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This is an interview with Ralph Turlington, Florida commissioner of education and former legislator. The interview was conducted on May 18, 1974 by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries. It was transcribed by Joe Jaros.

Ralph Turlington: My name is Ralph Turlington, I was born in Gainesville, Florida on October 5, 1920. I was the son of a University of Florida professor, he was a native of North Carolina and a graduate of North Carolina State and Cornell. All the Turlingtons, I think, originated in North Carolina. I'm sure that the people listening to this tape will be enthralled with this information.

Jack Bass: What prompted you to run for the state legislature back in 1950?

Turlington: Well, really, ever since I was a kid, and this would probably go back to early grammar school, I'd always been involved in political activity. I can remember the presidential election of '28, when the question of whether Al Smith or Herbert Hoover should be elected came up, I believe that I was about seven or eight at the time, almost eight, and I guess that I have just always followed politics. And we had a teacher, I think in the sixth grade, we had a class club there that we would hold elections about every month, and I don't know, it kind of got us interested. In the fifth grade, we had a teacher there that asked for a debate . . . this was in the 30's, and Republicans and Democrats, you know, this was the way that they were

approaching it. They asked who all were Democrats and everybody held up their hand and they asked who were Republicans and I held up my hand under the theory that whoever got to debate, you know, would have to be selected from one group or the other and I knew that I could be selected. So, I guess that you could say that I have just always enjoyed history and politics. In our high school, I went to a young laboratory school, which is actually the demonstration school for the University of Florida, I think that teachers and instructors there were all politically oriented. The friends that I developed, one being Bill Norman, we were just very interested in politics. I've watched every political race that there ever was. When we had thirteen candidates for governor one year, I could name all thirteen and tell when they came in and I had a political sign from each. So, it has just been a long standing interest in politics. So, when I went to teach at the University of Florida, I actually wanted to run for a local office like city commission or something like that, but the rules were against it, you couldn't be on the faculty and run. I didn't have a doctorate degree, only a master's degree, and I had to make the decision and I determined that I would leave teaching and go into business and I also wanted some . . . that meant that I could run for political office. An incumbent didn't run for the legislature and I thought that that was a good opportunity and so I ran. And Gainesville was home town and so forth, so being successful there was probably easier for me than for somebody that didn't have long time family connections.

J.B.: Someone told us a story about you arguing a bill, in the senate, I think it was, and the chairman saying something about how he found the case very persuasive and just you and he were in there, he had convened the meeting and had a bunch of proxies . . . what was that story?

Turlington: No, that's really not my story. That's. . . Cliff Harrell, who later became senator from Dade County, and at the time was a house member, in those days, the Florida legislature was probably from the population standpoint, the worst apportioned legislature in the country.

J.B.: This was when, in the 50's?

Turlington: I guess that this would have been about 1955, maybe. At that time, we had proxy voting in the senate. When I first came to the house in 1951, we had proxy voting in the house. And that just simply meant that if there was a bill coming up in committee, and if you gave me your proxy, I could vote your vote as if you were present.

Walter De Vries: Only in committee?

Turlington: Only in committee. A proxy vote, of course, never occurred on the floor. Our constitution required a roll call vote on final passage of every bill.

W.D.V.: Was that unique to this state?

Turlington: I don't know that it is, I suspect that a number of others have it. But that's why, for example, in Congress, you won't find a whole lot of roll calls . . . I know one year I compared and Congressmen had voted about maybe seventy, eighty, ninety times, something like that. I had voted over two thousand. Well, that sounds more impressive than it really is, just on final passage of everything, you call the roll. A lot of those votes are unanimous votes, whereas in Congress, you know, they would only call the roll as an exceptional matter and they pass the others on consent. Because there is nothing in the federal constitution that says you have to have a roll call on the final passage of a bill. It happens to be in our constitution. Senator Harrell . . . it's really a very interesting story and both principals are still alive. One later became the acting governor or governor of Florida,

Senator Charlie Johns, who is something of an institution in Florida. And this was in the days of apportionment when no county could have more than one senator and the number of senators could not be in excess of thirty-eight. And you can figure out what that does to apportionment. In the house, we had that no county could have more than three and each county will have one. And really, we laid it out that the first five would have three, the next eighteen should have two and everybody else would have one, that's the way it was. So, as badly skewed as our population is, this really meant that you could elect a majority of either house from counties having about 14% of the population. Now, the proxy voting was just part of our procedure and it was eliminated in the house in 1955 by Ted David, who became speaker and . . . proxy voting was justified by having conflicting committee attendance times and Ted set it up into groups so that if you couldn't be on a committee that . . . . he might set it up into five groups and group five could not meet when . . . committees on group five would all meet at the same time and you couldn't be on two committees that were group five committees. Therefore you would have no committee conflicts unless you had to be somewhere else presenting a bill or something like that before another committee. But the proxy voting was justified on this attendance type of thing and Cliff had a bill that he had worked to get through the house. And he came over and he saw Senator Johns, who was chairman of the committee. Now, he had had enough trouble getting his bill taken up, you know, he asked him if he had noted this and that and if he would take it up and finally he worried Senator Johns enough to where Senator Johns said that he would take it up and he gave him the day. Then Cliff came by ahead of time, maybe about forty-five minutes to an hour ahead of time and he called on Senator Johns and Senator Johns said,



"Tell me about the bill." And Cliff sat down and described the bill and went over it in great detail. And then Senator Johns looked at his watch and said, "It's time to go to the meeting." And they went to the meeting and the only persons there were the secretary for the committee, Senator Johns and Representative Harrell. And Senator Johns got up and called the meeting to order and then he indicated that they would take up bill so-and-so, which was the very bill that Cliff had been talking about and before that . . . well, Senator Johns declared that by proxy, the quorum was present and then, he said, "And now, Representative Harrell, would you please explain your bill." Well, Cliff had been in his office and explained the blooming bill and he said, "You mean, now?" "Yes, explain the bill?" "You mean the whole thing?" "Why yes, the committee needs to know about it." And so, Cliff went through the whole thing all over again, explaining the bill and then, Senator Johns said, moved that the bill be reported favorably and asked if anyone else wanted to speak. There wasn't anybody else there to speak, of course, and moved that the bill be reported favorably and he made that motion and said, "The secretary will call the roll." And he said, "Senator Beale." And Johns leaned over and said, "No, by proxy." "Senator Davis." "No, by proxy." "Senator Shans." "No, by proxy." And he went down and called the whole roll and they were all, "No, by proxy." And then, he said, "Mr. Chairman." And Senator Johns said, "You know, that's a damn good bill. Mark me yes." And with that, he got up and adjourned the meeting. Other than my having told the story, that's what it is. If you want Senator Harrell, he later became a senator from Dade County, he's still here and will be here and usually stays at the Hilton Hotel and he can tell you if you want to get it direct from him about how to work.

W.D.V.: If you wanted to open a section in a book about the Pork Chop

days, would that kind of a story be symbolic of it, or is that an overstatement?

Turlington: Well, let me say symbolic, I guess. It isn't a bad story to open with, it did show that Charlie had a sense of humor, although I don't think that Cliff appreciated it. I think that it would have some symbolism to it, yes.

W.D.V.: When you think about the two periods, because you served in both, how would you look at the two, how would you describe the two? Did you serve in any kind of leadership role in the first period?

Turlington: Well, I was always, after the first year, I was always chairman of a committee that dealt with retirement, which is actually, pretty . . . well, when you get down to it, has a lot of clout to it. People never really recognize that to begin with, but you can spend more money or do more things than passing the time at legislation than most people are aware of. So, that was sort of my committee and I became a specialist in that committee and to this day, I'm still, I think, quite influential in terms of retirement legislation. So, I had that element of a leadership role. I was always on the appropriations committee. My first session, I was the . . . my county had two members and I was the freshman and Gene Whitlock who was a real . . . he knew how to operate, was the fellow that had the appropriations assignment and so forth and I had mostly, you know, just the chicken assignments. The second session, I was the senior member and I had supported Ferris Bryant, who later became governor, or speaker. I guess that you could say that since 1953, I have done reasonably well, because I don't think that there has ever been a person that has become speaker that I at least have not supported. That doesn't mean that I was close enough in those instances to be really at the top, a lot of those, but I actually broke with the little county group on reapportionment. I stayed with the little county group and the little county group was predominately the controlling influence until about '55 or so

in there, when reapportionment constitutionally came up and I just quit attending the so-called "Little County Meetings." The little counties, that group was presumably designed to protect the financial and legislative interests of small counties and the division of race track funds and road funds and things of this sort. They were highly successful and well they might be. If you really want to know the . . . we had money that was divided and this was not changed until I became speaker, but it really didn't change because I became speaker, but it changed because the constituency that elected the legislature changed. And I would not be critical of the so-called Pork Chop Era people, you know, as not being persons who sought to represent the interests of their districts as they saw it and I think that they represented overall state interests with reasonable fairness, subject to the caveat that after all, they were elected from relatively small counties. You see, if you were sitting there and here's the way that the gasoline money was to be distributed . . . the first four cents went to the department of transportation for primary roads. And primary roads were defined by saying that we would have ten or eleven thousand miles and the department designated which of these roads were primary. But whenever that designation was made, I'm sure that that was done with the concurrence of the rural interests. So, the primary roads were to be paid for out of those first four cents. The next three cents, three out of a seven cents tax, were secondary in character, two of which were constitutionally earmarked and one of which was statutorily earmarked in the same way. All right, let's assume that a penny of gasoline tax raised thirty million dollars. All right, that means that you are distributing ninety million dollars and we would distribute it on three factors, population, area and contributions to the

state road system as of 1931. So, if your county had 1% of the area and it had 1% of the road milage as of 1931 and 1/10% of 1% of the population, you would get 7/10 of 1% of the secondary road fund. If your county had, as Dade County did, some 17% of the population, some 1½% of the area and some . . . oh, I would judge maybe 2/10 of 1% of the road contribution in 1931, because it wasn't really such a big county at that point, you see. It failed to recognize any growth since 1931, that's a factor. And area of course, was a big factor. So, population only really rated 1/3 of the distribution. Well, obviously, this would generate a very considerable number of dollars, you see, to rural areas in comparison with urban areas, because population only counted for 1/3 of the weight. And, another 1/3 really was predicated on what you had in 1931 and if you look at the enormous growth in some areas and the failure to grow in a number of other areas, you can see that this vastly misapplied the funds from a current needs base. Well, attempts to change those formulas were just utterly hopeless. And you could not blame a person representing a county that was, that had not grown very much since 1931 and was relatively low in population, from voting against a reallocation of those funds. That's just plain, you know . . .

J.B.: In addition to roads , what other serv ices . . . health?

Turlington: Well, roads, I think, is one of the greatest places. Race track funds is another that historically comes to attention. Now, race track funds, there a constitutional amendment was needed and Governor Carlton was opposed to it and what . . . they needed to get some extra votes or something, you know, to allow sin to have it's way by allowing legalized gambling of this para-mutual sort in this state. At least that's the story. And they got the votes from the little counties by agreeing that the race track

funds would be distributed in equal dollar amounts by county, so that a county, if you were going to distribute six million, seven hundred thousand dollars a year and you have sixty-seven counties, each county would get a hundred thousand dollars. O.K., by the year 1967, or so, the distribution of race track funds was somewhere in the vicinity of twenty to twenty-nine million dollars and each county would get approximately 1/67th of that. Not approximately, but exactly 1/67th of that. The apportion that was distributed to counties would be in equal shares.

W.D.V.: Now, the basic apportionment change occurred in '66?

Turlington: The basic apportionment change . . . now, we had, the 1965 House . . . no, I would really say that we had in the house of representatives a basic change, I think, in '63. And that was an apportionment plan that I helped to put over and interestingly enough, two people who I would say were very instrumental in preserving and supporting the position that I took, were Bill Chappell, who is now Congressman and Bill was speaker or had been speaker, and he was a strong . . . you had to have a strong allegiance to the little county group to be elected speaker and I never had that close an affinity. In other words, I was not supportive of the group's reapportionment posture in most situations and I never made the attempt to run for speaker for a number of reasons, but I didn't think that I could make it with that form of apportionment that was there at the time. Chappell was elected in '61 as speaker, and Mallory Horne, now president of the senate, was elected speaker of the house in '63. I don't recall when the Baker vs. Carr decision was rendered, but I guess it was somewhere. . . .

J.B.: '62, I believe.

Turlington: In about '62. And there we were faced with Baker vs. Carr and trying to figure out what to do. It's almost hilarious to look back today

on those years and see what people thought might be suitable apportionment. The court was very nebulous in the guidelines that it laid down. It really didn't lay down any guidelines. And for legislators to be criticized for not passing legislation that would meet court requirements . . . the court requirements were changing so fast that nobody would know what they were. the argument as to whether this applied to one house or to both houses and this sort of thing came into the picture. And interestingly enough, the governor always sided with the senate, with the idea that the house should represent population and the senate should represent area. I took the posture that it should be the other way around, that if each county was to have representation in a legislature, that the house of representatives was the logical place to give consideration for political units and that the senate would be the more logical place to give consideration to population, since the senate didn't have representation for each county anyway. And if you adopt the premise that every county has to have somebody and the senators were all insisting that that should be done and then the senators would insist that the house was the one that was supposed to be predominately apportioned on a population basis. So, when you give every county out of sixty-seven one seat and thirty-four of sixty-seven counties have about 6 or 7% of your population, in order to get any significant percentage of people to elect a majority of the house, you've got to go to rather enormous numbers. That didn't seem to bother Governor Bryant, or it didn't seem to bother the senate, but it did trouble Bill Chappell and myself and Mallory. And they passed, I thought, some pretty awful legislation, you know, for apportionment. And the first one was really adding seats in the house. I think that Bill and I got that knocked down to something like 125 members or something in that range. Remember, we had been operating with ninety-five and they were trying

to push us up to numbers substantially greater than that. They got that passed and the court or somebody, I believe, ruled . . . obviously a court, ruled that that was not sufficient population weight and that we would have to try again. The crazy adjustment over in the senate was to give . . . the senate actually went down in the number of people required to elect a majority. That was the deal that the governor worked out with them. It was a disgrace in my judgement. What they did was . . . no county could still have more than one senator and there were a few counties like Sarasota and Seminole that didn't have their own senator and so they were able to add on . . . I think that they moved the number of senators up to . . . I don't know, from thirty-eight to maybe forty, or forty-four or something of that sort. And they really just added on to some counties that are rather modest in size but didn't have their own senators. To me, if you want to have what Pork Chopism was mostly about, was that you would not under reapportionment legislation, do anything that was really adverse to a member of a group. And a guy sat there with more courtesy for years . . . and really, under our constitution, you couldn't have done much about reapportionment anyway.

J.B.: I'm going to make one quick phone call. Go ahead, Walter.

W.D.V.: When did all these changes in a legislative organization, procedure, staffing, salary, when did that . . . we understand that it started to occur under you when you were speaker.

Turlington: Well, I think that a lot of that did. Let me go back on this one other point, if you want to bear that in mind. That when the court threw out that first plan, Governor Bryant called us in and told us that we had to add more numbers in the house and he insisted that we go to a 144 members or something that gave a greater percentage of people required to elect



a majority of the house. I didn't like the number, I wanted to keep the number as low as possible. And the governor said that since the court threw out the other, we must make improvements and there was no way for us to get down to a low figure like I wanted, I wanted a number down around 110, unless we could have a greater number of people electing a majority. And we said, "Well, if we could work out a plan that would accomplish this, with a lesser number than the number that he had, would he approve that?" And he said that he would, knowing full well that there was no other way to concoct a plan. At least that's what he thought. Whereupon we said that we had such a plan and that we accepted his agreement. And then what we did, we just took the counties that had two seats and eliminated and stripped them of one of their seats and that included in my own county. You know, you go back home and tell folks . . . at that point, we were able to show where we could with 110 members achieve a better population allocation than had been in the plan that the courts had turned down. And he had agreed that he would accept that, I know that he felt very frustrated to think that that was part of it, but he agreed to it. And Mallory Horne agreed that he would not run for re-election, you know, there were two seats in Leon and he gave up his own seat. My colleague, O.C. Fagan was not going to run, you know, we had a lot of that stuff resolved. So, we came in with a house for the '63 session with about 110 members. The court, however, ordered us to add on these additional seats or some additional seats anyway, from the more populated counties. So, in '63, we wound up with 125 people there, but they didn't put anybody out. I'm satisfied that had we not done that to keep the numbers down, today the legislature in Florida, or the house of representatives would be in the vicinity of about 150 members, not 120. Although, I might add that this past time, I was one of the proponents of 120 as apposed to 100, I'm

not so-called, "completely wedded" to that, a lot of people in my area were, so I supported it. Now, as to how the staffing changes occurred . . . .

W.D.V.: Well, it seems that you've got really, in the last twenty-five years, two distinctive periods in the legislature. Up to about . . . .

Turlington: Yeah, the real transition, as apportionment came into the picture, that really, even in '65, you could feel the effects of population coming in. Because we had in '65, a number of our little county people were wiped out. Well, they weren't really, every county still had a member in '65.

W.D.V.: Isn't the change in '66?

Turlington: Well, really in '66 . . . I was there and I was not at that time the speaker designate. The speaker designate was George Stone of Pensacola and these things were usually pledged by previous members as to who they would support the next time. And George was killed in an automobile accident just as the primaries, the Democratic primary, were getting under way in 1966. And I started to campaign then for speaker and I had the advantage of not having to go back over a long period of months, particularly when the legislature was in session and solicit votes. My campaigning came when the legislature was not in session and we had whole bunch of new people coming in. I think that there was between 400 and 500 people running for the legislature that time. It was almost like a statewide campaign with enormous numbers. It was a real chore to get letters out to everybody and so forth, and you would get pledges from maybe two or three people running from the same seat. Or you would try to get pledges and I was successful in winning that contest and I guess that one of the first things that I did was to recognize the financial problems that we members have. Our compensation had \$100 a month and then we did have a per diem of \$25 while we were in session. I would say, quite honestly,

that some element of financial compensation is an essential ingredient to have a good legislature. Now, some people may not think that's the case and you can get some people to render some service, you know, have some fine, wonderful ideas about that, but if you are really going to be in the policy making business and give the time necessary to do a good job in a legislature, it's going to take some time away from your business and you are going to limit the kinds of people that can serve.

W.D.V.: So, one of the first things that you did was to raise the salaries?

Turlington: Well, I . . . our constitution prohibited any raise in salary. The constitution said \$100 per month and it had been that way since 1953. And we just simply provided an expense allowance and the expense allowance was \$300 and there was no itemization of what the expenses were. Each month, you simply submitted an expense voucher. And then, we quit that and just simply said that "unless we hear from you, we will assume that your expenses are \$300." So, we paid during my term as speaker, a \$300 a month expense allowance and then there was a salary of \$100. We had . . . also, from a staffing standpoint, we had had some of the delegations that would be staffed during the session by boards of county commission, or people such as this. We provided a legislative aide for every three members. So, if you had, for example, nine members from a county, we would pay for three aides. Well, of course, today in the Florida legislature, every member has his own aide. Our committee staff, ~~lest~~ you get the idea that we added a lot of personnel, I would like to say that when I was speaker, I had the lowest number of employees during the regular session per member of any speaker since 1961. And yet, we had these additional aides and some additional committee staff that hadn't been there before and you ask, "How did

you do that?" Well, because we eliminated a number of other jobs, but they were particularly eliminated in the journal room. You say, "What is the journal room?" Well, every member gets to send some journals back home. A printer would bring the journal in and they would take it down to the journal room and the journal room people would mail the journal to the people who were on the list. And how long did anybody have to work and whatnot, why that was unknown. I found that we just simply . . . and I would have to say that I retained a certified public accountant and told him to go over the whole thing and try to figure out how we could show a good management record. And the journal room was the first place that we went. We just eliminated the journal room and had the printer mail them. The printer did all that for \$1600 and we eliminated . . . I don't know how many people but it was a fantastic number. Because if you had to have somebody on the payroll, well, they could always put him in the journal room, whether he showed up or not, I don't know. I can just say that we saved thousands of dollars and reduced the number of employees by a significant number and by just paying the printer \$1600 to mail the journal. So, we watched the number of employees that we had. But the employees that we had, you know, we sought to put them in activities that were more useful. It's interesting to see, if you could go back and get the data, how many employees were sometimes involved in it and if really it was just a question of accommodation and putting somebody on the payroll and the journal room was the biggest boondog in the picture. We tried to improve the staffing of our committees. If I was going to give an accommodation to somebody that I thought did start in strongest in terms of staffing, I would have to say that I think Fred Schulz and Dick Pettigrew were the strongest persons in terms of pushing for legislative staff development. Over on the senate side,

they went pretty strong for staff development . . . .

W.D.V.: Did the house essentially provide the leadership in that and the senate follow?

Turlington: I would like to tell you . . . being a house guy, I guess that I would like to tell you that, but the truth is that I don't think that I can react accurately to that. But the fact that the senate really loaded a lot of the legislative appropriation in and I think that the senate also had the same idea, I would like to say that it was developed in the house leadership, maybe the senate wanted to be sure that it stayed ahead of the Joneses . . .

W.D.V.: When you think back over that last eight years, would you believe in 1966 or '67 that the legislature would look like it does today?

Turlington: No, I mean, frankly, we are better staffed, we've got a lot more things that we do than we ever did before. I would never have imagined it.

W.D.V.: How about the members themselves?

Turlington: You mean about the types of members and so forth that we have now? I would say that the types of members that we have . . . and again, I'm not reflecting on the people . . . the people we have today are more sophisticated, I don't say that they are necessarily from a characterwise standpoint, better. I think that there were fine people serving in both eras, and when we tell the story about . . . .

W.D.V.: But you do see them as two different eras??

Turlington: It is unquestionably two different eras, that's right. I think that I was there, bridging that kind of a situation. Really, I was accepted in effect, by the new urban groups and urban voters and instead of being something of a maverick from a so-called north Florida rural area, the north Florida people looked on me as one of their better contacts with which

to help mitigate the problems that they foresaw coming. And I guess that in a way, I have always been this kind of a catalyst. I have related, I think, pretty well, to persons of a different area and background. I still do that. If I'm working on school legislation, I can go out in the Panhandle and make a good presentation and I can go down to Ft. Lauderdale and make a good presentation. And I think that I can get persons who might think that they've got some basic conflicts more reconciled to working together.

W.D.V.: You said that that little county group caucused? Did they . . . .

Turlington: Yeah, they used to caucus.

W.D.V.: Well, would they be equivalent in the house of the Pork Choppers in the senate? Are we talking about two different kinds of . . . .

Turlington: I would say yes, except that you've got to remember there's some advantage . . . when people want to talk about a small legislature, you can make it so small that it can be too cozy. And that was an argument that I had made. In my judgement, the senate of Florida today would be a better senate if it had fifty instead of forty members. I just don't like th thing, when we had thirty-eight senators, you know, you can get a small group there that can wag that whole thing and then you're in trouble. Whereas, when you've got a little larger number, a single individual has got a little more difficulty in communicating and in the house, the numbers are sufficiently great that by the time you have finished communicating, the first ones you spoke to don't quiet remember what it was that you had said. There is always in the house a good shot on a fresh approach and a fresh argument. You can line up . . . that's what I mean by cozy, you can get a very cozy arrangement in a small body than you can in a large body. The problem with a larger body is the unwieldyness and the realization that when it gets too large, a fellow that really wants to be signifcant in life, feeling that he's not a significant enough part in the

decision making process to attract and hold his attention and commitment. You've got those two things to balance off. I personally would favor a one house legislature with about a hundred members. I think that would cut the mustard better and answer more responsively to the public as to what you are actually doing than our present arrangement. But I'm not going to use my time and credits working very hard for that, because there is no way in the world to get that. The public won't accept that, we are conditioned in this country to a bi-cameral situation. We think that must have been ordained by the Lord, or at least some of the angels.

W.D.V.: It's our impression that there have been more significant changes in the legislature in this state than almost any other southern state in that eight years. Is that your impression too?

Turlington: The impression is what, now?

W.D.V.: That there have been more significant changes in the way the legislature operates, its procedures, the quality of the bills and so on that are passed, the policy making, than other state legislatures?

Turlington: I think that this would probably be a reasonable assumption.

W.D.V.: Well, why is that?

Turlington: Well, I think one, we had . . . that you have to recognize from the population standpoint, the enormity of change that we had. If you were electing a majority of the senate and a majority of the house from counties having less than fourteen percent of the people and you went to a one person, one vote . . . if you caught that ERA language in there . . . one person, one vote principle, you have made a very significant change, you know, just in the makeup, geographically, if nothing else. Now, when I became speaker, it was the greatest turnover of people that you have ever had. That we had out of



117 people that showed up there in that November, and then later, that got thrown out and we had to go to 119 and hold a whole other re-election, we had close to seventy-five to eighty new members. And I was sitting there without any . . . you know, the talent pool was rather empty, especially for experienced talent. And Lord, it was . . . you know, we had a Republican governor, it looked like the world was going to wipe out all the Democrats. Our guys were so darn timid and the Republicans were, that had newly arrived, they were all sufficient, and it was . . . frankly, to finally, after seventeen years in the legislature, to arrive and then to have that fall in on you when you once became speaker, you know, it was a rather traumatic experience. There was just simply an enormous change from an experienced standpoint . . . we needed some of the experience we had before. You had to start over and educate persons as to what these issues were. And if I tried to move legislation too fast, people thought that there was something real sneaky going on, particularly from the Republican end and it was extremely difficult to operate. And then, we had a governor, who I would have to say for him, that he had the capability of attracting more attention, and he was a very colorful person and for awhile, people believed that he really consistently understood what he was doing. I'm talking about Claude Kirk. I would have to say that Claude Kirk can be one of the most likeable personalities that you would ever meet, but he was brand new and he had made commitments in his campaign that were utterly impossible to carry out and there I was . . . you know, the teacher walkout and all that other stuff came during this era. It was a very interesting time, I might add.

J.B.?: What is the role of the capitol press, the fact that it is an aggressive press and . . . .

Turlin gton: We seem to have, and I think that one reason we probably

have it, is because of the way that our cities are laid out. I think that our press here is more aggressive and involved than the press of about any other state. And certainly more so than the Washington press.

J.B.: Did this provide impetus for a change at the time . . . an impetus for reform when the change came, that's my real question. You had the change in the makeup of the legislature . . . .

Turlington: The press was relatively impotent under the old arrangement. Except that they were always in there, causing a lot of attention. Let's take the Tampa Tribune, I would say . . . .

(end of Side A of tape)

Turlington: . . . nothing about the Tallahassee situation and the malapportionment and so-forth. The St. Petersburg paper, some. Those two particularly came to mind. The Times-Union was not particularly . . . the Times-Union went along with the system. The Miami Herald had some clout, but each one of those papers, here you are with the Miami Herald, you have one senator out of thirty-eight and you have three representatives out of ninety-five. So, when you would write an editorial, why, those four people always read it very closely and everybody else was immune to it. As a matter of fact, if you followed that line or approach, why you would be in trouble in your home district, because your opponent would just say, "Well, he's sold out to Miami." And the same way with Tampa. The press had great circulation where the people were, but the people didn't elect the legislature. So, the press indoctrinated a large number of people in the state, you know, with the idea that we weren't doing things too well, but . . . .

J.B.: So, they did in effect, create a climate of reform once the change in apportionment came about?

Turlington: I think that's true, that the climate for some reform and

change was basically there. But a lot of people who had been elected were so new that they didn't know exactly about how to go about it.

W.D.V.: So, the importance of the press really increases then about 1967?

Turlington: The press today basically has far more clout than it did in the other day. I think that the press, because the circulation of the press is where people are. And now today, Dade County, the Miami Herald within their county, you have twenty-two members of the 119 member house and you have nine members of a forty member senate. Either nine or eight, I'm not sure which it is, I think that it's nine. Now, when your hometown newspaper, you know, covers a story, you are going to be pretty interested, you know. Sure, it's got a whale of a lot of clout, far more clout. I can feel the difference on a tax bill that came up just this year, on this question about home state exemptions. The house voted to eliminate home state exemptions for all future residents and to double the home state exemption for everybody that was here. And I frankly thought that was the way that it was going to stick. The Miami Herald wrote an editorial over the weekend and came back the following Monday and there was a measurable shift in the voting situation. I'm satisfied that the paper had a good deal to do with that. The same way with any of the large metropolitan papers. They've got a lot of clout in legislative decisions today, far more than they used to have. Because their representatives are now the dominant factor in the legislature. Whereas before, they weren't. If I could show before where the Tribune or Herald was sponsoring something, you know, I would have a better shot at getting something . . . and if I was opposed to it, I would have a better shot at working that and showing what the Herald was trying to do, you know, and going contrary than the other

way around. That's not so today. The media is far more important, but it's essentially because of the fact that we were apportioned on a population basis. I think that accounts for a bigger part of the change. I think a person like myself, I've been here and I think that I did sit with both groups, and an ability to adjust to new situations is a forte . . . but I would have to say that the one person, one vote change is the biggest single factor. You would never have had . . . really, you would never have had me as a speaker without that. I could never have been elected under the old arrangement.

J.B.: How do you assess Askew as governor?

Turlington: Reubin Askew, I think, is one of the finest governors and one of the finest persons that has ever come down the pike. Reubin is a person that I would say is a committed individual. He's a tenacious individual. And when I speak about being tenacious, I'm speaking about . . . hell, I've watched him strengthen and . . . I withdraw that last word, that four letter word there . . . Reubin has great sincerity. He's intelligent, he'll battle, tenacity is a strength with him. You can be in a hassle, I've locked horns with him, for example, on appropriations bills and settlements and things of this sort, and he's tough. He hangs in there. And he just plain, he hates to lose on any contest and you've got to work pretty hard to either break even or prevail, let's put it that way. When I say that he's intelligent, I think that he's got a very . . . how is he from the standpoint of being a manager and that type of thing, I don't know how he is, except I know that he doesn't have what I would call a financial weakness. And this is an important consideration, for a person that has serious financial problems to be involved in government. This is just not good. Now Reubin, his personal

habits and appetites are such that he doesn't have to have a lot of personal wealth or otherwise. With an individual that feels like he's got to live up to his status can always be in trouble, because if there is a real weakness in politics, it is this question of how do you raise money? You know, to take care of campaigns and to take care of personal commitments, because you know, that's what I was mentioning there about a legislator that comes to Tallahassee without any kind of financial base . . . to take care of reasonable personal needs and he has to look somewhere else for it, it's not good. So, Reubin, since he doesn't have any alcoholic beverage expenses and that kind of . . . (laughter) . . . you know, expenses of one sort or another, he doesn't have any of what I would call financial conflicts, serious personal conflicts, financial conflicts, and I think that gives a person a degree of independence and insurance. To me, after being in government after twenty-four years, I recognize that as an essential part of a person's, in the long run, of being an effective policy maker or government official. I would just rate Reubin as being a very first rate person. I would trust him completely. I don't always agree with his judgement or conclusion on a particular policy, but I would never have any hesitation about having him be, to represent me or be my leader in virtually anything.

W.D.V.: Were you a supporter of the cabinet when you were in the legislature, are you now, the whole cabinet concept?

Turlington: Well, yes and no. I guess that I am, I think, kind of an independent thinker. I'll take each issue as it comes. I've never felt that I've been in any one pocket, and yet, I've been adaptable, I think, in working under any kind of structure. Now, to me, a lot of the arguments against the cabinet system before was really eliminated in our 1968

constitution. In 1968, we removed the restrictions on the governor . . . the governor before, you know, could not succeed himself and the budget commission of Florida was made up of the cabinet. And we had two year sessions of the legislature. It's only because of PR complaints that people have failed into account that the cabinet of today in Florida is not the same in terms of dominating state government that it was prior to 1968, the adoption of the 1968 constitution, for two very fundamental reasons. One, the governor can succeed himself. Whereas before, when a governor went in, his budget was already prepared and the legislature, you know . . . he went in in January and the legislature met in April and passed a two year budget. The guy is just sitting there getting his feet on the floor and by the time that the second session of the legislature comes along, he only has another twenty-one months to go and he's considered pretty much of a lame duck. Whereas the cabinet, you know, just traditionally went on and on and on. And a cabinet member in this regard was considered as a permanent friend and the governor always wound up with some weaknesses because if you run, usually you have to make commitments or promises or things that you can't really deliver on. So, I've never seen a governor that wasn't in trouble during the last two years of his term, up until the time of Reubin Askew. And Reubin didn't . . . the next aspect about it was that when you pass a budget for two years, the legislature not meeting annually, but you pass a budget for two years, you have to have somebody that can adjust those things while you are out of session, and that always fell the lot of the budget commission or the cabinet. So, the cabinet had far more input in terms of the expenditure of funds than the cabinet has today. Today, if you really want to know who came out ahead in the 1968 constitution, it was the legislature. The legislature now meets annually. If you tell somebody that you are going to need a little flexibility

and the authority to adjust some of the appropriations, the legislature shakes its head and says, "You know, we'll be back in just a few months." The cabinet no longer has the budgetary authority that it used to have. Yet, the impression . . . you know, we speak of Florida's "unique cabinet system", I don't see it as being all that unique.

W.D.V.: Anymore.

Turlington: When you say anymore, I'm not sure how unique it was then. Listen, you are from North Carolina. Just how much clout does your governor have? He can't even veto a bill, can he? And yet, people preach and preach about how weak the office of Governor of Florida is. And then we just sit here in Florida and assume that the governors in all the other states have really got a whale of a lot of power. When you get down and examine the government in various states, you found out that a lot of that is just reputation and . . . .

W.D.V.: Well, is the difference being on the inside of the cabinet now, than it was when you were in the legislature looking at it?

Turlington: Of course it's different. The biggest thing that you have to get used to is . . . before, as a member of the legislature, and having the experience that I had had, I could work the timing sequence far better. You know, a legislature, especially a bi-cameral operation, is just one gauntlet after another. If you know how to work within that framework, then you can work many miracles. You have only to win the last battle, you don't have to win the first one and when you . . . like, I would appear before a committee and I would say a few words and time was limited or they were going back into session, instead of my . . . in the old days, if I sat in a committee meeting and things weren't going to suit me, I might go ahead and not comment or I might . . . I always knew I was going to be there whenever I



chose to be there. You don't have those options now. And another thing that you run into, there are two houses. Something is going wrong in the senate or something is going wrong in the house and you are torn in both directions and then you have got something to tend to in your own shop. It's tougher to keep up with things, even though the scope of interests is somewhat narrowed down. But look at what my situation was before. I was chairman of a committee that usually had, at least one time or another, control of virtually every important fiscal piece of legislation. I was a member of the rules committee, always relating well both to the chairman and the secretary, those are . . . and I was close to the speaker, close to good friendships in the senate, that you could put your oar in any place you wanted. Well, I still have those connections and those friendships, but . . . and also, on the floor, your capability of offering amendments or putting in little arguments at appropriate times, you could do as a legislator. Now, I don't have that freedom. And the types of debating techniques that I could use in the legislature on the floor, which I thoroughly enjoyed, when I use those now, it's not the same. If I'm before a legislative committee and I use the same argument techniques with the members that I used to use with the members, I'd be out in right field. Because, you know, it's just a different kind of a ballgame. But, it's also . . . after twenty-four years, I think that I was ready to get on to some new approaches and new activities. So, I'm frankly thoroughly enjoying what I'm doing. And I feel very challenged by it and I think that change is something that has kind of pumped up my enthusiasm you know, and renewed my interests, although I will have to say that I enjoyed every bit of my legislative service that I ever had. How I'll feel after a few more years of executive service, assuming that

I'm elected to the office, may be another matter. But right now, I'm having a very challenging and enjoyable time. I say that I'm enjoying what I'm doing and I think that I'm thriving on it. I would love to still be in the legislature and do what I'm doing now, too. I only regret that we didn't put that possibility in the constitution for me. There is, of course, a difference . . . and it's another thing, full time . . . if I'm elected to this office for a four year term, I will no longer have the business commitments that I have had in the past. Whereas in the past, I have always had to have my business and my legislative activity. With this, I will expect to wind up my so called working days and I will say that I will expect to run again in 1978 and then we'll have to worry about 1982 later on, but I would expect that I would not seek the office for more than one renewal. This department is one that always had an appeal to me, a good education background, and the city of Gainesville, you know, is an education center. It's just been the type of thing that has always been a strong commitment on my part and we've just got opportunities there to prove where we stirred up the pot and got a lot of things accomplished that I think we can do, and so my juices are charged up and flowing and I'm looking forward to some very interesting times ahead.

J.B.: From a theoretical concept, you think that the cabinet system, which results in, to some extent, in a diffusion of executive power, is in the public interest?

Turlington: I view it this way, I think that we've got . . . that there is much to be said for a collegiate type of situation, although it is not as diffused a power as a lot of people like to make it. But, you know, in our system of government in America, it defies these arguments that are typically

made, and if you've talked to Senator Pettigrew, who is a good friend of mine . . . Dick is one of the greatest organizational persons that I know. Dick will speak from a management concept and he will talk about how you have to give someone authority with responsibility. Now, let's look and see how it really is. We divide our government in America into three things: legislative, executive and judicial. And then we put . . . we call it checks and balances and it really doesn't matter whether you go to North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, or you name it, you do not have authority with responsibility. Here's your legislature over here appropriating and passing the laws and so forth, here's the executive in which you've got certain constraints upon you, and your judicial . . . we are already divided in terms of what our authority is. It's not like the guy that described a private corporation in which you say that you've got to give somebody responsibility with the authority and basically you can, or you can delegate. You cannot do that in an American system of government. And I would say that what we really have is a system of checks and balances and that really means that there ain't nobody in charge of nothing for sure in America. That what you have to do in order to be effective in America and to be effective in North Carolina and to be effective in Florida, is that you must do it basically through leadership. Because you haven't got the authority to do something in effect without the concurrence of somebody else period. I can sit here and I can recognize it as a member of the executive branch and realizing that if I don't have legislative support, you know, I'm not able to move in many ways. You may sit there and think that you sure have responsibility and authority, but you don't. We have checks and balances, but you're not in charge. No one is in charge, we are able to balance and check each other for that reason. Now, a governor . . . he has again, I call it through leadership, commitment, call it these things as nebulous as you choose, those

are the things that help to bring about change. But our authority is so diffused in government in America with our system of separation of powers and checks and balances that nobody can fit into the organizational pattern that some of them say should be. Now, there is some . . . in terms of a collegial operation like a cabinet, that's a visible thing in which a lot of things can be conducted, I think, in the open. I would say that there is a fair amount to commend it. But can you tell me where you can put your finger of responsibility on what happens in some other state that does not have the so-called cabinet system? I don't think that you can do that any more than you can do it in Florida. I said earlier that I was in favor of a unicameral legislature. Did it ever occur to you that you really, with a bicameral legislature, don't have any real way to fixing responsibility for what goes on in the legislature anyhow? I told someone that if you know how to operate in a bicameral structure, well, you really won't have every much that will ever be pinned on you for sure. And I think that's really so. Have you ever written a Congressman and have him explain how he agreed with you but he just really wasn't able to do so-and-so because of . . . well, look at the phony amendments that are passed in the Senate of the United States that are known will never become involved in the law but it is because the House has already passed the bill, but they know that it's going to go to conference so you can throw in any kind of wild idea that you want to and answer your mail and be perfectly safe as far as not really jeopardizing the policies of the country. A member of the House can always say that under the rule, we were prohibited from offering an amendment, you know. You've got a tough time fixing responsibility at the legislative end and you've got a tough time . . . Nixon blames that we've

got separation of powers and no one assumes responsibility for anything that is adverse and we all claim credit for everything that is good. And that is true whether you have a cabinet system or don't have a cabinet system. I think our cabinet, really, I suppose that there is a lot of authority in the cabinet, but I think that there really are some definite advantages to it. To me, the world will work all right either way. I think that it's not all that crucial. But these arguments that are made that you can't fix responsibility, therefore we have to go back to so-and-so, I'd like to know what state model it is that they'd like to pattern us after and then compare it. Because, no one has got really the responsibility that they talk about in any of the states or in the United States Government either. And the public can't hold anyone responsible because you can always point out as President, that the Congress prohibited him from doing this or the Congress explains that somebody prohibits them from doing that. Who is responsible? My answer is that all of our authority in American government is diffused and we just as well recognize this. I have, as Commissioner of Education, my greatest opportunity for effective change is that people think I'm in charge. Now, you really aren't. I told somebody, "If you just plain give me the appearance of being in charge, I'll be in charge." But if you look about at who all you've got to have with you, you know, to affect something, you realize that you are only in charge if others permit you to be in charge.

J.B.: Is there anybody in state government in Florida who is really in a position to exercise a great deal of power or who remains almost invisible to the public? In many states, we find that this is true. In South Carolina, for example, the state auditor is a very, very influential figure.

Turlington: Well, that really depends a lot on the talent. Remember, I said Gilchressie was in here? Gilchressie exercises, I think, an enormous . . . .

J.B.: Now, who is he?

Turlington: Well, the fellow that I told you . . . a budget guy. Joe exercises authority not by virtue of his office, really, but by virtue of his skill, the way he puts in the hours. While we were here talking, you know, why, Joe was here. Joe gets in his licks and Joe knows people in the house and senate and he talks around and they trust Joe and Joe knows what he's doing. If you know what you are doing and can communicate, and you'll put in long hours, well, you'll be effective. And if you don't know what is going on . . . the greatest power you can have, you know, is knowledge, and the power to communicate that knowledge. And if you've got that, you can score and if you haven't got that, then you don't know where the ball game is being played anyhow. Sure, there are people that are . . . well, the effectiveness of this office right here, for example, is more dependent upon who holds it. The office of governor can be a weak office or a strong office, depending upon who holds it. The office of education commissioner. I can be a very effective force if I am confident and committed and work at it or I can be nothing if I really don't understand what is going on and the fireflies pass me by in the dark. I'd say that you will find that in almost anything. Now, an auditor, sure, he's got some . . . anytime that you can look at people's records and so forth, you can exercise some influence, and a lot of times, that may be negative in character, you see.

J.B.: Is there a cabinet secretary?

Turlington: No, I gather that the way we operate . . . I have two people who are so-called cabinet affairs aides and they bring by the agenda

and they meet the Thursday and Friday of the week before cabinet meetings and go over these agendas and apparently argue with each other about what ought to be done and then they come in a brief the members. Well, as a new person on the cabinet, I don't feel as impressed with all that as some. Years ago, or not so long ago, when I was chairman of appropriations, I used to come to every cabinet meeting. So, I'm used to going to cabinet meetings. I'm not impressed any more that each decision is all that great. It's the same distinction that I think I have now about voting on bills that I had when I first went to the legislature in 1950. I still remember the thrill that I had when I waved my hand indicating "pass the bill." And it was a local bill and they said on the motion, "Mr. Chairman can pass the bill." And I just thrilled to the idea that there was there was legislation that was going into the laws of Florida that Ralph Turlington, you know, had passed. And then you get to be, no doubt, like a teller gets to be handling cash. He might be real impressed the first day that he's in the teller's cage counting out the green money, but after a while, it becomes just like any commodity. The same way, I think about a cabinet issue. They are the same types of issues and I am used to dealing with those issues and realizing that you can't be right everytime, but you have to do your best. I don't think overall, with a meeting or an aide coming in and giving recommendations, you know, on a particular point. I'm somewhat familiar with those issues to begin with and so it didn't have the newness to me that it might perhaps have had to someone else. I could also say that a lot of it is routine. A big weakness, I think, of the cabinet is actually being up there and if the meeting is a long one, having to actually be alert the entire time. In the legislature, you know, if the day drones on, you can look at the calendar and see what's coming up and kind of wander off. You know, you



might be around or whatnot, but you don't have to give the appearance of sitting there paying attention. In the cabinet, you are sitting there and you are in front of everybody and if you've got a four hour session and you could really care less about what is going on, you can't show that without having an adverse public relations problem. In the legislature, you can be disinterested in an afternoon's activities and not have anybody particularly upset about it. I guess that's one of the differences. If I were to say what I'd do about a cabinet system, by and large, I'd say that I think you've got a fair amount to commend it. But again, I'd go back to the problem of how do you select people to be on anything. Campaign funding and things of this sort is a real problem, I'm sure, in terms of any type of governmental activity. You sure do hope that you can have people to serve you that can handle or be personally responsible about how their own finances are. I think that's a real problem in our form of government and no doubt always will be.

(end of interview)