

**FP 32**

**Gwen Cherry**

**24 Pages - Restricted**

**May 21, 1974**

Pp. 1-5: Gwen Cherry's political background includes some previous campaign experience and she was a US Coast Guard Attorney for the 7th District of the Coast Guard. Since 1970, Gwen has been a state representative for Dade County. As a black woman, Gwen was a "curiosity" at first. She focuses on issues such as: rape, capital punishment, child care, equal rights, and the elderly. Gwen was born and raised in Florida and her father was a doctor.

Pp. 5-10: Gwen Cherry's first political act was the introduction of her child care bill, which has yet to pass. She discusses Reuben Askew and believes that he can do more for women and blacks than he has, especially on the passage of the ERA. Gwen thinks Florida is in desperate need of Affirmative Action. She speaks about the need for blacks to run for public office. At the time of this interview, 50 blacks were holding office. They were not organized. Gwen says that the NAACP, Voters Organization and Urban League support the general public, but there are no organizations specifically for black politicians. Gwen discusses the Cuban population in Miami, their conservatism and future power in the county.

Pp. 10-15: Gwen believes that Florida blacks are better off than in other southern states, but contrary to common opinion, she does not think that Florida is more northern than southern, nor is it liberal. As an example, Gwen points to the racial issues of busing and welfare and says that Floridians have moved extremely conservatively on these issues, which is indicative of a southern state. Yet, Gwen says that she'd rather deal with southern politicians (who she believes are more straightforward) than northerners (who she says are vicious). Askew is discussed as popular among blacks because of his stance on busing.

Pp. 15-20: Gwen discusses women's political groups like the Women's National Political Caucus and NOW. She discusses the attempts to pass the ERA. Gwen criticizes Paula Hawkins for not putting her full political weight behind this legislation. Gwen talks about her campaign style and to whom she tries to appeal. She discusses how women are crossing party lines and the typical "housekeeping" positions that the government often relinquishes to women.

Pp. 20-24: Gwen discusses the next election and possible seats she may run for. She talks about Alce Hastings, Askew's black advisors, Claude Anderson and Lester Maddox. She also broadens the discussion to speak on women and blacks and their future in holding high positions nationwide. Gwen briefly mentions the Haitian refugee crisis. Finally, Gwen returns to the subject of northerners being more difficult to deal with than southerners.

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This is an interview with Gwen Cherry, a black female state representative from Dade County, Florida. The interview was conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries in Tallahassee, Florida on May 21, 1974 and was transcribed by Joe Jaros.

Jack Bass: Basically, what is your political background?

Gwen Cherry: I had worked in many campaigns prior to being elected, but I had never thought about running for office. At the time, I was the United States Coast Guard Attorney for the seventh Coast Guard district when I was asked to run. And I resigned that position in order to run, which was a terrific cut in salary. I guess that it was higher in a way, because it was on the federal level and the seventh Coast Guard district encompasses about six or seven states, southern states.

J.B.: Who asked you to run?

Cherry: A combination of people, black people, women, lawyer's groups. They felt that it was time for a change and they thought that perhaps it was time for a black woman to go, to make the step of running for office.

J.B.: That was what year?

Cherry: 1969, and I was seated in 1970.

Walter De Vries: Was that a special election?

Cherry: No, it was a regular one.

J.B.: So, this is your third time?

Cherry: No, second.

J.B.: Second.

Cherry: Completing the second.

J.B.: Right, o.k.

W.D.V.: And is it what you would have expected?

Cherry: It's very frustrating. I guess that I am getting a little more accustomed to it now, but having been a lawyer for awhile, you get even more frustrated, because you can change a rule of law in a particular case, and whether or not the legislature will act and change it in accordance with the way it should be is left up to them. They may go all the way up to the Supreme Court and change it, and that has to do with that particular case. However, in the legislature, if you manage to be successful, you get a whole body of laws changed at one time. So, you do make more of an impact, although I use both of them. I still file suits where I think you need action, where the legislature will not move. Using both of them sometimes, you can get results. For instance, when I first came in, there was a group of about 20,000 women in the state of Florida, the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, who had a clause in their by-laws that discriminated. It was for whites only. And they were in tax exempt status and the state got no taxes from them because they were do-gooders, and they are. Very fine women, honorable women. However, their lands and things were not taxed, their buildings and I think that one of the first bills I filed was to eliminate them from this privileged status. I couldn't get any action on it, because they were a very powerful group throughout the state. But after I launched the bill, I was able to file suit against them in behalf of two clients who wanted admittance into that organization, and they did drop this from their by-laws. Under a great deal of persuasion, we had to go all the way through court.

W.D.V.: How are you received by your colleagues as a black and a woman?

Cherry: I would say that I am a curiosity to them, to a great extent.

W.D.V.: You were, or you are?

Cherry: I was. They were friendly enough. They would say, "We don't have too many women in the legislature in the first place." So, they would say, "What's a nice lady like you doing up here? Wouldn't you rather be home with the kids?" Something to this effect. "This is really not the type of thing that you should be doing. What does your husband think?" That sort of thing. But I think that they have gotten rather accustomed to me now. More or less. A woman has to work harder, but once she is accepted, I think that she is pretty well accepted. It's just like with blacks, and that's where I have an advantage, having been black, I know discrimination keenly. So, the other discriminations that come from sex, I can readily see them quickly and understand them. So, I think that I am privileged, although I still have a double disability, too. Like for instance, in explaining things like. . .oh, I've been working with the rape laws lately and for a long time, my colleagues couldn't understand why I would be working to try and get women, female officers, female attorneys working with rape victims. "What difference does it make?" And I said, "Let me give you an example. Suppose that you had just had an unfortunate incident with someone and you were brought into a police station and you had the choice of two policemen, and you were black and one was black and one was white. Which one would you pick? Or the reverse, you know. You are white and you come in and there is a black one and a white one, which one would you rather talk with, if you had choice? It's the same thing with a rape victim. She has just been assaulted by a male and then she is immediately put in an all male environment. If she had a choice, I think that she would prefer a female, although I do admit that females can be just as

bad as men, but not on the whole. Usually, they can relate better, they can empathize and they can do a couple of other things." So, from the vantage point, I can see how things will work a little bit clearer, I would say, than some of my colleagues. And I can give you a lot of examples like that.

W.D.V.: Well, it sounds like some of the attitudes have changed since you got here.

Cherry: Yeah, I would say so. We've had a whole new election. I guess I fought pretty hard on capital punishment. I've lost so many good battles, as I would see it, so I guess that losing doesn't matter too much anymore. It's winning or losing and coping with either one of them. But during the first year or so, there were some pretty hard losses. I fought for child care centers, equal rights amendment. Mainly legislation that deals with human rights. The elderly . . . .

W.D.V.: Did you lose on the basis of the issue, or because you were black?

Cherry: A combination, I imagine, of both. Capital punishment, I think maybe it was a combination of, maybe I fought so hard not to see it reinstated, but community pressure probably played the biggest role. The legislators felt that the community pressures demanded, and it was election time, demanded that the reinstate it. And I think that we were the first state to reinstate it. So, it may have been a combination of both. There is a tendency to automatically reject legislation that I'm carrying a lot of times. But you must remember that I come from a different vantage point. Everybody is the sum total of their total environment, right? And the things I'm saying are the things I'm accustomed to. They've never seen that side of it. So, in many instances, I have a job of educating

them up to my point of view. Because they haven't seen that side. They don't know what I'm talking about when I talk about the welfare mother with ten children that may want to work and how she gets caught in this cycle and can't get out of it and how all of these things take place. They really can sympathize, but they can't empathize.

J.B.: Did you grow up in Florida?

Cherry: Born and raised. (Laughter.) In Miami, right in the area that I'm representing.

J.B.: What did your parents do?

Cherry: My father the town's physician, and my mother ran a boarding house and a hotel.

J.B.: So, you know many of the people in your district, then.

Cherry: Right, and they know my family. My father built the first hospital in the South, south of Tennessee, for blacks. He worked closely with the University of Miami hoping to establish a black medical school. So, I do have the advantage, and this is where I have a similarity with them. I'm not a Yankee, I'm not a transport, I'm not a foreigner. I've seen the Klu Klux Klan, I've witnessed that, I've been through all of that. So, I know all about it. I've been through sit-ins and all of that sort of thing.

J.B.: What was what you would consider your first political act?

Cherry: The introduction of the child care bill. I thought that it was the most beautiful piece of legislation that I had ever written. It was about a thirty or forty page bill, and I haven't been able to get it passed yet. We are the only state of the fifty states that has no rules and regulations governing child care. And I can only say that this was

because I carried it. It would have been a major step forward.

J.B.: Have you made any progress since you first introduced it?

Cherry: Well, it's coming up this year, I hope. But it's coming up mainly changed around into someone else's name, or parts of it and someone else's bill is amended to it, it may still carry the substance. It may be that they are not quite ready that a black person would introduce progressive, massive legislation that would make complete changes. They may not quite be ready for that yet.

J.B.: How do you assess Governor Askew as governor? Both from the perspective of being a legislator and a citizen of Florida and also from a black perspective and a woman's perspective.

Cherry: I think that he is a very well intentioned, a very good man. He is relatively sincere. But I don't rubber stamp him. I don't think that he has done enough. I think that there is much more that he can do for blacks and for women. He hasn't spoken out as strongly as I feel he should. However, I do realize that he is a new voice coming from the South and he has a good image. But I guess that none of us will ever be satisfied. I'm not completely satisfied, I'm happy with him. I think that he could do more, much more in the leadership role.

J.B.: Such as?

Cherry: Well, you see, I think that we could have gotten the Equal Rights Amendment passed if the governor had done what he did with the corporate tax. With the corporate tax, he got out and campaigned, went all over the state of Florida in behalf of it, and it passed. I think that he could have done maybe not that much effort, but something similar to that. Other than just lip service. I think that the same thing is true of blacks. He's made a number of black appointments and he always reminds me of this, and that's good. But it's no more than

he should have made. We still have further down that road to go. We're getting blacks in the judiciary, where we need them, and we are getting them in other aspects, but we don't have the kind of Affirmative Action program that we should have for the state. I'm embarrassed and I have told him that over and over again, that I am embarrassed that the state does not have the kind of Affirmative Action that they should be doing.

J.B.: Does he meet on any regular or formal or informal basis with the blacks in the legislature?

Cherry: No. Not to my knowledge.

J.B.: Well, it would probably be hard to do it without your knowledge. (Laughter.)

Cherry: He has the blacks . . . .

W.D.V.: It wouldn't take a very big room, would it. (Laughter.)

Cherry: No. (Laughter.) We are 'way behind. We are 'way behind in the blacks in the state legislature. And I have been all over the state to try to interest blacks in running. Because I really believe that this is where the action is and where we have to go to make the changes we want. We're trying to get together the black elected officials in the state of Florida, but like I said, we are behind.

J.B.: How many are there?

Cherry: About fifty all told.

J.B.: No association.

Cherry: I have called them together twice. They have elected a leader and he hasn't called them together again. It takes a lot of time to organize it. Everybody is so strung out and busy until you can't

really get down to. . .

J.B.: A big state, too.

Cherry: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Is there any statewide black organization?

Cherry: The NAACP, the Voters League, the Urban League. These are the ones. They may or may not be considered strictly political organizations. You know, we really aren't as organized as we should be, and you know I think that one of the reasons may be that we didn't have it as hard as some of the other areas. The hard core areas I think come in and do more than those who have had it kind of all right. Then you become complacent and you don't do very much. If you've had a little bit of the pie, you just get complacent. But I think that it is going to catch on, and hopefully in the near future.

J.B.: Is there any sort of political coalition existing, or in the making between blacks and Cubans in Miami?

Cherry: I'm hoping for that. They are beginning to talk about it. And you know, we have a Spanish speaking mayor in the city of Miami. We have a Spanish speaking commissioner. There are Spanish speaking persons that are going to run for office and I'm hopeful that they will get one of the seats. We don't have any in the legislature. Yet, we have the influx where Miami is becoming one-third black, one-third Spanish speaking, and one-third white.

J.B.: We heard some speculations that the Cubans in the Miami area tend to be more conservative.

Cherry: They tend to be Republican.

J.B.: They tend to be Republican, and as they develop politically, Dade County is likely to become more conservative.

Cherry: That has been the prediction. Hopefully, I hope that that isn't so. With the mayor that we have now being black, and he's Democratic. The Commissioner that is sitting is . . . .

J.B.: You say that the mayor is black?

Cherry: No, I mean Cuban. Well, Spanish speaking. He's a Puerto Rican. And he's a Democrat. The other one is a Democrat and liberal. We have one on the school board that is a Democrat and very liberal thinking. We these Spanish speaking leaders, hopefully they will sway their people that way.

J.B.: Do you have any Spanish speaking constituents?

Cherry: Yeah.

J.B.: Do you have their support?

Cherry: Yeah. I don't know if it's . . .let's see, they've had a choice, a pretty wide range of choice. But they have been supportive. I can't tell you why, other than that they are another group. Not as much of a minority as blacks, but maybe . . . .

J.B.: Why should Spanish speaking people, say that those in Dade County, not be Republican?

Cherry: Because Dade County is not Republican by nature. I mean, for the first time, we have two Republicans up here now, we never had them before. It's been Democratic for the past fifty years, I would say. Predominantly. Like the good old "solid South" you know. All the way through. It's followed that pattern. Republicans are just beginning to show strength in that area.

J.B.: My question is really, looking at it from the perspective of the Spanish speaking population, why should they not be Republican?

Cherry: Because their leaders, the leaders that they are electing, are

Democrats. They are following the same trend as the other Dade Countians. They haven't elected a Republican, Spanish speaking, to anything that I know of. And they do have leaders in elected positions. That's all I'm judging on.

J.B.: You're saying that the most effective. . . .

Cherry: Visible leaders that they have are . . . .

J.B.: The Spanish speaking leaders that they have elected are from the Democratic party.

Cherry: Yeah.

J.B.: So, you think that they are going to follow?

Cherry: I think that they will. I think that this will set a pattern. And these are well respected and very popular leaders. I don't think they were hand picked or anything. Most were appointed and then ran, and kept their jobs. Kept their positions. It may go Republican because we have Nixon in that area. I have found that there is a Republican following around in the Key Biscayne area and around there. And there are quite a few Spanish speaking in that area.

W.D.V.: What did you mean earlier when you said that blacks in Florida had a bigger piece of the pie than blacks in other southern states?

Cherry: Well, they had a few blacks, I would say, who weren't as hard pressed as blacks in say, Mississippi, that were . . . .

W.D.V.: You mean economically pressed or politically oppressed?

Cherry: Economically. No, politically, they were oppressed. But they had a little bit of . . .you know, they had characteristic blacks that you let flourish. I mean the number rider, that has the flashy cars and has a little bit of the action, or pie, and they tend to want to keep

the status quo. They are not worried about the political arena maybe, particularly, but they are doing all right. They are living all right. Then, you have the blacks who work in service for the very wealthy that do very well, too. And anyone who is pretty comfortable, they keep the status quo.

W.D.V.: Well, the thing that puzzles me is that Florida is considered one of the least southern of the southern states . . . .

Cherry: Only Dade County. Only that area of southern Florida. We went for Wallace more so than Alabama. You must remember that we gave him a bigger vote than Alabama. Don't let Florida fool you as far as . . . .

W.D.V.: It wasn't any bigger than Michigan though, was it?

Cherry: That's right. (Laughter.)

W.D.V.: There are two blacks in the legislature, right?

J.B.: Three.

Cherry: Three. One male and two female.

W.D.V.: That's about as low as any other southern state. Is it the lowest, Jack?

Cherry: No . . . .

J.B.: No, Mississippi has one, Louisiana has eight.

W.D.V.: That's right.

Cherry: Don't let Florida mislead you. It is not liberal. It will fool you. You know, they thought that surely Florida would show up, would be a barometer for the whole United States in that primary, the presidential primary . . . .

J.B.: It was. (Laughter.)

Cherry: The whole country was for Wallace?

W.D.V.: Well, a lot of the country was for Wallace.

J.B.: I tell you, you didn't run any worse in Michigan than you did . . . .

W.D.V.: He ran better than Michigan. Are you saying that race is still an overt kind of issue in . . . .

Cherry: Covert.

W.D.V.: . . . . Covert. A covert kind of issue in a legislative campaign?

Cherry: Yeah, it's still there.

W.D.V.: But it's not articulated.

Cherry: No, no, it's . . . .

W.D.V.: How is it an issue then?

Cherry: It's self evident. (Laughter.) In fact, you don't have to make it an issue.

W.D.V.: Well, in those cases that you have a black and a white candidate. But what about if you have two whites or two blacks.

Cherry: There are those who are more active when it comes, or more aggressive, when it comes to fighting for the rights of minorities. Or fighting for the rights of poor people, or fighting for the rights of elderly people.

W.D.V.: If I was a state wide candidate, how would I use that issue without articulating it out in the open? What would I use? What code words would I use, what issues would I use if I wanted to exploit race?

Cherry: In what community?

W.D.V.: State wide, say for governor, or senator. If I wanted to pluck that string, what would I say and what would I do?

Cherry: You mean the minority thing?

W.D.V.: The race thing. If I wanted to make race a very subliminal, covert kind of an issue.

Cherry: Busing. You would go with the busing issue. The court issue. These words have a meaning . . . .

J.B.: Is welfare another one?

Cherry: Yes. "Get all these lazy, shiftless people and make them work."

Yeah, these are the sort of things . . . is that what you mean?

W.D.V.: Yes.

Cherry: Those would be the things that people would . . . .

W.D.V.: Crime?

Cherry: "Crime in the street, and putting it in the White House."

(Laughter.) Yeah, that's it. "We've got to take all the crime off the streets." These are the code words that you mean.

W.D.V.: Yeah. Well, has the rhetoric of the campaign changed since you have become aware and involved in politics?

Cherry: Yeah, but they are still . . . .

W.D.V.: You said that you can remember the Klu Klux Klan days.

Cherry: Yeah, I can remember.

W.D.V.: Our book covers the last twenty-five years and we are trying to see the major changes that have occurred during that period. Would that be one of them?

Cherry: Yeah, it's covert, it's hidden now. And you have to be of a certain amount of sophistication to know what is happening. That is true, that so many of our people are so easily fooled by what people say, rather than what that do. And politicians really know how to make hay with that. For instance, it is very difficult for me to tell people what I think of their representatives, that their representatives are really shafting them, because they won't even believe it. The fellows have it down so well. So, I have to learn to fight just a little bit better than they do and just a little bit

more sophisticated than they can, you know. In a different kind of a way, because if they see me in front of a black audience or something, they have no qualms about leaning over and kissing me. (Laughter.) But they don't mean it, and I know that, but then you've got to get that across to people. So, it's a different kind of politics now. And I guess that the southern gentleman really knows how to whip it on, just like Wallace does. However, I'd rather deal, I think, with a southerner than I would with the northerner that comes down and goes into the political area.

W.D.V.: Why?

Cherry: I can deal with my southern beau. (Laughter.) I can deal with him, I think, despite all these facades. I'd rather deal with the southerner. Maybe it's because I'm more accustomed to it. . . than I would with the many northern transplants that we have in the legislature. That's just a personal feeling. They are more sincere, notwithstanding. I have no qualms in dealing with people who are being 180 degrees away from what they think. And I think that the southerner can better take it, they don't hold it. They aren't as vicious. I can even take Wallace a lot better than I can a whole lot of the northerners that come down and ask for my vote. And you'll find more and more of that. I think that there are more and more black people now that are turning over to Wallace. At least you know what Wallace is, you know what you are dealing with, you know? It's that sort of thing, if you understand what I'm saying.

J.B.: How is Askew perceived by black voters in this state?

Cherry: He's an ideal to them.

J.B.: So, Wallace against Askew in a Florida primary is not going to get any black votes, is that what you are saying?

Cherry: I think that Askew would get them all. I think he would.

Askew has really won the black voter.

J.B.: Was it his stand on the busing thing?

Cherry: I think it was. Because he really did a . . . he hasn't done anything since then, but he really did a bold move on that. A very commendable stance. But he hasn't done anything since then. He made that one stand and he hasn't done anything else.

J.B.: Doesn't he have some sort of a human relations commission.

Cherry: That doesn't function.

J.B.: It doesn't function?

Cherry: If they did, they would have Affirmative Action, they would be doing meaningful things. They are not doing anything. But he does have one. He has one on the status of women. But they aren't doing anything either. But maybe he will whip them up into shape. And he went in on the women's vote, too. Because he promised the equality of women. I don't know if women are going to remember that when he comes back or not, but he hasn't done anything other than lip service for women.

W.D.V.: Are there any women's political groups.

Cherry: Oh, strong, strong.

W.D.V.: Like what? Is there a Caucus?

Cherry: Yeah. Well, I used to be the head of the Women's National Political Caucus. We just finished our state meeting last weekend, in Orlando. They are getting ready, they are getting up. The NOW organization is strong. Florida, interesting enough, fifty-five percent of the voters are women. We have the highest percentage of women voters than any other state.

W.D.V.: In the nation?

Cherry: Yeah.

J.B.: Well, Florida almost passed the ERA, am I correct on that?

Cherry: Well, the first time I carried it, we passed it in the lower house and because of a constitutional prohibition, they didn't take it up in the upper house. We had a relic left over from the constitution, and the constitution said that no constitutional amendment could be ratified until after an election. So, they didn't do that. We overwhelmingly passed it the first year I carried it. The second year it was ten votes short. This year the senate turned it down. So, we have tried all kind of strategy.

J.B.: Did the house pass it this year?

Cherry: We didn't take it up. It was asked. I asked the senate to take it up since they had never voted on it, and we had voted on it twice.

J.B.: Was there an active women's movement in support of Paula Hawkins?

Cherry: No. Paula Hawkins. . .the only disappointment that we've had with Paula, and I tell her this . . .women were very proud of Paula being elected to the top position, but Paula has not spoken out for the ERA either. She has not identified with women since she has been in. I think that she will move closer to us now, with the election coming up.

J.B.: Well, when we came in, you said that she was the hottest thing going in southern politics.

Cherry: She is the hottest thing. She's the hottest thing in Florida politics right now. She has a beautiful chance. The only thing that might through her out, and I don't think women will remember and I don't think that any of us who have observed her very carefully will remind

anybody of it, but Paula was new and could have made a big difference with her Republican delegation when the ERA was up, to come before their committee, or to make any sort of attempt. And she did not. She has been a consumer person, which will relate to women, but other than that, she hasn't related as a woman's candidate. She went as a housewife from Maitland, and that kind of caught on. But she is sitting on a bank board, and she is a very wealthy woman.

J.B.: What is her husband?

Cherry: I've forgotten what he does, but I think they are all in banking business and they have their own firemen and health aids, and ect. But she is really hot, because Guerny is going down, and I think that women are ready to place a woman in Congress. They have been waiting a long time. They are ready for a woman lieutenant governor, if Askew had sense enough to pick one. They are ready for one. Women are tired of being placed down. They are just about ready for a statewide woman candidate.

J.B.: Do you speak before more black groups, or more women's groups?

Cherry: A combination of both. I like to think that I do coalition politics. I have my priorities in my order, and my black priorities come first and women second. But I have been at the helm of the National Women's Political Caucus and we had a convention in Houston. I am now state president of the NOW organization. I have been on the national NOW board. The women's movement in the South was in the forefront, and I led that movement. It was a black and white team with a woman in Dade County. Which is most unusual, you don't see that in the South. We made the changes, we took down the signs, the same way that we did with the Colored Only signs, we took down the Male Only signs out of the stores, and we did it by quiet peaceful persuasion. We slowly

dropped all the barriers. We went to the department stores, we went to the restaurants, we went to different places. And we didn't have to file the suits, but they were removed one by one. So, we have been in the forefront of the women's rights movement. I don't think you can very well divide it. When you are talking about people's rights, if you are going to fight for one set of rights, you've got to fight for the other, it doesn't make sense if you don't.

J.B.: I know that in North Carolina, a lot of women, liberal Democratic women are voting Republican women at the state level.

Cherry: They are crossing party lines.

J.B.: Do you see that as a growing trend?

Cherry: That's right.

J.B.: Do you see yourself as a potential statewide candidate?

Cherry: I'm hopeful.

J.B.: This year?

Cherry: Not this year, no.

J.B.: Cabinet post or something else?

Cherry: Possibly a cabinet post, possibly Congress, I'm not sure. But I do have hopes.

J.B.: Congress would be house seat, though?

Cherry: Yeah.

J.B.: It would be less than statewide there, right?

Cherry: Yeah, that's right. Like I say, it's winning or losing, but I think that it's time to step on up. But I think that I have to learn well at this level in order to step up. So, I'm doing my apprenticeship, I hope.

J.B.: When is a consumer oriented <sup>candidate</sup> going to run for Secretary of Agriculture

in this state?

Cherry: (Laughter.) I have a woman who says that she is putting her hat in the ring, I don't know if she's kidding or not. And urban oriented, that's what she is. Roxie Bolton. She told that she is going to run, that's the one position that she wants. I don't know. It would be great.

J.B.: That just struck me as something, just sitting here . . . .

W.D.V.: The Commissioner of Education is something more natural.

Cherry: No, no.

J.B.: This state is 70 or 80% urban, and you've got a Secretary of Agriculture who is a cabinet post and he represents the farmers. I mean, it doesn't make much sense.

W.D.V.: Well, that's not what I meant, I just said . . . .

(Interruption on tape. Someone enters office)

J.B.: You mean more apropos for a woman?

W.D.V.: I didn't say a woman. . . .

Cherry: This just happens to be a woman.

W.D.V.: I meant that the position in the cabinet that would be natural for a woman would be on the state board of education.

(Laughter.)

Cherry: Like for instance, you could probably name my committees? You know, women are always. . . .

W.D.V.: Constitution, health services. I was assistant to the speaker of the house for a number of years, so I can tell you where we put them.

(Laughter.)

Cherry: You're right. And I have been trying to get the fellows to see that we are tired of doing the housekeeping tasks. We do them all

the time. I'm on judiciary. That's still one of those, too, that they let women go on. But I have told the leadership, "I'm moving up, I want decision making. I want a chairmanship, or I want a minority whip. I don't want this any longer, I want to move up. I'm tired of being stereotyped into this."

J.B.: What did he say?

Cherry: He's shaking his head. He's just shaking his head. I'll have to resort to something if he doesn't move. But it's the same sort of thing. What's wrong with transportation, or energy or any of these? We are still getting pigeon holed in these things.

J.B.: Do blacks tend to coalesce around any statewide candidate for office?

Cherry: They haven't. We have one young man who probably has the most charisma and is going to state that he will run this year, and that is Alce. Hastings. Have you seen him?

J.B.: No.

Cherry: He ran when Lawton Chiles ran. He's very articulate, he's very handsome. Looks like he has a bright future.

J.B.: From where?

Cherry: Fort Lauderdale. He's a lawyer. He's run, but each time it has been unsuccessful. That's unfortunate. That's a Republican area that he comes from. Fort Lauderdale is highly Republican.

J.B.: What's his first name?

Cherry: Alce. A-L-C-E. Hastings. H-A-S-T-I-N-G-S. He's going to run for the Paula Hawkins seat and I think that he has a good chance of getting that.

J.B.: On the

Cherry: Uh-huh.

J.B.: Is he going to get the Democratic nomination?

Cherry: Yeah. He's run so much, and they know him and they know that he is capable. They know that he is articulate and I don't think that they could deny it to him. He carried it for them, I think, on that U.S. Senate seat that Chiles holds. So, he can hold his own. Money probably will stand in his way. He has his own personal money, but I mean getting money from others might stand in his way. But he is the nearest thing that we have to Julian Bond down here. And I think that's what people are looking for. You know, that kind of person to rally around. He's about the closest thing we have.

J.B.: Has he run for the legislature before?

Cherry: I'm trying to think. He's run for the U.S. Senate. . . I think he has. He's run about four times. City commission, Senate and then legislature. And that's bad. You get in that rut, and people think that you can't make it. But he may have been a little ahead of his time on each one of them.

J.B.: Who are Askew's advisors, black appointments?

Cherry: Mrs. Range in Miami, who was his secretary of community affairs. He has a black now who is assistant secretary of labor, C. He has Rabinell (?) who is one of his assistants or aides, he has Claude Anderson, who is over education. Those that he has on his staff I don't think too much of. I think this is probably his downfall to me. As far as I am concerned, because these are all fellows that are not from here. And who are not too familiar with the state itself and the blacks in the state. And the blacks in the state are going to kind of resent this sort of thing. That's the one place where he makes a mistake, I think.

J.B.: Well, speaking of Claude Anderson, who is more or less his top black aide, you think of someone who is not from Florida?

Cherry: He's from Michigan. (to De Vries) Why don't you take him back to Michigan? (Laughter.) I'm just kidding. I don't think that you bring a man in from Michigan to tell you what to do with education in Florida when you've got all these people here that are highly trained, that have been working in the educational system, that came up through it, were trained in it, and then you pick somebody like this, it's sort of a slap in the face. Rabinell is the same way, he came from somewhere, I don't know where.

J.B.: From South Carolina, maybe?

Cherry: Oh is that where he's from?

J.B.: I don't know.

Cherry: He's a good man, but I'm just saying that people will resent that. It's as though you didn't have anything available, the local talent didn't come up to par. That sort of feeling. And I don't think that Askew realizes that. That's as I see it. I think that he is a good national candidate, I think that we are going to lose him to the national scene as Vice-president.

J.B.: How would you feel if he became President?

Cherry: I think that he would do his best. I don't think he would do very much, but he would do his best. He's very steeped in legislative knowledge and all that, so we're fortunate in that, and that he's been in a long time. He knows the legislative process, he knows all about it. But he is getting more and more conservative every day.

J.B.: He's conservative, or cautious?

Cherry: Cautious, I guess. Yes he's cautious. A much better choice

of words. That's it, cautious. And it may be that he's being singled out so much for the national scene. That may be it. But he's a good man, he's good. Doesn't smoke, doesn't drink. Conservative man.

(Laughter.)

J.B.: Lester Maddox doesn't smoke or drink either.

Cherry: He doesn't? Does he require that others not do it?

J.B.: I'm not sure. (Laughter)

Cherry: He's running for . . . what is Maddox running for?

J.B.: He's running for governor.

Cherry: That's right, but how many candidates are there? Seven or eight?

J.B.: Nine, I think.

Cherry: You know, they are about to have a woman governor in Connecticut. I just did a seminar at Mount Holyoke. They are about to have a woman governor in Connecticut, I think; Progress. We are going to have some women in those big positions soon. And some blacks.

J.B.: Do you see more black women running? In Georgia, there are only two women in the legislature.

Cherry: We've got Grace and Betty, the only two. And both of them are black. Black women have been able . . . one thing, we can get more easily accepted, I believe for the first initial time than black men. The door will open a little bit quicker for us. And we have been playing a role of compromise ever since I can remember, between blacks and whites. In family situations, in home situations, in service situations and everything. So, we are well equipped for that.

J.B.: Who is the Congressman from you district?

Cherry: Leaman, the new one. It used to be Pepper until we split it

up here. Pepper and Leaman are very close, but Leaman is really my Congressman. I'm looking at him?

J.B.: Maybe he's looking at you ? (Laughter.)

Cherry: He just read one of our resolutions in the Congressional Record for me last week. On the Haitian situation. We've got a terrible Haitian situation here, where the United States government will not grant them political asylum. And I passed a resolution in the house here and asked that he read it into the Congressional Record, so we can get some uniform standards.

(end of side A of tape.)

Cherry: I think that it is the government's whole attitude toward Haiti.

J.B.: You think that it's desperate?

Cherry: Yeah, I think that it's reached over the top. We've never had too good relationships with Haiti and Papa Doc. So, we've got about three or four hundred people that have come to these shores, you know. And they've got them all in jail, locked up in the jails in Miami. Keeping them back, and they are committing suicide in jail. And this is the country where they say, "Give me your tired, your hungry, your whole masses yearning to be free." It's ironic. I guess I better get back downstairs. Is that about all?

J.B.: Do you have any other questions?

W.D.V.: Thank you very much.

J.B.: We appreciate it.

Cherry: Let me know when your book comes out.

( Interruption on tape.)

J.B.: You just told her that you thought there was more hope for

the South than any other section of the United States.

Cherry: Yeah.

J.B.: Why?

Cherry: The South coming up with the problems and the solutions to the problems. I think that we are going get it. You know, our legislature is number four in the United States as rated by the Association of . . .whatever it is, the legislatures. I think that we are the ones that are going to be able to solve the problems and really push forward.

J.B.: You are talking about problems of human relations now?

Cherry: Human relations, that's right.

J.B.: Why?

Cherry: I think that really, we, black and white, can sit down better with one another than any other group of people. The black and white southerners can sit down and iron it out. Not withstanding all of the conflicts and all of the history and all of the past things, we can still sit down and iron out our troubles and our problems and resolve them.

J.B.: Does this go back to what you were saying before about how you find it easier to deal with the native Floridians in the legislature than the Yankees?

Cherry: That's right. You know, I used to go off to school, you know how you go off in the summertime. You go off to NYU or to Columbia, Harvard or Howard. The people I was closest to were the southern whites. In the classes. I mean, we could find one another, not withstanding all the differences, with all of the differences, there are more similarities when you come right down to it. You don't believe me?

J.B.: I do believe you.