

Interview of H. Edward (Ed) Flentje by Rex Buchanan, June 14, 2019
Kansas Oral History Project Inc.

Rex Buchanan: I'm Rex Buchanan, the former director of the Kansas Geological Survey. Today is June 14, 2019, and we're at the Kansas Historical Society in Topeka. As part of the Kansas Oral History project's Reflections on Water series, I'm interviewing Dr. Ed Flentje who has played a number of roles in state government. He is currently professor emeritus at the Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs at Wichita State University, where he served as director from 1999 to 2008.

From 1975 to '79, Ed was a member of Governor Robert Bennett's cabinet and director of State Planning and Research. During his tenure as director of State Planning, Ed served on the governor's task force on water resources, which met for two years and published its interim report in December of 1977.

In 1986, Ed was named coordinator of the Special Commission of a Public Agenda for Kansas. That commission was created by the Kansas legislature to identify policy choices on issues critical to the state. Dr. Flentje edited the commission's final report, published in 1986.

He played three roles in the administration under Governor Mike Hayden—chair of the transition team for the governor elect, secretary of administration, and coordinator of policy spanning the period from 1986 to '88. In addition to his academic pursuits in recent years, Ed has also served in the local government policy arena for the City of Wichita and other cities and counties in Kansas in a variety of roles. He also conducts interviews of former legislators for the Kansas Oral History Project.

So good morning, Ed, and thank you for agreeing to do this. It's a little intimidating for me to interview somebody who interviews other people. Try not to be too judgmental here as we go through this. I will say I appreciate you doing this because, as we begin the preparation for this series of interviews, your name kept surfacing over and over again.

Ed Flentje: Really?

RB: It was almost as if you scratch deep enough, eventually, you always come to Ed Flentje. That's why I appreciate you doing it. I also appreciate you being one of the first people that we're doing in this process.

EF: Great. It sounds like a good project.

RB: I obviously—water I think is the critical natural resource issue facing the state, and that interface between water and natural resource issues and policy and politics has always been pretty intriguing to me. That's sort of where you come in. Talk a little bit about how you got involved with Bob Bennett and that first task force that I just described.

EF: Governor Bennett hired me to head up, as you indicated, the division of State Planning and Research. I followed Herman Lujan, who was a KU professor who essentially started it under the Bob Docking administration. Herman brought kind of a planning orientation to it that I think was productive, but I had a very different concept of that unit, and that was what I would describe as a policy orientation, policy in the sense of being in tune with the governor's policy agenda, but also helping the governor develop an agenda. I was able to keep some of the folks that Herman Lujan had hired, really a fairly young crew, for the time I was with Bennett, which was pretty much three-and-a-half years. I came in in the summer of his first year as governor.

We were engaged in almost anything that the governor was involved in from a policy standpoint. Bennett had a problem-solving kind of orientation. He was an erudite attorney. In terms of the intense politics and partisanship today, it was a different era. If there was an issue like water, he was very comfortable with a task-force approach. So, we in this policy unit that I headed helped him conceptualize problem areas and analyze them, engage agency heads, engage political interests to some extent, and lay out options.

I don't have a count, but we were involved in a number of task forces like this, but I have to admit on water, I was a blank slate. I didn't bring any expertise to that subject at all, other than a general policy analysis frame of reference. The water task force was a complete education for me, gaining understanding for the first time of water policy and its complications and water politics.

The task force had some real brain power in KU Professor Bob Smith, particularly. As I recall, he understood the groundwater aspect particularly well, and obviously there were others who did. I happened to have on my staff a young man who was in his twenties, Chris McKenzie, who later headed up the League of Municipalities in Kansas and then went to California and headed up their League of Municipalities.

The real work, the real thinking, I was just down there getting educated, the real thinking that was going on, the work that ultimately got into the task force had a lot to do with Bob Smith and, in my view, Chris McKenzie, literally a young analyst, a really sharp young man.

RB: So it was somebody who was sort of outside the water world that suddenly got an exposure to it at in retrospect a pretty critical time in the 70s when a lot of the legislation that still is in force today was coming along, a really active time. How did the water world strike you? What impressions did you come away with? I'm trying to think of a way to phrase this, but those of us who work in that world are used to the way that world works. Somebody that comes into it from the outside at such a critical time must—you must have impressions based on that.

EF: As I said, I was a blank slate. So, I was soaking up a good bit, and I came to it from a governmental perspective. Of course, I was just overwhelmed by the number of entities -- state agencies, university-based entities -- that were engaged in one piece or another of water resources. I also come from the field of public administration. Every instinct of mine was there had to be coordination. There had to be maybe some consolidation. Every one of these jurisdictions resisted any kind of—not any kind, but there was just resistance to protect their bailiwicks.

At the time I didn't fully understand the array of political interests tied to the existing jurisdictions. If there was one thing that I particularly remember, that was it. In retrospect, this huge authority that related to water rights was lodged in a pretty archaic Department of Agriculture, Board of Agriculture at the time. In fact, there is a post-audit report about this time. We were doing water rights on 3 x 5 note cards, which was our technology at the time. I guess that's what struck me. This was all new to me. It was an appreciation of how critical water was, is to the state.

RB: If you were going to invent a method of water regulation today, it's pretty high that you wouldn't invent one that looks like the one we have. Isn't that a fair statement?

EF: That's a pretty big question. I actually, when you asked to do this interview, I got in touch with Chris McKenzie. You go back forty years. I mean, we're talking about forty years ago when this task force in the Bennett years took place. The groundwater management districts were fairly new.

RB: Brand new.

EF: A new creation. Chris McKenzie's now in California, and he said they didn't do groundwater management districts until five years ago.

RB: Yes.

EF: Would we do it the same way? I have no idea. The one thing that I learned, the powerful force on water is what I call a "First Come, First Serve" ethic. I mean, that has driven a good bit of water policy.

RB: "First in Time, First in Right."

EF: "First in Time, First in Right." I call it "First Come, First Serve." Any kind of reform or regulation is going to come right up against that. That's part of the political culture of our state, which I'd call an individualistic kind of political culture.

RB: If you were to look at that array of agencies that you talked about, I always thought in effect, it's sort of a decentralized form of water control. The bulk of legal control resides with division of water resources and ag [the Kansas Department of Agriculture], obviously, but everything else is spread out over a number of agencies. I always thought that that was deliberate. I thought that's what the legislature wanted to do, didn't want a single or even one or two, all powerful entities. Am I right? You have to believe at the end of the day that we got the regulatory scheme that the legislature wanted out of this.

EF: That's what I would characterize as the result of an individualistic approach. Over time, when we ran into a problem, we created some entity to deal with that. Whether that was recreation, water-related recreation. You have an entity working on that -- whether it's water from municipalities or water for agriculture. Do we like it the way it is? Yes, I think we do, but that allows the expression of a lot of individual and somewhat narrow interests. The idea of consolidating all of that, it's probably beyond imagination.

RB: You mention coordination and consolidation. Obviously, there's been a lot of coordination with the Water Authority in various other ways. There's been a lot of coordination but very little, if any, consolidation over time.

EF: Right. I mean, look at the structure of the Water Board. I don't know how many members are on that now, but it's a consolidation of interests into one board. In some ways, that makes it less than effective as an entity.

RB: And we'll come back to sort of efficacy here at the end because that's one of the primary roles of these conversations. But before we do that, let's track a little bit more then over time. Were you involved in the Carlin administration at all in this process?

EF: Not the Carlin administration. I think Joe Harkins and I visited probably a few times during that process, but I think obviously what John Carlin did was bring Joe Harkins into the picture. I had become acquainted with Joe during the Bennett administration, but he was in the health arena at that time, and I don't remember his being involved in the water task force. He may have been. Back to your question now, it kind of seemed to me like Joe was running that pretty much independently.

RB: One of the reasons I asked is because Carlin did do an executive reorganization order that put all of the water agencies in effect in one house.

EF: Yes.

RB: It basically got overruled by the legislature almost as a matter of course. It was at least in theory an attempt at consolidation and to deal with this issue.

EF: In doing a little prep for this interview, I went back to the report of the Water Task Force. The preliminary work on that was really laid out in my view at that time. In fact, that report was put together in '77, and it was the basis for the governor's legislative message in '78. I was amazed at how the governor's '78 message essentially laid the groundwork for what Joe Harkins ultimately got assigned to do in the water planning area. I had not remembered that particularly well.

So why some folks would say I have fingerprints on it, as a policy advisor to Governor Bennett, we were making sure that that work, analytical work that went on in the Water Task Force got into the policy agenda of the governor. I had not appreciated until I went back in the last week or so and saw how that laid out, kind of a framework.

I can't remember when Joe actually got appointed to the Water Board.

RB: We talked about that, and I'd have to go back and look at my notes. The early 80s, I think, but I'd have to go back and see.

EF: But he worked that thoroughly through an extensive process.

RB: Let me ask you this. My memory of Bob Bennett is not of him as having water at the top of his list of legislative priorities. Yet obviously a lot was going on in the water world at that time. Did he come at this sort of the same way that you did, as something that water was another issue to deal with? Was there more genuine interest in the topic than I'm aware of?

EF: I think he was probably very much like me. He had no history, to my knowledge.

RB: That's what I thought.

EF: No history of water in the legislature. Of course, he'd been in the legislature, president of the Senate. In general, agriculture was a blank slate for him. But he kept well attuned to folks in the agricultural sector. I was going back and looking at the Water Task Force and trying to remember how exactly it got put together. I am fairly sure that we drafted the governor's executive order, creating the task force. When I say "we," the staff of Planning and Research. But the exact initiative, and I think I would say that Shelby Smith, the lieutenant governor, somehow had figured out this was important. I think Shelby was heavily involved in identifying who should be on that task force. We weren't involved in that that I can remember. For Bennett, it was okay. This was a problem, an issue, let's look at it, and see what we can do with it.

RB: I can remember, we were talking about Bill Hambleton earlier. I know Bill talked about the role of Shelby Smith in that process quite a bit, but it does sound to me as you describe this as if here's another issue that needs to be dealt with for Bob Bennett. It's one of several, and this is his way of dealing with it fairly effective, it sounds like.

EF: As folks who knew Bennett, he mastered a great deal of public policy, but this was not a subject of his mastery, not that he couldn't. I don't think he had been engaged in it.

RB: Exactly.

EF: Obviously coming from Johnson County, although they had water issues, but not the kind that you had on the state level.

RB: Right.

EF: I don't remember the governor saying to me one word about water, but giving us a free hand to look at it, sort it out, understand it, and then take to him policy recommendations that ultimately found the way into his legislative message.

RB: That almost sounds like the way it should work.

EF: Well, we tried.

RB: Governors shouldn't have to have a mastery of every topic. There's no way they could. The important things are to identify what the issues are and then delegate responsibility for coming up with solutions. In some respects, that sounds like a model.

EF: It sounds archaic in today's politics, but it was what we were doing—problem solving, development of policy alternatives, agenda setting. As I look back at that task force, it seems to me what the task force did was elevate the issue in a broad sense. Much like it was educating me, I think it helped educate the public to some extent, not that we necessarily viewed it that way. We viewed it more as “Here's an issue. Let's look at it and see where we go with it.”

RB: Let's move from Bob Bennett to a very different governor, Mike Hayden, in terms of water. Talk about that a little bit.

EF: He mastered water issues. Mike Hayden comes to the table with understanding, appreciation, insight. He didn't need any policy analysts to advise him really. It's a different time, too. All the work of Joe Harkins and the Carlin administration of getting issues identified, getting alternatives developed, and avoiding finance at every angle. It kind of lays on Mike Hayden's desk, figuring out the next step, which is really finance.

I think Joe Harkins's effort was criticized for avoiding finance. In retrospect, maybe that needed to happen independently of finance because once you start talking about funding it, you're getting into some tough political arenas. For Mike, it was "How do we get this done?" It wasn't "Let's analyze it and consider it." It's "How do we get it done?"

My involvement there was pretty minimal. I mean, Mike had brought John Strickler in. I can't remember all who was involved. Obviously, there were legislative interests as well. The interim committees were developing all that. But Mike was willing to put the political muscle to it and make something happen. The legislature, in my view, would have been quite happy to let that slide in the '89 session because a lot of happened in that 1989 session—a highway program and prison issues solved. It would have been easy to say, "We've done enough. Let's not take on anything else." I think Mike, with John Carlin's help, interestingly, just kept pushing. It just squeaked by in getting the votes necessary to get it done.

RB: In previous interviews, both Joe Harkins and John Strickler have talked about involving Carlin. Let me ask you this then. Obviously, Bob Bennett is a Johnson County attorney. Mike Hayden is a Republican from Atwood. Would a Democratic governor had been able to get done what Mike Hayden got done? Was this just basically a bipartisan effort at that point?

EF: I don't know. I know Joe and Carlin avoided the finance issue very, very well. Finance is always the tough piece, particularly in an arena like water where so many diverse interests are involved, and agriculture is such a big piece of it. I don't know. Could Sebelius have gotten it done if it had been hanging around that long? I don't know.

I think it took—it was such a high priority for Mike. It was his nature. It was why he came to the legislature, not necessarily for water plan funding, but just environmental natural resource issues. That was his nature.

RB: And still is, for that matter.

EF: And still is.

RB: But maybe, as opposed to Democratic versus Republican, coming from western Kansas, he brings that credibility to the table that somebody from eastern Kansas doesn't. The big concerns about consolidation and finance are going to be out there in the ag community, particularly the irrigation community. He comes from that part of the world.

EF: And indeed, the final resolution was a fragile agreement, as we know. It hung together for the most part until the Brownback tax cuts.

RB: Yes. That relationship worked okay until over time the legislature began to sweep money more and more out of Water Plan funding, which is sort of where we stand today. Joe sort of described that as an arc that began in the 70s, maybe even peaked in the 70s, continued for a while through the 80s, and then you see that arc go in the other direction, which I think is sort of what you just described.

From the perspective—there are three or four, looking back now, questions I want to ask you, as you said here today, and you've gone back and looked at what the task force recommended. There were all of those other things going on in the 70s with Groundwater Management District and everything else. How have we done? Did that all work out the way you thought it was going to?

EF: The last few years have shown that the funding package can be blown apart. I haven't followed in detail how it's hung together, but I know—I put together a book on the Mike Hayden administration, papers of the governor, in I think 2002, and I just made an estimate of how many dollars the funding plan had deployed over that time period. That would have been just twelve years or so. It's 200 million

dollars or something like that. That's huge, and that continued until 2012 or so. That hung together. Probably another governor is going to have to try to put it back together.

RB: In terms of—let's look outside—it affects still pretty much the machinery, the groundwork, the regulatory machinery that was present, created in the seventies through the early eighties. It's still pretty much the same one that was in place today that has been coordinated but not consolidated as we talked about. How has that worked from your perspective? Have we dealt with the problems that we were supposed to deal with, identified in the 70s?

EF: I've not followed all of what's been done in great detail as relates to the administrative machinery. There's been some consolidation but pretty modest. The Water Board, how many members now? Twenty-five, thirty members. Every member brings to the table a particular interest. If you've got a good executive director moving that entity forward, identifying issues, then a lot depends on the governor and who's executive director there.

The one thing, I don't know if Joe mentioned this, but I said I didn't have much to do during the Hayden administration with water because you had a governor that knew what to do. There became an issue of whether Joe should continue. His term was up. I worked with Joe. I knew Joe. I had a high regard for Joe, but I don't know again if he told you this, I pretty much insisted that that appointment be signed off on by the governor. That change was made as a part, I think, in that first Mike Hayden administration. That came from my public administration background. If you really are going to make things happen, you have to have an executive of the Water Authority in tune with the governor and the governor's priorities. Now you might say, "Well, that worked during Hayden and Sebelius and so forth, Carlin, but does it work now?" I think it should. I assume that's still the case.

RB: I was just sitting here thinking about that because Joe would basically say that you're never going to get anything done if the governor doesn't throw their weight behind it, and Hayden in support of Water Plan funding is obviously an example of that. But then he talks about the arc, as you go through Bill Graves, there are just other priorities.

Then we get Sam Brownback as governor who, as a former Secretary of Ag, and for whom water should be a big deal, but there was a task force formed and a lot of meetings, but it didn't result in any—it avoided this financial thing that you keep going back to.

EF: Brownback undid the financing in order to get tax cuts. I was disappointed that he was not criticized more for that, and maybe he was. I just didn't see it. It kind of reminded me of talk. He did a lot of talk about water and no action. It was just a huge disappointment. Of course, that's my biased view of it. He just let it languish. So, what happens, First Come, First Serve. There's got to be an active gubernatorial interest to make things happen.

RB: That task force talked about a lot of issues, and Brownback identified some things like “Use it or lose it,” some nibbling around the edges kind of things, but in terms of taking on the financial issue the way the Hayden administration did, there was an appointment of a blue-ribbon task force to deal with the financial part of it, but by the time that came along, the state was in such terrible financial straits that it was pretty clear that there wasn't going to be an additional tax passed.

EF: I go back to my original assignment with Governor Bennett. I had a conversation with the governor when I accepted the appointment, and I can't say I insisted, but the governor and I had an understanding that planning would be involved in the most important plan that's put together, and that's the budget. I had a conversation with Jim Bibb then, who was the budget director at that time and indicated that my intention was that our staff would be involved in the most important plan put together, and that's the budget. He kind of went, “Harrumph, harrumph!” but we were.

My point is this: When you have somebody talking about a fifty-year plan, as Brownback did, crap. I mean, really. What about next year's budget? It's so basic. Of course, that's what Mike Hayden brought to the table, this understanding of the budget and how you get that done, and not fifty years from now, but next year, getting started.

RB: The budget is basically sort of that vote with your feet kind of thing. If you really want to know what I'm concerned about, look and see where I put money. It's easy for me to sit here and say that I'm worried about something, but if I don't put any money towards it, it pretty much makes my priorities clear.

EF: Or more importantly, after fifteen years of consistent water plan funding, you undo that financing plan, it tells everything about your priorities.

RB: Where the priorities are. You touched on partisanship a little bit earlier in terms of Bob Bennett and to bring both sides or both parties together. Is that some of what's going on by the Brownback administration as well, that the partisanship has infected the Kansas legislature to the point that it can't deal with issues like that?

EF: It's priorities. Brownback became convinced that tax cuts—

RB: Tax cuts are more important than anything else.

EF: And part of those cuts came out of the Water Plan financing.

RB: Water may be important to you, but it's just not as important as the overriding feature here.

EF: And we'll talk about it. I mean a lot of talk and action on the periphery, encouragement to groundwater management districts, terrific.

RB: That brings us to today. Is water a bigger issue today? Are we too early in the next administration to know?

EF: I don't know. I don't have any idea about that. General Funds are tight. The General Fund was a piece of that financing, but there's so many other related, not necessarily related to water, but finance issues. I don't know.

RB: Part of that is still a function of dealing with budget cuts that came about in the Brownback administration that then created priorities like jails and social programs that jump up to the top of the heap.

EF: When you've got a crisis in prisons or child welfare, it's hard to say funding the Water Plan takes top priority.

RB: And that's part of the problem here, it feels like. If you've lost all your correction officers, you have to do something. You have to do it today. When you've got a slow decline in the Ogallala Aquifer, you've got a problem, but it's real easy to say, "We'll deal with that after we deal with these more pressing immediate needs."

EF: And in a sense, that is what Mike Hayden faced down in the legislature at the time. They said, "You need to protect this piece" because there will always be other priorities—education and universities and on and on.

RB: But what he was sort of successful at was dealing with—this may sound like a little bit of a leap to you, but if you believe climate change is an issue, it's a similar sort of thing. You may not have to deal with it today, but it is a long-term issue that thirty, forty, fifty years down the road can be a very big deal. Hayden successfully dealt with one of those very long-term issues in the near term. Politically that's got to be really hard when, as far as I can tell, most politicians worry about the next election cycle.

EF: Well, it was something to see Mike put his political will on it, but also John Carlin, and make it a bipartisan issue. That's how important things get done in Kansas mostly.

RB: So, if it's important enough, it gets dealt with that way.

EF: If it's a priority, a gubernatorial priority, it does, yes.

RB: That basically came down to what Joe was saying, which is you can trace this arc according to who cares and who doesn't care deeply about water issues. I have one last question. It's a little bit off the topic. Well, it's not off the topic, but through this process, the primary responsibility for particularly groundwater regulation gets lodged in today's Department of Ag[riculture], the Board of Ag[riculture] before. Is that where it belongs?

EF: Certainly, you can argue that it ought to be independent of agriculture, since ag is a huge political interest related to it. And you can argue the other way, since ag is dominant. Certainly, urban folks would say it ought to be independent. I think with bringing the Department of Agriculture into the Cabinet and having the secretary serve the pleasure of the governor, that has for the most part put that issue to rest. We've had a series of pretty capable folks heading water regulation in [the Department of] Ag[riculture] in recent years, and I think that's made a difference. Now if somehow [the Kansas Department of] Ag[riculture] started acting in a way detrimental to other water uses, I think that issue would emerge quickly, but the quality of leadership at that level, and I'm talking about the last twenty years, has assured that that's not been a huge issue.

RB: What you're talking about is that switch from the Board of Ag[riculture] to the Department of Ag[riculture], when it became an appointed position as opposed to—

EF: Right. When [the Kansas Board of] Ag[riculture] was an entity created somewhere in the 1800s run by essentially a board elected by farm interests—

RB: Though as you watch Kansas become a more urbanized state over time, is that where the big, big proportion of population is in a few counties, is that control of water and the Department of Ag[riculture] something that will still make sense?

EF: I'd just repeat what I've said. It seems to me that municipal interests in water are pretty reasonably dealt with. I just don't see that being triggered. Now, if that changes, I think that they would get triggered.

RB: If water supplies became short enough that it became an either/or kind of thing.

EF: But when you get right down to it, municipal suppliers can purchase water rights pretty simply. The economics of municipal water simply outweigh agricultural water use—

RB: That's what I've always told people. If your water bill doubled tomorrow so they could go buy water rights, what would you do? You'd pay your water bill because you don't have any choice, and the city has always had that muscle behind it.

EF: One thing that helped me, the experience at the state level in the 70s helped me appreciate, when I moved to Wichita State University, the significance of water, and Wichita has a great water story of itself.

RB: There's a couple of questions I want to finish up with, and that was actually one of them. The perspective of water from Wichita, I've learned over the years, is very different than it is in northeastern Kansas, and it's very different than it is in western Kansas. You've got that Wichita experience. It's very different. It's an urban area that has long been concerned about where it's going to get its water.

EF: Water is critical, and Wichita has taken steps with legislative support over the years to assure a long-term water supply. They've been creative politically over the years, and I've been involved in peripheral ways in some of the things they've done. For example, one thing that always was a thorn for agricultural interests was green laws in Wichita. We did things like use pricing of water. The more you use, the more you pay. A rate structure that had those that use a lot of — those urban dwellers that use a lot of water pay higher rates.

RB: I think a lot of the rest of the state has always sort of, the water community has always sort of watched Wichita with sort of a wary eye because of concerns of what Wichita might do because it could afford to, to go to other places to look for water.

EF: Wichita had a plan for pipeline to somewhere up north and was blocked by legislative action.

RB: From [Lake] Milford, [near] Junction City.

EF: Wichita has not been completely free. There have been some savvy water directors. Water's a real asset. Wichita is in the top fifty cities, that kind of sounds surprising, in the US, and it's an efficient water supply, and I think for the most part quite well run.

RB: Wichita has always made sure that lack of water was not going to be an impediment in terms of business recruitment. Let me ask you one final question here. How did you come to Bob Bennett's

attention? How did that happen? The average person doesn't just become, especially that early in your career.

EF: Well, I'd been in Washington a couple of years with Senator Pearson of Kansas. I'd been in higher education in Illinois. My wife and I at the time were wanting to get back west. After [Robert] Bennett became governor, I learned of that opening and had a couple folks speak up on my behalf. I didn't know him. We didn't know each other. I, of course, became a great fan of his. We kept in touch pretty closely until he passed away.

RB: It is pretty striking though. Both you and Joe [Harkins] come at this from a planning perspective. He doesn't go out and look for a subject matter expert. He looks for a planning expert.

EF: You'll have to ask Bennett. No, we meshed. He wanted—I've written about this. He had a lawyer's approach. I kind of described it as a judicial approach. He wanted to hear all sides. In other words, on a case, let's hear from all of those that have a stake in this and then resolve it. That was particularly with respect to Jim Bibb [Director of the Budget]. Jim Bibb was reputed to have run state government during the Docking years, and [Governor Bennett] wanted an independent—a voice independent of Bibb. That's what we provided him. He appreciated and sought Bibb's counsel as well, but he didn't want Bibb to be running state government, and interestingly, just a little background on Bennett, Bennett came up in the legislature through the tax side, mastered the tax side. He had that well in hand, not through the budget side, say, like Mike Hayden. We spent more damn time on the budget during the Bennett years than you can imagine, hours and hours going through the state budget, mainly in a sense to educate the governor, but to educate everybody about it. He wanted to be an independent force on the budget as well as understanding the taxes.

RB: That almost comes back a little bit to what we talked about in terms of the budget as an expression of priority, and you can't express those priorities if you don't know the intricacies of budget.

EF: His name for me was Dr. F, or another name was The Contemplator. Every once in a while, I'd have a member of the staff that would prepare a six, seven-page, single-spaced memorandum on Medicaid. He'd come back and say, "If I had a losing case, I'd want this guy to be working on it." He did have this, I called it a judicial approach, fair-minded, evenhanded, listening to all aspects of the case approach.

RB: I think those were the main things I had. Is there anything else that you wanted to toss in here as we finish up?

EF: No. It's been fun to do this. The whole process was an education for me, and the education I got by being involved in a task force really helped in educating students. I've had exposure to probably five hundred students over my career, and they did some water-related cases. We looked at a lot of water-related issues that face the state and local government. That kept me semi-fresh, and I think helped students think about the area.

RB: Well, it's definitely an issue that isn't going to go away any time soon. It hangs out there. It's just a question of whether or not anybody wants to tackle it at a given time. Mary, I'll ask you then to get the Bob Bennett interview scheduled maybe for next time since it was Ed's idea. I appreciate you doing this this morning with everything else I know you've got going on. Thank you. I appreciate it.

EF: Great. I really enjoyed it.

RB: Thanks.

[End of File]