: I have no idea. Well, you see, there are so few states that don't have re-electable speakers and presidents. You see, that's . . . a speaker, in the house sense, is the leader of the majority party. A silly position, because he is always stuck back in his rooms and everything else that he is probamatically oriented.

W.D.V.: You mean that he is the caucus chairman?

Harris: Yeah, he's the caucus chairman, he's the whole bit. And as a matter of fact, the position of majority leader, which is a powerful position in every other state doesn't amount to anything here. The majority leader is the speaker. A silly system, because does not have the independence. It gives the speaker tremendous power. We have just been very fortunate, usually, that the speakers have not sought to exercise all the power that they really have.

And the press has done pretty good in that, because our press is excellent. You know, a really hard working press corps. They are a good investigating press corps, and they just rip the hell out of anybody that gets out of line. You know, that's the best thing going. That's all you really need, basically, to keep a legislature honest, is a good press corps and a couple of people who set an example within the legislature. That will raise the tone of your legislature faster than any law you pass.

W.D.V.: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that relationship . . . .

Harris: for example, doesn't mean a darn thing. We have come farther in the last eight years toward cleaning up our own house because of the caliber of people we've elected and who we continue to elect. What's happened is that some of the others have dropped by the wayside because they couldn't cut the mustard ethically as against the other people in the legislature. Word gets out, it doesn't get out all the time. It doesn't get out quickly sometimes, but it gets out.

J.B.: But this challenge that you are involved in against the speaker designate, is it your objective, or the objective of the group with which you are associated, to have the people who are elected to the house this year, come back in the organizational meeting and then elect the speaker fresh?

Harris: This is an aberrational situation. That would be the most probable way that it would be handled, but that's not because it is conscious policy.

(end of interview)