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A Conversation

Mandel's Concept of the State, and the Job

Marvin Mandel was interviewed last week in his Executive office by staff members of this page in an attempt to gauge his feelings and attitudes about the things he enjoys and dislikes as Governor. These are excerpts from that meeting.

Question--You have been Governor now for six years. What are your chief satisfactions and what are your chief disappointments?

Answer--The satisfactions are basically getting some things done that have been needed for a long time in government. I think getting government reorganized is one of the great satisfactions and that hasn't been completed yet.

Q--What are some of the other satisfactions? **SUN**

A--I think what we've done in the field of education is tremendously satisfying. Not just the school construction program, that's just part of it. But I think the program that we passed to help private colleges is equally important. There should be state colleges and there should be private colleges. A student should have a right to make a choice where he would like to go, rather than leading him into a stereotype system. If he wants to go to a private college, fine. I think it's important that these private colleges continue to exist. So the program that we passed for aiding these private colleges, I think, is important.

Q--What have been some of your disappointments? Are there things that you want to get done that you haven't gotten done?

A--One of the disappointments... one thing I'm interested in is getting a judiciary system in this state that is second to none. We've been able to do it by creating the District Court. That's part of it. We've been able to set up the commissions to recommend the appointment of judges. But the one big area where we still have a problem--and the problem is going to continue to get worse--is that the judges, once they are selected, they have to run for office. And it's getting worse all along because they are getting more and more reluctant. I'm talking about lawyers, and I'm talking about the capable attorneys who are reluctant to become judges because of the fear of having to give up their practices, go on the bench, then have to run and possibly lose.

Q--What are some of the disappointments that you have had that in some way hurt or directly affected the people of this state?

A--There's been other disappointments, of course. For example, going to the community penal system (for incarcerating prisoners close to home) is good but it is

very difficult to get it moving. Everyone thinks it is a good idea but no one wants it in his community. Everybody is for it but in somebody else's back yard. The same way with the juvenile program. We had a hearing just the other day on a small group home in a community. Everybody thinks it's a fine home, run by a fine reverend, but don't put it in my community. So these are things that disappoint.

Q--You have to deal with the Legislature, you have to deal with the bureaucracy, you have to deal with subdivisions. Where do you find the greatest obstacles to your purposes?

A--There are two things really frustrating, maybe not to the average person, but to me sitting in this position. Dealing with the federal government is number one. And dealing with our own state government in some areas is another. I feel that the average citizen should not have to go the lengths he does now to get an answer to a problem that he has. The endless delays, the endless frustrations that he has is unnecessary and the bureaucracy is what causes it. **SUN**

Q--Have you found the legislative branch an obstacle to your plans? **JAN 6, 1975**

A--It all depends on how the executive department works with the Legislature. It hasn't been, because we've tried to keep the Legislature completely informed on what we feel is necessary, and what we think should be done. If we run into a situation when the legislative leadership says it's impossible then there's just nothing. So you wait until another time and try again.

Q--Have your perceptions of the job changed in the six years you have been Governor? Is it what you expected it to be? Is it quite different or has it evolved through this period?

A--I think the job itself gets more difficult and has gotten so as time has gone on. The problems are getting bigger and there are more concerns. The state is being requested to get more involved in a lot of programs it never was involved in before. The counties, a lot of things that the counties would like to do they can't do so they come to the state. The federal government is reducing a lot of the programs that they were funding and you have to make a decision: Are you going to let those programs go or use state money? So that the job is much more complex and complicated

as each year goes by. If you had told me when I was speaker of the House... that the states would be involved in the areas in which they are today I never would have believed it. You just couldn't have conceived of the states getting involved in all these problems, but we are.

Q--Is it necessary for the state to get involved in all these problems?

A--We're the only state that owns a mass transit system. It used to be the Baltimore Transit Company. Is it necessary for the state to do that? We had to make a decision because the B.T.C. was going down the drain and Baltimore city couldn't buy it. So the state had to step in and do it.

Q--In general, do you prefer to resist state involvement in these local problems?

A--I think the less we are involved in these local matters, the better these local governments are. I would prefer not to be involved, obviously. I think that I would like to see less state involvement in local problems and I would like to see more control of local problems in local hands. But the direction of that today particularly is being guided from the national level... unless you just want to turn your back on federal money. The federal government almost forces the state to get involved in local government through some of the programs that they have.

Q--Shouldn't the local governments be encouraged to expand to meet the needs of their citizens?

A--Of course government has to expand, because as I've said the more services that you get into the more services you're delivering to the public. You have to expand. I'm not talking so much about the expansion of services, I'm talking about the controls of expansion. I don't think we should be making decisions for local government... The more the local government runs its own business the better off we all are.

Q--Governor, you're a Baltimorean by birth. You represented the city in the Legislature. Now that you've been looking at it from a statewide vantage point can you see any hope for the city?

A--Certainly I do. In fact I think Baltimore city is making more progress than a lot of cities around the country. I think Baltimore city has done a good job. And I think that it's going to take a few years, but I don't see any question that it's going to survive. Not only survive but get a lot stronger.

Q--How much state assistance will it need to become stronger? And what kind of state assistance do you see develop over a decade?

A--I can't answer that. About 65 per cent of the city's revenue come from the state and federal governments. The state has increased its allocation of dollars to the city every year, and we'll do again this year. So that they have been constantly getting help. I don't think dollars are the answer alone. I think the city has to be put in a position where it can generate its own strength.

Q--There's been a lot of criticism in the press about "cronism" in this administration. Is the public aware of this or concerned about it. Do you think it has been a fair depiction of the actions of this administration? **SUN**

A--Well, I don't think it's fair at all. I've come to the conclusion that newspapers basically would rather see a corrupt administration than an honest one. Because if they have an honest administration they have nothing to write about. They're trying to create corruption where there is none. So would you do about it? You run honest administration and don't have anything that's corrupt--and we haven't. We haven't had one instance in the last six years of corruption in this administration, but no newspaper has said. And they start looking under the stone to see if there is a worm. Everything becomes magnified beyond what it really is... thing that gets me, you don't get both sides of a story.

Q--Having had executive power, do you have any fear of government or police power?

A--I think you have to watch it all the time. I think police power can be abused... I think there can be an abuse of power. And it's so easy. It's hard to abuse that power. Some people will. And that's why we have to keep an eternal watch on people working in government.

Q--So what institution keeps that eternal watch?

A--Right in here (indicating his office). There's nothing that happens around this state government that I don't know about.

Q--But what if we had a Governor who wasn't averse to abusing the power of the state? What institution then would--

A--The public, the people. They're the ones that would take care of that. They elect him, if they want to re-elect him, they