

Governor Christine Todd Whitman Interview (May 22, 2013)

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It is Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013. I'm Marie DeNoia Aronsohn here with former New Jersey Governor Christie Todd Whitman at her farm, Pontefract. We are here for the second in a series of interviews for the Center on the American Governor for Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics. Governor, during our first interview we got to the point where you had just been elected to your first term so I'd like to begin today with your transition and inauguration, an interesting time.

Christine Whitman: Oh, yeah.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Yes.

Christine Whitman: Very, <laughs> more interesting than I would have liked actually.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Shall we start there? You defeated an incumbent and it's almost unheard of. What was it like dealing with Governor Florio's team as you were transitioning?

Christine Whitman: Oh, it was fine. I mean he was perfectly friendly. I mean we weren't warm, fuzzy but perfectly friendly and they didn't try to make things difficult and it went forward pretty smoothly. He and I met only once at Drumthwacket to look at the house and the place and then maybe one other time so he and I didn't do a lot directly, but the staff-- I had never heard that there were any real problems in getting in the budget and getting budget numbers, that sort of thing. I mean we found some things there that we weren't told about but it wasn't because they were trying to hide things during the transition or make things difficult at all.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Things like budget issues you mean--

Christine Whitman: Well, we found a bond issue that had somehow been left off the books for about a million dollars that had been accounted for. I don't know quite how-- we weren't sure how it had been accounted but again it wasn't because they were trying to make it difficult. That's the way they budgeted; that was part of their budget or not.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: We know that shortly after the election there was Ed Rollins--

Christine Whitman: Uh huh--

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: --who asserted that you had won in part because of suppressing the black vote in urban areas. Tell me about when you first heard that he was making this claim and what your reaction was.

Christine Whitman: Well, I heard about it at the transition office and Judy Shaw came in and said she'd gotten this call from Ed saying, "Oh, there's no big deal but you might hear about something at the Sperling breakfast today. I kind of said something that might cause some problems." And she told me what it was and I said, "Yeah, that's going to cause problems. Get him on the phone" and so we tried to get hold of him and we finally got hold of him and I said, "What were you thinking?" and he said, "Oh, I don't know. I just-- it happened" and he said, "What do you want me to do?" And I said, "I want you to tell it's a lie and I want to be clear about it," but on the other hand campaigns being what they are you have a lot of people and while I know perfectly well-- because we had such tight control over the money and with Peter Verniero as our chief legal officer and overseeing all that I knew perfectly well there wasn't going to be one dime spent that wasn't absolutely on the up and up. But there were a lot of people out there who could have said something to somebody. So I immediately called anybody I thought might have known about it and said, "Have you ever heard anybody anywhere say anything about offering money to ministers-- black ministers and mayors to keep out-- keep down the vote?" And everybody came back with no, they never heard any of that anywhere, anytime. So I was very confident it hadn't happened but that didn't mean we didn't have to contain the allegations and try to deal with them, and of course then within a day I (I was in the transition office) heard that Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton were down the end of the street about to march on the State House-- on the transition office. And so I said, "Go get them. I want to meet with them" and so they brought them down and I was in an office-- tiny, little office and I had Judy Shaw and two or three others of my African American advisers sitting across from Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, and I can remember thinking I'm not even Governor yet, I'm not sure this is supposed to be happening, but we talked about it. And, interestingly enough, it was Al Sharpton who really stepped up. Jesse Jackson-- I said to them basically, "Bottom line, look. I don't think this happened. I can find absolutely no indication that it happened but if you find any indication that lends substance to it I'll agree to another election-- we'll hold another election." And Al Sharpton said-- Okay. Jesse Jackson wanted to still go ahead with the march and Sharpton's the one who said, "No, let's give her a chance," and then we had to go out and meet the press and we were in a room not much bigger than this one with one long table and masses of media and people lying on the table and screaming at one another, "You're in my shot" and all this kind of thing. And the three of us stood up there and basically said we'd come to this agreement and then we had two federal investigations going. Janet Reno opened an 800 hotline and I was sure that was going to get something because hotlines just encourage people who just have a grief-- or a grievance and it had been a very close election. They never got a call on that hotline and all the investigations came to nothing 'cause there was nothing but it was brutal for a while. I

can remember some people saying, "Well, it shows you've got character." I said, "I don't need any more character, thank you very much. <laughs> I think I'm fine."

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: That kind of allegation, knowing your values, having known you over many years, this would be something that would really be contrary to--

Christine Whitman: Oh, yeah. I mean it was such an affront and so frustrating and I can only assume that Ed, because he was so pumped at having beaten Carville and Begala because they were the new kids on the block-- they were the hot number 'cause they'd just delivered the President's election and everybody was talking about them and this was their first defeat and we'd beaten them. And I think he wanted to show he could beat them at every kind of game and so this was part of the game. It was just-- I don't know-- for him to say-- to start off saying, "Well, not a big deal" was just mind blowing.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: How much of a distraction did you find it to be from your transition process?

Christine Whitman: Well, it was a big distraction; it really was. I mean I had to spend my time--it was a week or so before we had all the discussion with Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. But it took quite a bit. And then of course after that we had all these investigations going on. We had a state investigation, they had the State Attorney General investigating, the Federal Attorney General investigating, we had the 800 number, there was just a lot of stuff going on, and you're always nervous that something will turn up, that somebody somewhere said something. I know we hadn't spent \$500,000, I knew that, there was no question; that was the number that Ed had thrown out. There was never a question about that but someone might have said something somewhere. But the other thing that really bothered me about it is everybody-- not everybody-- so many people were willing to jump to say, "Aha, I'm sure you did it," and I kept saying-- and they were mostly Democrats obviously and I wanted to say, "But do you know what you're saying. You're saying that there are black mayors and black ministers who could be bought" and nobody seemed to be taking that up. I kept saying, "You can't have just one side of this. If you're saying-- if Ed Rollins is saying that's how we won the election then you'd have to say-- and I don't believe there are any black ministers or mayors in this state that would have accepted that; I just don't believe it." And we said that-- actually I said that at the press conference, but I was surprised that everybody seemed to be so willing to believe that we had done it but not seeing that that meant there had to be someone on the other side who would have accepted it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: As negative an experience as this was that this came up, do you think that it raised a certain amount of awareness in terms of putting people on notice

if that was in somebody's playbook, that they would think of doing such a thing or trying to, as you say what minister would actually accept such a thing, do you think there was anything good that grew out of this?

Christine Whitman: Well, probably the best thing that came out of it is people saw that I was tough and that I would face issues head on and I think that did help with some of the other things that we did. It certainly set a tone. I don't know that people had voted for me not as much because they wanted to see me I don't think as they wanted to get rid of Jim Florio, and so this may have reinforced in their minds that maybe they hadn't made a mistake and this gave them a little bit of an understanding that I could be tough and I'd be straightforward and we'd face down the issues and hopefully that made them feel a little bit better about things.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: You created a transition team comprised of hundreds of volunteers who reviewed every state agency and department; I recall this. Who chaired your transition team and why did you decide to organize such a massive effort?

Christine Whitman: Well, it was Judy Shaw and Hazel Gluck. There were a whole group of people who co-chaired that. That was the way to really get into the departments. No one person was going to be able to know every department and we wanted to get a good understanding of what had been going on, where the issues were going to be. That meant putting together teams that were focused on that particular department and those sets of issues and then they could make the recommendations that were the ones that we put into place eventually. And it was important to me to get that kind of depth and feeling rather than to just have a superficial overall look of how we were going to change things more to understand and to try to find who were the good people too. I did not come into government with the idea that I wanted to throw out everybody who was there who'd been there because they were there because they were Democrats. I actually got into trouble from some of the Republicans for that, but if they were good civil servants-- they were good servants. If they were good people, if they knew their job we wanted to know who they were 'cause I wanted to keep them.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Makes sense. Did you ultimately find the suggestions they came up with to be helpful or did a lot of them sit on the shelf?

Christine Whitman: No. They were very helpful actually. They developed basically a playbook for every department and agency and to the extent-- well, we didn't do everything that every one of them suggested but they were also given to the commissioners as they were appointed to see what had been found for them in the course of this transition and they were very thoughtful. They were thoughtful and some were in more depth than others

but we adopted a lot of the recommendations that came through that process. It was an enormously helpful process to what we ultimately tried to do.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: As one of the most powerful governors in the country or the most powerful governor--

Christine Whitman: --at that point certainly—

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: --in the country, you had the power to appoint hundreds of people to paid and unpaid positions. These are very coveted positions obviously in the administration. How did you go about this process? How did you solicit names and credentials?

Christine Whitman: Oh, it wasn't hard to solicit names. They came in in droves, believe me, and again we had the transition team. They appointed subgroups that looked again at every name that came in and for every department to see who would fit and for the cabinet members Hazel and John Sheridan were the two that chaired. John was chair of the transition as well. They were the ones who actually did a lot of the vetting for the cabinet and then they would make recommendations of three or four names of people that I then interviewed personally to see whether I liked them or not and whether I felt we were a fit or not, but I didn't obviously interview for every position up and down the line. That happened within these subgroups; they'd make recommendations and when the commissioners came in we let them do a lot of the picking.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: When you were in those interviews were there certain things in particular that you were looking to hear, a certain level of commitment, a certain focus that you wanted from them?

Christine Whitman: Yeah. I mean obviously I wanted to hear that they were people who understood they were part of a team and it was my team <laughs> and where I wanted to go, the kind of approach I wanted to take to governance. I also wanted to get a sense that they thought for themselves and that they weren't going to be afraid to push back if they thought something was wrong or an idea wasn't the right way to go about things but at the end of the day they recognized that the decision was mine. And I've always said-- I make analogies back to riding 'cause I spent so much of my growing-up years here on the farm riding-- "I'd always rather have a horse I had to put the curb on than one I had to kick all the time." And I wanted cabinet members-- I would rather have to say to them from time to time, "Now wait a minute. You're getting ahead of yourself. You're getting ahead of me and we need to vet this a little bit more" than when I was constantly saying, "Okay. What do we

need to do here, what are your ideas of this department, what do you"-- and so for a lot of them in those interviews I just listened to what their ideas were for that area, for health, for criminal justice, education. What did they think, what were their ideas. And if they were pretty much in tune or at least going the way that I thought about going at things then I thought we had a pretty good chance of making a good team.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you feel that pressure of owing political favors?

Christine Whitman: Oh, yeah. There's always a certain amount of that but not too badly, and again I think that got me into some trouble with some members of the legislature 'cause we didn't appoint all of the ones that they wanted. We appointed the good ones. I mean hey, give me a good name and I'm not going to hold it against them they're Republicans, but if there was a person in the position who was good and just 'cause they'd been appointed by Jim Florio or they were Democrats I didn't necessarily throw them out. And there were recommendations at times to do that because that was a coveted position and they wanted somebody there. And for the most part certainly all the cabinet appointments were new. They weren't all Republicans; we had some Democrats and some Independents in the cabinet. I just wanted the best people; that was the thing that mattered the most to me.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Who were your closest advisers? I know you mentioned Hazel and Judy--

Christine Whitman: And John Sheridan; Phil Angarone was somebody who was there for the political part of it most definitely. Phil was constantly grumbling at me 'cause--" Get rid of some of these Democrats. They're just going to undermine you," and some of them tried later on, yes, but for the most part we got on well.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: They tried to undermine you?

Christine Whitman: Well, there are times when-- they were committed Democrats and they weren't totally with the program of a Republican, not necessarily with what we were trying to do but there'd be leaks, there'd be those kinds of things so they wouldn't move things through the way we'd want them to move them through or with the alacrity that I would have liked to have seen for some of them. But for the most part it wasn't a huge problem.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: As the first woman governor of New Jersey, how do you believe you made a difference for women?

Christine Whitman: Well, I think it was first and foremost the thing that you don't think about, which is the role model part of it. You don't run to be a role model but just by being there, by virtue of the office, you are a role model and I had lots of parents male and female who would tell me what a difference it made to their kids, particularly their young girls, to see a woman in that position. The other thing was appointing women to positions that had traditionally been held by men—the first gubernatorial chief of staff, the first woman as an attorney general, the first woman as a chief justice, and to a host of other positions that'd traditionally been held by men. And what I would find is when we had an opening the first list that I got back from the appointments office almost always was predominantly white males. And I would send it back and say, "I want a bigger group from which to choose" and then I'd get a much more diverse group. It wasn't because they were trying to have white males. And they got it over it pretty quickly and many of them were women in that office so that helped. It was just a question of not reaching out. They hadn't-- and telling people, particularly minorities, that hey, we are interested in you and you can have a role here. And I sometimes went back to the original list and picked from that original list. I always said, "Look. It's not that I'm not going to appoint from that. I just want more choice and more people from which to choose-- a bigger list from which to choose" so we did, but appointing women to those positions again raised the visibility of women, let other women see that women can do this-- let men and women see that women can do these jobs and brought the kind of diversity I like to see in the office.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you get pushback from those who weren't ready to embrace that idea?

Christine Whitman: Well, there were times when we were called the estrogen palace, yeah, but that goes with the territory. You'd hear the grumblings and they would sort of get over it. If I hadn't thought these women were very qualified-- they were enormously qualified and I had no hesitation; I made no apologies for those appointments; they were good appointments.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: In interviewing your husband, he definitely feels and felt that there was gender prejudice happening in a big way.

Christine Whitman: There wasn't the old boy's network anymore and that discomfited, if that's a word-- made some people uncomfortable with how to deal with the front office because it wasn't what it used to be and that was something that threw them off their game a little bit.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did they ever throw you off your game by criticizing or bringing pressure about this?

Christine Whitman: No, not about that; they really couldn't. I mean it would be a dangerous game to play to criticize me because I was a woman because that doesn't reflect on me. That's on every other woman out there and that will even get the Democrat women mad <laughs> and I had a lot of Democrat women that supported me, no question about that, but no, there were rumblings; they probably made things harder at the time. It's one of those things you learn in mountain biking, don't look where you don't want to go, if you're on a gnarly single track and there's a rock in front of you if you spend your whole time looking at it you're going to hit it, <laughs> but if you look at it, know it's there and look where you want to go you get right on and you can get beyond it. And I wasn't going to change my sex so the fact that I was a woman was just it and that was going to be their problem, not mine, and they had to get over it. And the fact that these women were appointed to positions I was confident in their abilities because of their backgrounds and what they had accomplished already and it was just going to be the problem of the others; they had to get over it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Which brings us to your first inaugural address. You called for a five percent cut in the income tax and elimination of income taxes for those earning under seven thousand five hundred per year and a cut in the corporate tax to nine percent retroactively. This was a bold step, and if I remember there was some surprise--

Christine Whitman: Yeah, there was a lot of surprise, and it happened the way it happened because-- right after I was elected I was asked, "Well, what are you going to do?" and I said, "I'm going to cut taxes" and they said, "No, no, no. What are you really going to do?" and I said, "I'm going to cut taxes." And so then some of the press went to the legislature and I started hearing some things-- some quotes from legislative leaders in my party who were saying, "Well, that was the election and now we've got to look at the budget" and I could sense a softening here so I didn't tell them. And it was the year that Bill Clinton had retroactively raised a tax—it was a big deal. So what I said is "If he can do it-- if he can retroactively raise a tax, I can retroactively cut a tax and the bill's on your desk, oh, by the way," and I hadn't told them. They were all sitting behind me. I couldn't see their expressions but I'm told they were a little shocked in the legislature to hear this but there was nothing they could do 'cause I had the whole audience and of course they were all cheering and this is what I'd said I'd do. And so that started the process of getting to the 30 percent tax cut in the three years-- in less than three years actually.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: The fact that they were framing it (perhaps we'll look at that), is that what convinced you to take such a bold step?

Christine Whitman: Yeah. That's what convinced me to do it retroactively 'cause I could sense that we would lose it otherwise. If I didn't do it when I had a stage where I could get

the public really behind it, and kind of box them in so it was hard to get out of, it wasn't going to happen.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: There was no going back after that.

Christine Whitman: No, no.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Their reaction immediately following?

Christine Whitman: What could they do? They sucked it up and said, "Okay. Well, yeah, that's what she said she was going to do." I don't think they were very happy about it, and again it probably soured relations and made things a little more difficult than it should have been with the legislature even with the Republicans and I don't blame them. I can understand why they'd be a little affronted by it, but on the other hand they were getting squishy on me, I could sense that, and I wasn't going to let them go 'cause that's what I said I was going to do and I was convinced that that was the best way to get the state back on its feet and get the economy going again.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did it make it more difficult for you because of that?

Christine Whitman: I think probably but I hadn't dealt with the legislature before so I didn't know what was difficult and what wasn't in the day-to-day dealings with the legislature.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Certainly, if there's going to be such a bold tax cut they want to be getting some credit for that as well.

Christine Whitman: Well, they did afterwards. I mean that's why they had to say "yes." They weren't going to stand up there afterwards when it was obviously very popular. It's what had gotten me elected, and it also happened to be the right thing to do for the state so they jumped on board right afterwards but I don't think they were all that thrilled at having been blindsided.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What was the reaction from the press if you recall?

Christine Whitman: I think surprise-- real surprise and I think they tried to get some of the legislators to say that this was a silly thing to have done-- but they didn't; they didn't

bite on that. They were good about it-- the Republicans were good about that. They stepped right up and I think the press was surprised. I do know that there were some subsequent op eds that sort of said, "Well, her husband must be putting together these plans. It must be the man that's doing this" and so John never came to the State House after that.
<laughs>

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What was your reaction to that framing as if it had been John and not you?

Christine Whitman: That again I wasn't going to change. You just don't feed the beast so he didn't come to the State House. You just don't make it easy for them to write those stories if he's not around. We slept together every night so he could still give me all the good ideas but he wasn't visibly there in their face to pick me up for lunch and tell me all the good ideas.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: How did the public respond to you after that?

Christine Whitman: They loved it. I mean the public was very much-- I think as much because it was unusual for an office holder or a politician to actually start to do what they said they were going to do. The reaction I got was "Wow. Maybe this is really going to happen" 'cause I think a lot of them thought it's a good idea, I like it, I hope that happens but they didn't really believe that it would happen. They were very supportive.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: I know now on the internet you'd be hearing from people--

Christine Whitman: I got letters of support and people talked about it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: One of your first steps was to establish an Economic Master Plan Commission. Why did you create that and was this a valuable exercise?

Christine Whitman: Well, the state was in really bad shape. We had lost 350,000 jobs in just the four years of that previous administration and traditionally New Jersey even in a recession is less badly hit than the surrounding states. We're usually the first to come out of it and we traditionally have had an unemployment rate that's been lower than the states around us. We were upside down in all those indicators. We were just the wrong side of all of them and so this was going to have to be a pretty deep and pretty pervasive, all-encompassing look at the economy.

If we were going to turn the state around, this had to be more than a 30 percent income tax cut, it had to be more than that, and so we put together that commission to say "What is it we really need to do to be competitive, to get the jobs back here?" 'cause that was my most important job. The most important thing that I could do was to give people the ability to earn a living and to stay in the state and earn a living and pay their rent or pay their mortgage, be able to get their kids in to school, pay for their health, that kind of thing.

And so we put together a very diverse group of business leaders and small business, large business, economic people, economics professors. It was a broad group and they came back with a lot of recommendations that we implemented. I don't think we got everything through but the biggest one was probably the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, putting economic development in there and putting the emphasis on the fact that that was the go-to place for a business, that they would have an advocate in state government. And that was important because up until that point businesses felt that they really weren't wanted that much. There was always a problem getting through the morass of state government and this gave them an advocate; it would help them get through it, help them get answers on tax questions, help them get that kind of thing.

And then we also put together a business employment program, the BEIP grant, business employment incentive program, which was-- actually I stole it, I mean I stole it from Ohio, and we-- George Voinovich had done it in Ohio. And what we did was gave it to Commerce and Economic Development and said, "Let's see how we can make this work," and what we did was we put together a tax program-- tax incentive program for businesses that came into the state. I didn't want a pot of money to try to lure businesses into the state because my feeling was you could never have enough money and after the first one or two you're out and that that wasn't the best way to do it. So the BEIP program basically set up a negotiation with a business if they were going to bring new jobs into the state, and depending on where they went, if they went into, for instance an economic development zone in a city-- places where we wanted to see jobs created and they created 25 or more jobs they could negotiate. They got a better deal if they were in places where we wanted incentives, where we wanted them to go, but anywhere in the state. If they were going to create X amount of new jobs, they could negotiate on the income tax that those new employees would pay and we-- the state would not take all the income tax, we'd pay it to them, and they got to keep it; they got to invest it. They had to agree to stay in the state for at least-- I forget-- I think it was just three years after the program ended. They could negotiate it from-- anywhere from one to five years again depending on the size of the company and where they were located. They could negotiate the number of years and the percentage that they would get back or that the state would not take out of those income taxes that those employees would pay 'cause my feeling was hey, we're getting new money because these are new jobs. They had to be new jobs being created, and so we were going to get-- we're just not going to take as much as we would ordinarily and we'll give that to the businesses so that they can expand and bring those jobs in.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was that a powerful incentive?

Christine Whitman: Yeah, it worked very well actually.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was it pretty instantaneous? How did it work? Do you recall?

Christine Whitman: It took time. I mean it took time 'cause they had to negotiate with the Department of Commerce and Economic Development and again it depended on where they would locate and how many jobs. But it brought some people in and it brought them into some of the special districts where we wanted them, the urban enterprise zones where we needed jobs and needed people. And that was helpful 'cause they got a better break and they were able to reflect that in the salaries of their employees 'cause their employees didn't have to pay that income tax, and again it was-- it depended on the size of the company and where they were-- how long that lasted and how big a percentage of the income tax it was.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you have a lot of support for this policy?

Christine Whitman: Well, Gil Medina is one of the best cheerleaders I know in the world and Gil was running that and he made sure that everybody thought it was a good program and we didn't have any pushback; I don't know how much positive. There were skeptics obviously, it was a new program, but for the most part we had support on that, yeah.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you start to see that unemployment number moving down?

Christine Whitman: Yeah, we got the unemployment down to below the national average. We had-- by the time that I had left-- and it takes a long time-- much easier for a business to decide to leave the place than it is to get them to come in. But by the time I left, which was seven years later, we'd seen 450,000 new jobs created in the state. And we were-- the largest part of our growth was direct foreign investment and that was something-- another thing we did through the Department of Commerce and Economic Development and my Department of Protocol was put together trade missions and we did a lot of trade missions and they were real trade missions; they were not tour groups and they were not boondoggles. And I was amazed in some of those. I never expect a trade mission to actually result in a contract. That's really not what they're about, they're about establishing relationships and getting people to think differently, but we had people come back with actual contracts 'cause we'd set up individual meetings. We tiered it so that we had the big cap companies who usually went with me, the Mercks, the J&J's, and they'd already have, for the most part, offices and businesses in the countries we went to. But it was very

interesting, particularly in the Asian countries. Even their people couldn't always get a meeting with the minister, and just to have that picture-- they'd come with me to go to a meeting with the prime minister and they'd get a picture with the prime minister and then they could hang that on their wall, and it made a difference when people came in to visit them; other businesses in the country responded to that. Then we took the mid cap and small cap businesses. The mid cap businesses-- mid-sized businesses, we called them mid cap, had maybe some understanding of international trade but not a lot. We helped set up individual meetings for them, and the small ones didn't think there was anything. I mean that was way outside their frame of reference, doing business with another company overseas, and we introduced them to companies. We-- one trade mission we had over a hundred meetings scheduled for people and took about-- almost a hundred businesses with us, not quite, it may have been 60, but it was a lot of work. It was a lot of work but we also always tried to, at least for one night, do something cultural so they could get them to understand the culture of the country in which they were thinking about doing business, that it was different from the United States. We gave them a little relax time but structured so that they were actually understanding what it was like, what the food was like, what the entertainment was like, just a different way of life.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Had that approach been taken before in New Jersey?

Christine Whitman: Not that I know of. I mean at the end of the day we were asked by the National Governors Association to do some training for new governors on how to do trade missions. I mean we got known. Our Office of Protocol did a superb job with the Office of Commerce and Economic Growth-- Economic Development. They-- the two of them together-- really did a good job with these trade missions, a lot of followup, a lot of preparation beforehand. I mean the first one I took was up to Canada and that was very small, that was only about three or four, and the CWA was protesting me then and they were outside <laughs> in Canada protesting. That was sort of like the first National Governors Association meeting I went to which was up in Maine and I'll never forget we were sitting outside having dinner in a tent and there is a plane with a banner going across, "Christie Whitman sucks" or something like that, <laughs> I mean the worst governor ever. CWA had hired a plane and I thought that's a lot of money to spend, they're really spending their dues money. But the other governors were fascinated because they didn't have unions that would follow them around like that. And then the first real trade mission we took was to London and we took some of the press with us and it was interesting 'cause they were expecting it to be kind of easy, laid-back. They were exhausted, by the third day they were saying, "When is it going to stop? Can we stop now?" And no, we've got a bunch more meetings to go to; they got it. Before that there'd been a couple of articles about what are these trade missions, aren't they just big boondoggles? After that, never another word about it, because they got it, that these were serious, they were really about trying to increase trade, and as I say direct foreign investment became the fastest growing part of the economy while I was governor.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: The way you described New Jersey then sounds like where we are in a lot of ways now in terms of unemployment. How is that for you watching things progress in the way they do? I imagine you have many, many ideas.

Christine Whitman: Well, right after I left it was very frustrating to see what happened in those subsequent eight years, between those years and when Chris Christie became governor. But in that time period you saw the same kinds of things happen that had happened during the Florio years between McGreevey and Corzine. Unfortunately, we saw ourselves sliding back. Now I will say that when I was governor we'd had a national recession but the country was coming out of it and they were coming out of it at a better pace than they are today. So you can't-- it's apples and oranges to really do a direct comparison. It's not fair to anybody, and the recession was deeper but I think in the two administrations immediately preceding this one some real mistakes were made. In the last year when I'd gone; some mistakes were made that have made it more difficult to get out of it than we had.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: When you became governor the state was facing a 1.2 billion dollar shortfall. To address this issue and to pay for the tax cuts in your inaugural address your first budget called for several controversial measures including a new way to fund state employee pensions, elimination of several departments and state employee layoffs. I don't remember how many--

Christine Whitman: It wasn't many. It wasn't very big. I can remember of being accused of having decimated the Department of Environmental Protection. I think it was about 15 in the layoff. The Department of Environmental Protection was bigger than California's at the time, which I thought maybe was a little excessive.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Well--

Christine Whitman: Well, that's why the CWA was protesting.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Of course.

Christine Whitman: That's why they were following me around wherever I went because of those proposals, but again we had to do something serious. This was not something that was just passing that you could fix quickly and easily. They were systemic problems with the state and the way the state had been doing business and we needed to address them, take them on and try to fix them, which is what we did. It was painful. Those first two years of budgets were just awful actually. I hated it because the first year's budget was actually

less than Jim Florio's last budget and the year after that was flat so we weren't giving anybody anything, and if you count for inflation we were actually still cutting people and that made a lot of people upset.

I mean for instance the teachers-- there was a thing that had been done for teachers and I can't remember. It had to do with Social Security and I don't know exactly what happened. When the federal government changed the way it did some things with Social Security, because of our tax structure here the teachers got nicked and so they were given an extra five percent or three percent to make up the difference. Well, then the feds changed and they were back being whole against our tax structure but nobody took away the three to five percent or whatever it was; I can't remember now; I think maybe it was five percent. So I said, "No. Okay. I'm sorry. Now you're whole, you're not at a disadvantage by being in the state of New Jersey, so guess what; this has got to go." It was not popular, which I can understand. I mean we don't overpay our teachers dramatically anyway so it was taking something from them, but from the perspective of equity and what was right that was put in place to make up for something that was unfair, what had made it unfair had gone away, and so it was time to recognize that in the tax structure.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What you recounted with Social Security, that's a tough story to get out there. It's not simple.

Christine Whitman: No, it's not an easy, straightforward thing. It's complicated and whenever it's complicated it's very easy to push back to make it-- she's taking things away from me, she's cutting my salary, and you want to say, "I'm really not. What I'm doing is rebalancing things to where they were supposed to be. You were always meant to be whole. No one meant-- you were never meant to be at a disadvantage because you were teaching in the state of New Jersey. That now has been addressed, it was addressed at the federal level, so there's no need for this extra bit of money to come to you because now it's not doing what it was intended to do."

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Is that one of the most vociferous oppositions?

Christine Whitman: Oh, it was very contentious and the teachers were very upset and it was difficult, and I learned about the strength of the teachers' union in the state of New Jersey. We would-- I can't remember whether it was on that or one other thing that we did, whether it was when we were doing core curriculum standards, but at one point I didn't have the home addresses of all the teachers, I had the names of all the teachers and knew what schools they taught in, and so we addressed personal letters to them but we sent the letters in bulk to the school to be distributed there. We got them back in bulk and I don't

know-- from some schools, not from all of them. I don't know whether I couldn't have said something about tampering with the federal mail or not but—

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was it difficult to get legislative support?

Christine Whitman: Those kind of things were harder but we did it within the budget.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It wasn't an Executive Order. You did this all through the budget 'cause they were big changes for that time.

Christine Whitman: Oh, they were very big.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Governors hadn't tread on those areas at that point.

Christine Whitman: Yeah.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Other issues that you tackled during those early years-- We talked about the elimination of departments. We heard a lot about the Department of Higher Education and the Public Advocate's Office. Tell me about those two departments.

Christine Whitman: Well, the Public Advocate, again to me, seemed like an extra layer of government that wasn't needed. We had a Department of Justice, they had lots of lawyers. They were the ones who looked into these cases. They were the ones who-- I expected my public employees in the Department of Justice to be public advocates. That's what they were there for, to protect the public. I didn't think we needed a separate office. The Department of Higher Education came about because my mother actually had been on the Board of Higher Education and I can remember her with stacks like this before every meeting. Driving down I'd look at her, and she was a very bright woman who worked very hard and read all the stuff, thinking but you're not an educational expert and for the Department and for the Chancellor, to be kind of this king that could tell a college or a university what they could or couldn't teach, where they could or couldn't expand. She thought this is higher education, they're supposed to act like higher education and they should be able to make some of these decisions themselves. And so I wanted to take that oversight and those bureaucratic obstacles out of the way and put in place a president's council and then an outside board, so there were two other structures that were working with the colleges and universities to try to prevent a proliferation of meaningless programs. And what was interesting to me, it was the first time that many of the presidents of the four-year colleges had ever met the presidents of the community colleges, and yet to me

the community colleges were the feeders and the community colleges were and are enormously important in the overall educational-- higher education structure of the state. Yet they'd never even talked to one another and yet they needed to so that part was good and that worked. I think now looking back on it I'm glad we did it, I think it was the right thing to have done, I think it needs to be readdressed, and it has been. I mean now it's been readdressed and we have a department now and that's fine. I have no problem with that because unfortunately some of the colleges and universities did start to go off on their own and create majors in fields that were not exactly relevant, which is fine. They can choose to do that as long as they're not doing it with state money. There needs to be some kind of coordination, a bit more than the Presidents Council gave them, which is what I'd hoped was going to happen.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Eliminating the Department of Higher Education was pretty popular with the colleges.

Christine Whitman: Oh, yeah, it was very popular with the colleges. The college presidents loved it. The Chancellor wasn't so crazy about it. <laughs>

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you get pushback otherwise?

Christine Whitman: Well, the Chancellor was pretty powerful at that point. He had a lot of friends in the state legislature and they weren't happy with it but the college presidents were so happy and everybody had a community college in their county, not everybody but most of them did. There were a lot of community colleges if they didn't have a community college they probably had a four-year independent and so they got big pressure on the other side so the college presidents were the ones that really pushed that, made sure that got done; they were the ones who carried the water on that.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you get pushback at that time on the elimination of the Public Advocate's Office?

Christine Whitman: Oh, yeah, there was a lot of negative press and stuff and I just held firm on that 'cause I said, "Come on. We've got so many people-- oversight. You've got inspector generals; you've got everything. You don't need a public advocate too" 'cause the implication to me of a public advocate was that nobody else is doing the job for the public and that's what a public servant is about; they're serving the public. And can you assume they always do a good job? No, but that's why you have these other ways of coming in and looking and examining and finding out when stuff isn't going right, and we didn't have any

scandals. I had nobody investigated by a federal panel, nobody investigated by the state. We ran a clean administration.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did this plan to eliminate these certain departments grow out of that first commission that you put together?

Christine Whitman: Yeah, a lot of it did-- a number of those came from that.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: There was also--

Christine Whitman: The other one was getting the legislature to change the law to allow me to put a non physician as head of the Department of Health because the law required that it be a physician and I looked at it and I said, "Look. It's big business now-- it is big business and you need somebody"-- At that point there weren't as many as today-- of physicians who also have MBAs. You now have a lot of physician MBAs; then you didn't have it. And I said, "I want somebody who understands business because this is a business and the deputy could be a doctor. I understand completely about the fact that this is a very specialized field" but I felt so strongly that it was big business and big money and that the decisions being made were not all medical decisions. They were financial-- fiscal decisions and doctors didn't always have the best training for that. That took quite a while to get done but Len Fishman was a terrific person to have in that position when we got him there because he was sensitive to the needs of the physicians; he understood the world of medicine. It's not that we took somebody totally outside; we didn't take a Wall Street person and put them in there. He was somebody who knew the industry and was appreciative of the challenges but he was also a business person.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What kind of results did he get? Were they the desired results you were looking for?

Christine Whitman: Well, we got the report card-- the hospital report card done. We turned it into the Department of Health and Senior Services. He did a masterful job in getting one number throughout the state for seniors to call. One of the problems we had is that the services available to seniors varied from county to county and if somebody for instance had a parent living in Hunterdon County and you lived either in Mercer County or you lived in Maine you wouldn't necessarily know how to go and get services for that person 'cause they wouldn't be the same. This was one place, one number, the seniors could call one number and find out the answer to all their questions, and we harmonized what was happening across the state and tried to make the services as amenable as possible and then provide kind of the same for everybody if we could. But at least you knew where to go to

get the answers and you knew where to go to apply. And that again, we introduced gradually from one county to another-- because it took a lot of work to put it in place because it did require the counties to put all their services together in one place and adopt this number and train people in it. It was very successful and Len was the one who really oversaw that and the hospital report card. The hospitals initially were very concerned about it, that it would be something that would be used as a tool against them. He was just the right person to show them how no, this was a tool they could actually use for positive outcomes. I was there for the releases of them every year and they got a very positive reaction.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Structuring higher education I know is another issue you tackled by eliminating the Department of Higher Ed. Anything else that you can talk about in that area, higher ed? You didn't start with looking at melding records--

Christine Whitman: No—

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: That didn't start until way later.

Christine Whitman: --We did a lot budgetarily for higher education and particularly for the community colleges. We did a lot. We put money in for the community colleges and locked it in and had goals so that they knew they'd have a stable source of funding, and they could expect a stable amount from one year to the next and the same thing with the colleges. We were able to get more money for the colleges and universities and that was very important in order to be able to provide the opportunity for students in the state.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: You were able to--

Christine Whitman: We were able to get more money to them. One thing I wouldn't do, and it's interesting 'cause I've just been in Georgia where the HOPE program started-- the HOPE scholarship program. I never put anything like that in place, which is something that says that if you maintained a certain average, a 4-point average I think it was, and is in Georgia, you got a full boat to a-- to the state universities. And I never did that 'cause I was so afraid of grade inflation. I just couldn't see a teacher-- if a kid is right at the cusp do you give them a C plus or a B, I'll bump them up because I know that that way he'll get a full-- he or she would get a full ride to a college or university. And while the outcome is what you want, which is more young people going to college or university, grade inflation is not what you want, and so we just tried to make it so that they had better programs of support, that they offered more in scholarship aid, and that in-state residents got a better rate.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What did you think of the NJ Stars program?

Christine Whitman: Excuse me?

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What did you think of NJ Stars when that came to be--

Christine Whitman: I think that's—that's a good program. Yeah.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: When you look at community colleges now my understanding is that they're rather robust and things are working out. Is that something that you take pride in because of your focus?

Christine Whitman: Well, I hope it made a difference for them. I mean they were-- I've always loved them. I was on the board of the community college in Somerset County, which is now Raritan Valley, it serves Somerset and Hunterdon counties, and I always loved those graduations 'cause it was inevitably a single mom with three children and two jobs who was the valedictorian of the class. Or you'd have somebody go across and you'd hear the audience, "Way to go, Grandma" or "Grandpa" <laughs> and it was just great, and then you had the young kids who were coming in and it was a a very good way for them to feel their way through. They could decide did they want to go to a four-year college or could they get the skills to get a good job without going to four-year colleges. I also-- 'cause Somerset County has a very good vocational-technical school-- how that fit in to the whole panoply of educational opportunities for students, and to try to get people away from this idea that somehow you're less successful if you go to a vo tech, which just isn't the case. You can get a real job and you can get paid decent money and make a career for yourself and support yourself and that's fine. So I was delighted to see the community colleges do well. I think they were always going to do well but they were struggling; they needed help and we provided some of that.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: In the K through 12 realm, we had education reform. You mentioned the core curriculum standards, school choice, magnet schools and the school takeover in Newark. There was a lot going on at that level.

Christine Whitman: There was lot going on with education. We really started-- I think we started with the core curriculum standards and we did it in six areas. I thought it was very important for every child to be exposed to the arts. I mean it was not just math and science and English. There was a language requirement. I said, "Well, I want to start the language program in kindergarten. Those kids at that age are like sponges," and I can remember one of the state troopers who was on my detail saying that his two kids after the first year of

having Spanish thought it was just great 'cause they could sit at the dining room table and speak to each other and Mom and Dad didn't know what they were saying. And at that stage they hadn't learned anything good to say but they thought it was pretty cool that they were getting this tool that their parents wouldn't know about. I thought that was important and so we did that and there was pushback on that obviously 'cause it was a change but also because there were tests that went along with it and there was a feeling and a frustration among some of the teachers about teaching to the test. My feeling was if the tests are any good I'd rather them teach to the test than some of the stuff they weren't getting otherwise, in Newark particularly. I used to take the cabinet and we'd spend a day cleaning up a schoolyard. We cleaned up, we went to Newark and toured, took everybody. Everybody came-- members of the front office, members of the cabinet, and we did a lot of work. And when you looked at some of the circumstances under which you were trying to have children learn, you'd look at it and say, "They can't-- you can't learn when the roof's leaking, you can't learn when there isn't a decent bathroom around, you can't learn when there's no place to play." And that was really disturbing. When you saw how the money was being spent and how the Board of Education was spending more on trips they took to conferences than on school libraries or repairing the school buildings there was just something very, very wrong with that. It took awhile. We worked hard trying not to take over that school district but at the end of the day there was just no way not to. The school district was the largest employer in Newark at the time. I don't know if that's still the case today. The pushback we got was from parents whose kids were actually in school because they'd say, "Nothing you're going to do today is going to help my child who's in the school system now. It's too long a ways but you might cause me to lose a job or my husband to lose their job or some other relative who was critical to our being able to live in our homes to lose their job." And the first two superintendents we put in there had demonstrations outside their homes. They had death threats. It was very ugly and rough for a while. And I think now it's worked and they've gotten some good people in there and we're seeing somewhat of a turnaround. When you're spending more per student than any other district in the state and than most of the schools in the country and getting the kind of dismal results we were getting out of Newark it just told you something was very, very wrong there.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: School choice, which as you know is still an issue, what was your position on that?

Christine Whitman: Well, initially I'd been against school choice until I had a mother come up to me, and I can't remember whether she was from Newark or from one of the failing school districts and said, "Why is it that you should have the right to pick the school for your child and I can't for mine?" And I looked at her and I thought you know what, you're right, and how do we give somebody like that the tool that they need to find the right place for their child. So that's why I supported school choice. I could never get it through with charter schools. I mean we got them through, we got charter schools up and

running for the first time in the state, but not enough. The legislature was very hesitant and as for magnet schools they'd only give me one per county and twenty-one is just not enough to see whether it really works. The thing I really liked about what we did with charter schools was-- and it's been something that the critics have used as a way to say, "See, they don't work," which is you examine them and if the kids aren't achieving and they don't turn it around and they don't get them to achieve after a certain period of time you pull their license. If you think about it, the public school system's probably the only place that I can think of where the worse you do the more money you get with not a whole lot required of you to change. It's just somehow that more money is going to make a difference. In the charter schools we said, "If you don't do the job, you're going to lose your charter" and so that's really making sure the kids succeed, and one of the best charter schools is down in Camden. I've been down there now a couple of times and their graduation rate is 90 percent at the LEAP Academy going on to college. They now have kids who have been through college and their graduation rate from college is very high. I mean my feeling was always it doesn't matter what your economic background is, where you come from, what's your ethnic background, you deserve a chance to get a good education 'cause that's what's going to allow you to make it in the world.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: On the flip side of charter schools, as you say, you review the charter, you review their record if things aren't working but was it in your mind to also have a mechanism that if it is working like the LEAP Academy to examine that so the greater world of public schools in New Jersey would be able to use some of the techniques or methods that they were using?

Christine Whitman: Would that I thought that the other public schools or the unions would want to use them! There were also some restrictions because of the way the public school system is set up. But the charter schools, while they were in the public school system and had public school teachers, have a flexibility that other public schools don't have so you can't replicate it within the system. But that's what the Department of Education is looking at. They looked at them to see what could you replicate, what was a good model. Another thing we did-- toward the end actually-- some examination. We found that a lot of the new teachers coming out of teachers' college were being sent in to some of the roughest districts, some of the most difficult districts, and you put them in the classroom and said, "See you in the spring." So what we did, and again it was more difficult than I would have thought necessary, but we said we wanted a volunteer program of the good teachers in the school who would agree to be mentors and we'd pair them with the new teachers so that that new teacher had one particular person they could go to and say, "How do I deal with this?" because teachers aren't just dispensers of education. They are psychologists, they're psychiatrists, they're family counselors, they're nutrition counselors, they've got a lot on their plate, and for a new teacher just out of school it's tough to deal with all that, and it was interesting; we got pushback. It had to be a voluntary program, the union insisted, which is fine. I mean that means you have somebody who really does care

and how you pick the good teachers and how do you make sure it's happening. But we worked our way through and got a program in place and I hope that's helped.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: You also took on juvenile justice reform. What was the impetus for that and what did you do?

Christine Whitman: Well, I'd been on the board of something called the National Council on Crime and Delinquency for a number of years before I ran for governor and at NCCD we've done lots and lots of studies on what worked in criminal justice and what the challenges were. And one obvious one to my mind was incarcerating juveniles for minor offenses particularly with adults and that it wasn't helping them. They were just learning bad things and it wasn't giving them the training that they needed. So we put in the juvenile court system, the drug court system, which was a big thing particularly if you get caught with a joint. Okay. It's against the law, you don't want to do it, but that's not something that means that you should be locked up for an extended period of time. The drug courts have worked enormously well and I see that they're expanding them now.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Land preservation we talked about the last time. I know that was very important to you and your administration.

Christine Whitman: Well, overall the whole environment was important. Tom Kean had done a wonderful job with the environment. Then we'd lost a lot of our impetus in the intervening four years and we were back to a point where New York garbage was washing up on our shores, you couldn't walk on the beach because of syringes and I was hearing terrible stories about people getting stuck with syringes and all the kinds of things that were showing up on the shore so we really made an effort. One of the things I found is we had no pump-out stations for boats in New Jersey. None, which meant that any boat that had a head on it would just empty that head anywhere and so we provided pump-out stations. I think we had five or seven by the time I left so that they could come in to a place and discard efficiently and appropriately so it didn't just go into the ocean. We put together—according to the National Resources Defense Council the best beach monitoring program in the country because of some of the things that we put in and the restrictions. Then you had to deal with sanitary sewer overflow and that's still an enormous problem for the state because of the amount of money that's required to improve and upgrade the sanitary sewers and combined sewer overflows. When you get heavy rains that overflow and you get a lot of flush-out of bad stuff into the ocean. But our water quality passed the toe test. A reviewer would stand in the ocean up to their knees and see their feet and that was not something they'd been able to do every day. We also had more shellfish beds come back because of having cleaned up the waterways. We had shellfish. That's an industry in the state that came back to a great degree. A lot of growth in that and we again were

recognized for that as well-- so there were a lot of things with the environment. Along the shore of course is really enormously important to the state of New Jersey, which is why it was so important to clean up the shore because of tourism-- the second largest industry. The shore being 50 percent of that. You needed to have it vibrant, you needed to have people feel they could walk on the beach and lie on the beach and swim and not be worried about being stuck or get sick, and so it was important that we do that. We did a lot of things. Also commercial fishing and recreation fishing is a big issue in the state. We were over-fishing the blues so we put in-- and it was controversial-- a no-fish area. Now they're admitting the fishermen are seeing them. In fact they're getting bigger catches outside. If you give the fish enough time to mature you can do better.

And then we did a lot of work. We got our national guard. We had a lot of tanks that weren't being used and as a way to train some of our guardsmen on the tanks we had them decommissioned and pulled out everything that would be problematic. Paul Glazer was great. This was a program that he put together that I supported a thousand percent and then we took them out on barges and dumped them offshore so that they became reefs for the fish. The little fish love them 'cause they can get in through the windows. They get in through the turrets and down the cannons but everything bad's been taken out, which helped the artillery guys learn about the inside of tanks and how everything works. So it worked for everybody; it was one of those win-win situations. And we did a fair number of things like that and some controversial ones.

Horseshoe crabs, which I see are coming back now, was another issue, which is a shame because I thought we'd reached a pretty good compromise. New Jersey's on the flyway-- Cape May's on the flyway, which is an important stop for birds coming up from South America to Canada. When they land in New Jersey is just the time that the horseshoe crabs have come out of the ocean and lay their eggs on the beaches. Those eggs are very important nutrients for the birds so they can get up to Canada. The bird watch is a big tourist attraction. A lot of bird watchers come to the state and watch it. But the eggs of horseshoe crabs are also very good bait for eels and eels are used to catch big fish so the commercial fisher people were starting to take all the eggs. By the way, and something I didn't know until we got into this discussion, the blood of the horseshoe crab is one of the purest things that exists and drug companies use the blood of the horseshoe crab to test the purity of their drugs. Now we did find as we looked through it that they were returning them. They'd extract the blood and then return the horseshoe crab. They weren't always extracting it in the best way so we had to work with them on that 'cause a lot of the crabs were dying. But what we had to because so many eggs were taken by the fishermen that it was hurting the bird migration and it was hurting the future population of horseshoe crabs that the drug companies wanted. We put in a limit on how much they could take. And that was very controversial because it was not just the fishermen who were objecting to that; it was the garage down along the shore where they had their boats repaired or the grocery store owner in those shore communities who said, "Hey, I'm not going to have as many

guys coming in here getting their boats repaired, getting their engines repaired, coming in for groceries. It's hurting me." And I had some sort of unpleasant trips down there but you had to go and say, "There's a balance here. It's not what we do today all the time. It's not either/or. It's finding that middle ground, understanding that there's always going to be somebody who's not winning. Everybody's giving a little bit but we're all going to win in the end and that's the important thing. It's going to get us to where we want to be over the long term." And there'll always be pushback from time to time but we need to understand that this is something that will be positive for everybody in the long run and I think it has been.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It's interesting that your administration would take you to the horseshoe crab in such a compelling way and you said you see that the population is recovering.

Christine Whitman: Yeah, and the fishing-- by limiting fishing, limiting the size of the catches, limiting the season I understand the stress it puts on a commercial fisherman 'cause it does shorten their season. But what they're getting when they go out are better fish now and bigger fish and it's more exciting for the people they take out and it's better for them when there are commercial fishermen taking it to the stores.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Are they thinking "Thank you, Governor Whitman"?

Christine Whitman: Well, I'm not so sure. As I say, right now they're having a battle over the horseshoe crab. They want more access to the eggs but we have to be careful. Again we don't think about what our relationship is to the natural environment and to find out that the horseshoe crab blood is used by drug companies 'cause it is so pure. "Oh, okay, we really do need to care about these things, don't we?" There's a lot to learn.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Many faces, one New Jersey?

Christine Whitman: One family. Many faces, one family.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: One family.

Christine Whitman: New Jersey, the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Thank you. I stand corrected.

Christine Whitman: --my cabinet got 25 cents every time they said that in a speech.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Say it one more time.

Christine Whitman: Okay. New Jersey, the best place to live, work and raise a family, but the button we put together was New Jersey, Many Faces, One Family, the program we put together.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It was a significant policy in your administration and the chain of events. There was an inflammatory hate speech given at a college campus.

Christine Whitman: Well, that was early on.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: --reaction to that?

Christine Whitman: It was early on. What happened was a member of the nation of Islam had come before I became Governor. He'd appeared on one of the county college campuses or-- I can't remember which college campus it was and had given a very inflammatory, hate-filled speech. Louis Farrakhan was then scheduled to come to another college and I got a lot of pressure to stop it and say, "You can't let him come in. You can't let this happen" and I said, "Look. It's freedom of speech. I don't want to stop him 'cause I don't want to stop free speech." But at that point, Schindler's List had just come out, and so what I did is call Spielberg-- Steven Spielberg. I didn't know him and I called him and I said, "Look. I've got this problem. I would like to have a copy of Schindler's List to show on our college and university campuses" and God bless him he gave me a copy or two and we were able to send it around the state. Then for the lower grades I asked them to either teach or watch the movie The Power of One. They'd read the book, The Power of One, or show the movie, The Power of One. I thought Schindler's List was a little tough for the middle school kids but for high school and college Schindler's List was enormously powerful. Just to provide the other side, let Farrakhan speak. Let them see this, and that's what we did. The program Many Faces, One Family came out of that, came out also because of the fact that we have 150 different languages spoken in Jersey City alone so we probably have more than that in the state as a whole. And to me that's what gives us our color and our texture and makes the state as interesting a place as it is and as strong a place as it is. That was out of the Secretary of State's office. Buster Soaries took it on. Some Girl Scout troops took it. They got a badge for it. They had to learn about another culture, they had to learn about other countries and do a presentation. They got a badge. We had a pin made up. But to me understanding the diversity, appreciating it was very important.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Do you think it helped?

Christine Whitman: I think it did. I really do. It's gone by the wayside now, which I think is too bad. I mean the pin itself was an interesting one because it had different colors coming in together and it just reminds you we're all human and we share much more than divides us and particularly nowadays we need to remember that. And another program out of the Secretary of State's office that unfortunately didn't survive the administration was the V-FREE program, violence free, victimization free, vandalism free. Buster put that together and we ran it in high schools and had programs. They took a pledge to be V free. The kids put together programs, all sorts of different programs, everything from an afterschool program to all kinds of different things. I can't remember some of the other things they did but they did all kinds of things to encourage other students not to victimize and victimization really is bullying; in other words it's bullying. It's another term for bullying. And in those schools that ran the program they were very satisfied with it. They liked it. We let the kids run it really. This was a kids' program because trying to impose that from the Department of Education or the Secretary of State's office with adults doing it is not the way to do it. The kids came up with the programs. The kids are the ones who said what was needed in their community to address the issue. As I say, an afterschool program was what they did in some, a cooking class in another. There were various things that they suggested and it worked for those school districts.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: You selected Lonna Hooks to be Secretary of State and she was the first--

Christine Whitman: African American Secretary of State, yeah.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Tell me about her and that selection.

Christine Whitman: Well, Lonna had-- I'd known Lonna for a long time, I'd known her when I was running for office the first time for the Senate, and then she was very helpful on the campaign. She was a lawyer, very well respected. I respected Lonna a great deal and I thought she'd do a very good job there and she took it on with understanding the pushback that she'd get being the first African American in that position but she really focused on it and I think she did a nice job there.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did she get open pushback?

Christine Whitman: I think it was more subtle. Nobody was that open about that sort of thing but I think she felt very strongly that there was a lot of subtle bias that made her life difficult.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Another major policy that you tackled, and you were busy--

Christine Whitman: That's what happens when you're governor; you get a lot to do.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Government restructuring including the privatization of certain state functions, motor vehicle inspection, etc.

Christine Whitman: Oh, yeah, that was a fun one.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: --being a major one.

Christine Whitman: That was a fun one--

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Yeah--

Christine Whitman: --But Parsons just got re-upped for the contract so clearly they were doing a good job in spite of the early mistakes shall we say.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Interesting. Right?

Christine Whitman: Yeah—

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: --where we are now--

Christine Whitman: --Sometimes when you're first out of the box you have a few bumps in the road that smooth out for the next ones.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Is that policy another one of the recommendations that came from the commission you put together?

Christine Whitman: Privatization was something I already was very receptive and open to because again I believe in government. Government has a role to play but government doesn't have to play every role. We had gotten to a place where we were expanding beyond what was actually critical for government to be doing. And there were places where the private sector could do it more efficiently and more effectively and I wanted to see that happen and take some of that burden off government to give us the money that we would have been spending to put into other programs. And so that was something that was not a hard sell to me. One of the recommendations was privatization of various functions. I thought it made sense.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was it a hard sell?

Christine Whitman: Well, we ran into a few problems with it, yes. When we first leased the contract things didn't get built in a timely fashion. I can remember, and I guess there was a famous memo I sent to Eileen McGinnis, who was Chief of Policy and Planning and thought at least for Pete's sakes if it's going to take this long for people to go through give them a place to be warm and dry in winter and give them a cup of coffee. That was the big coffee memo that got out. I was looking for simple things to help people. I understand what it's like. I've sat with my car going through inspection lines and it's no fun, and when you have to get out of the car for that period of time if you have to go in the winter months it can be cold and miserable. You want to give them a place-- they're going to be a lot happier if they have a place that's warm inside and they can get a cup of coffee or tea so that was my point. It was more to say, "Hey, come on. You're dealing with people. Let's be sensitive to the people. You're serving the public. Let's be sensitive to the public here" and they'd missed that a little bit so we had our bumps in the road with that one.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Beyond the Parsons contract and the things that didn't quite go as expected, did you think it worked, for instance the DMV and how that operated afterward? I'm not talking just about inspections; I'm talking about the DMV--

Christine Whitman: The DMV is still—

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Yeah, now DMV--

Christine Whitman: I don't think everything has been solved-- everything was not solved during our time at DMV. We tried and I think things did get better. Certainly, the inspections have worked and obviously the contractor has done a decent job because they've just been re-upped yet again. They won that contract again so it's working out now. But DMV was a challenge and we did not iron out all the problems there. We had to

maintain state oversight on that. Privatization wasn't going to work for something that critical to the state and critical to the way we do business.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Your relationship with the legislature was reportedly rocky. Other accounts would suggest that there was some friction; let's put it that way. How would you describe it and do you feel that your relationship with the Assembly differed from your relationship with the Senate?

Christine Whitman: Well, there was always a difference between the Assembly and the Senate in basic attitude as to who and what they are. But I never felt it was that bad. I know that they grumbled and frumped but hey, guys do that. This was mostly guys. I worked very well with the women on both sides of the aisle in both houses and I actually worked fine with the Democrats. I got a lot of things done with Democrats that I couldn't get through with Republicans. When Chuck Haytaian was in the Assembly we had a particularly good relationship and he was very good at helping get things through. I didn't have bad relations with Jack Collins but not as close or as strong a relationship as had been with Chuck. I got along fine with the Senate. We had our battles but the Republicans were loyal. They stood up for most things. They went to battle for me when we had the contentious issues. But on some other ones I worked very closely with the Democrats and got insurance reform and auto insurance reform. Joe Doria was a big part of that; it would not have happened if it hadn't been for Joe Doria. So you need both sides of the aisle and I worked with both of them and it depended on the issue. You expect people to be in different places on different issues. I mean I guess I was happily oblivious to it. There was a time when we made a real effort to outreach and I said, "Okay. We're going to have coffee and bagels in the governor's office" 'cause I heard the grumbings about how I didn't go out and have a beer afterwards with them and stuff like that. I went home to my husband and the family when the kids were home. That was very important to me and I spent a lot of time with them. So once a month we'd invite them and nobody came. One or two would come and I finally said, "Okay. Forget this. It ain't going to work. We'll just get on and we'll work together and talk with one another, and could I have done a better job? Yes, I think I absolutely could have. I could have spent more time with outreach. I mean we'd have them to Drumthwacket, we'd have receptions for them and everybody was very courteous and very friendly when we'd have those, but I probably could have done more and probably should have. But as long as we were moving forward and getting progress on the agenda that was the most important thing to me.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Do you think that it was more that, the interpersonal, the not going out for the beer thing as well as the positions you would take and the way you would take them?

Christine Whitman: Well, we pushed people outside their comfort zone and that's always uncomfortable for people, but I think it was more just the interpersonal relations. It didn't feel that there was the same bond. I mean there was with say my Chief of Staff, with Mike Torpey, or with the Chief Counsel. They were the ones who carried that relationship and made that relationship work and I was happy to let that happen. As I said one of the things I've tried to do always in my career is when I get home I'm home, and not carry the office with me and not be out every night. Something else I stole from George Voinovich in Ohio, I didn't do dinners. I would say to people, "Look. I'll come for cocktails. I'll come and do the grip and grin line. I will shake hands, smile, I will talk, but I'll do that before dinner and then I'll leave," because otherwise you're out every single night and by the time you speak if you're an after dinner speaker half the people have had too much to drink and don't listen or fall asleep and the other half just want to go home. So if you have a message to deliver it's much more effective doing that before dinner and it then would give me time to relax at the end of the day. You're under a lot of pressure as governor; it doesn't go away; it's 24/7. Right after I got elected-- I was governor at the time-- and it was the first time I'd taken some time off and we went down to Florida and I had left the State Police behind 'cause I said, "I don't need you. Nobody knows who I am. Nobody's going to care. Nothing's going to happen and I'm going to be in a very safe place." I had no sooner gotten out on a boat-- we were fishing-- and put my line in the water than we got the ship to shore call that the Edison pipeline had blown up and I mean the scramble that we had-- We managed. I got back home fast-- as fast as anyone could have done it 'cause we commandeered a private plane, got American Airlines to hold up a plane so I could get to it. The State Police had grins on their faces saying, "We told you. We told you you needed us." It doesn't go away even when you're on vacation so when you can build a little bit of a space, a breathing space, you need that and also for my husband. And I happen to like him, we get along well, we're going on 40 years of marriage. I liked spending time with him and not always talking about the office. And when the kids were home we wanted them to know they were the most important thing. At the end of the day, titles were going to change, responsibilities were going to change, family is what's going to stay, and that's always been very important to me so I didn't want to spend a lot of time going out and smoking and joking. That's not who I was.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you find the way the legislature of New Jersey operates to be very transactional, or I'll do this for you, if you do this for me-- in terms of getting legislation passed?

Christine Whitman: There was a lot of deal making done. There was a lot of backing and forthing and deal making done. That's a part of the whole process and we tried to do that as little as possible, which again I think made some of them mad. The other problem was that I had come up in a way that I didn't owe anybody anything. When I ran for governor, by the time I'd gotten the nomination, then everybody got on line and everybody was very supportive. Up until that time it had been very sporadic. Again, for the senatorial race in

1990 everybody really walked for the most part. They thought there was not a chance and I didn't get really any support from the organization, individuals absolutely but not the organization as a whole. I have to believe that if I'd been a man and come as close to Bill Bradley as I had in 1990, I would not have had a primary as a gubernatorial candidate. I would have been seen as being the obvious next choice 'cause of name recognition, the money that had been spent, not because I was great but because that's just the way things happened and instead I had a three-way primary. So the organization-- and for good reason they didn't get involved in a primary. That was not a problem for me. I was kind of an outsider to a large degree and I hadn't spent any time in the legislature, which upset them a bit because I hadn't spent any time working with them before and they were right to know that that's a different mindset, it's a different way of doing business. If you don't appreciate that fully it can cause problems and I didn't appreciate fully how much it took for them to get anything done.

It wasn't easy. You have an idea and first of all you have to convince your colleagues and a subcommittee that it's worth discussing and then you have to move it through that and then you have to do the same thing with a full committee and then you have the Assembly floor or the Senate floor. I'd go nuts; I couldn't do it. I admire them for having the patience to do that but because I didn't have that experience I think they assumed that I couldn't possibly understand it and I did. I appreciated it but not fully and I got frustrated with it, which is why I moved some things out ahead and pushed them where they wouldn't go. I mean to me a perfect example of the difference in the issues they faced were my re-elect in 1997 with the partial birth abortion bill because that was the year that Bill Clinton had vetoed a partial birth abortion bill at the federal level and sent it back to the states and of course the whole Assembly was up. The Senate and the Assembly and they felt they had to pass a partial birth abortion bill. And I kept saying, "Guys,"-- and it was again mostly guys-- "In an election year is probably the worst time to talk about an issue like this. It's emotional, it's highly charged; don't do it," and they felt that they were under such pressure from the Right to Life groups that they absolutely had to do it. I started drafting a bill and as I looked at it I said, "I can't sign it. I can't sign it not because I'm pro-choice, which I happen to be, but because it's unconstitutional" and I honestly don't think they thought I would conditionally veto it. I think they thought that because it was my re-elect year and this was such a hot-button issue that I couldn't possibly take that chance, and I did. I rewrote it and sent it back to them and ironically it would have had the first limits on third trimester abortions had they supported it. We have none now, but it was the only time I was overridden. And they overrode me on that, which brought a third person into the gubernatorial race, and I was followed around by people with a sign showing pictures of dismembered babies and a running total of how many babies I'd murdered. And the problem was that most people in the state of New Jersey didn't understand the conditional veto. They didn't understand that I had the power to rewrite a bill as long as I stayed within the parameters of the intent of that bill and send it back to them. I hadn't vetoed it. I conditionally vetoed it. I had offered new language that would have put some restrictions on

access to third trimester abortions. But the legislature didn't feel I understood the pressures on them by their constituents in their individual districts and they also didn't think I would actually do it. They may have thought, understandably, that even if I did it, because my base was going to be statewide, it wasn't going to take such a toll on me as it would on them in their individual districts. I think they were wrong. I think they could have certainly gotten through even with Right to Life groups which were pushing them by saying, "We're going to do this next year," make whatever promises they wanted, or not overriding the veto and then just blaming me, which would have been fine. I mean that's the way the system's supposed to work and if they had upheld or not overridden the conditional veto, just let it go, I think we could have gotten away with that and it still would have put the pressure on me. At least it would have given them some cover. But \$500,000 later of the taxpayers' money in court it was declared unconstitutional.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Wow.

Christine Whitman: And they knew it. They were getting that from Counsel, their Counsel and from the Attorney General's office.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It's an interesting case study. By the end of your first year in office, your popularity was soaring. You were on every major talk show. You were rumored as a possible candidate for Vice President. How did you feel at that point?

Christine Whitman: That was all irrelevant. I know that was ridiculous, I mean the vice presidential stuff. I was pro-choice and even then the party was at a point where there was no way a pro-choice person was going to be chosen. I had my job to do and I loved it. I loved being Governor of the State of New Jersey and it was a great job. There was so much to do that you didn't even think about that kind of stuff. I mean I did the response to the State of the Union. I was the first governor to do the response to the State of the Union and we did it in the Assembly chamber, which is the first time they'd ever done it with a live audience, the responders. And I can remember being very nervous about that because Bill Clinton got up and gave his speech and he said everything I was going to say. He sounded more Republican than I did and I was sitting there saying, "Uh oh. Now what do I do? I don't want to get out there and just me-too it" but then thank God he went on and he went on and he went on and he went on, and by the end of it he had gone on for about two hours and had promised everything to everybody. So then I agonized was it okay to be a little bit rude to the President and I said, "Do you think it's all right if I go out there and say I'm not going to ask for equal time?" Because I thought I was being a little rude to the President but I was told it was okay so I went out there and said, "I'm not going to ask for equal time," and then I was able to give my speech and it was fine, but the rest of it you just don't think about. I mean that's other people making speculations about you and unless

you focus on that-- and I've always been very cognizant of and raised in a tradition of do the job you've got; the rest of it can take care of itself. If you take one job, particularly in politics, just with your eye on the next you're not going to get that opportunity. You've got to concentrate on the job you've got and then if other possibilities open up, they'll open up. If all you're thinking about is the next step you're going to trip up.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Considering everything that happened during that first year though, having that kind of popularity, that kind of exposure, being on the talk shows, it must have felt like a victory lap of a sort. Did it or didn't it?

Christine Whitman: I don't remember thinking that. It was nice. I mean of course everybody loves the attention. I mean I'd be a liar if I said I didn't. You get nervous before every time when you go on these talk shows 'cause they'd like to get you. You're going on Meet the Press and that sort of thing. They weren't all patting you on the back. You had to be up, and it was more nerve racking for most of those things than not just to make sure you didn't look like a fool and do something really stupid or say something really stupid. You had to make sure you had your facts at the tip of your tongue. And so you'd get nervous about it, but it was nice. That's why I always felt that the best thing in the world was going to National Governors Association meetings because in whatever state you're in, you're it; you're the Governor. Down there when they say "governor" 53 heads turn around 'cause you've got all the territories too, so it reminds you you're not the only one in the world. There are others like you out there, and I always thought that was a good thing.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It must have been an affirmation though I would think, the popularity in the polls, considering that you made so many controversial decisions--

Christine Whitman: Well, not everything we talked about—

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: That's true. The bold decisions— It must have affirmed that I'm on the right track as you were going to continue into your first administration.

Christine Whitman: Well, it was very nice to be able to go around the state and to have people be friendly and to have the town meetings because we started those in the first year, I think. I'm trying to remember when they really started, where I took the cabinet out on the road. That may not have been the first year; that may have been the second year. It was certainly the first term, the cabinet on the road, and I made all the cabinet go. I would ask them to go ahead of time during the day to whatever area we were going to be in, to hold office hours in that town so that people didn't have to always travel to Trenton. We'd

have an open public meeting in the evening and it was nice when they were friendly <laughs> so it was a whole lot better than when there's a lot of antagonism.