

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Marjorie Harris Carr speak at length about local government and the water management district*

Interviewer: At the local level, which is where so many of these environmental issues are finally decided, land use decisions are made at the local level and they affect the water use and they affect the air three of the elements that you were talking about before. Do you feel there has been a change, over time, in the attitudes of the local elected and appointed officials that you've worked with?

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Well, I don't think you are quite right in saying that they're settled at the local level. The Water Management District is an overall district area and, certainly, the Corps of Engineers are not a local thing. That's where the federal influence comes in. The local level has been left to decide some things, probably wrongly, because when they decided on the local level, at the County level, it's not in regard to the overall picture. Getting at, in particularly to the question of the East Everglades, well the County has been left to permit building in places the State should have never permitted building. The State did not exercise enough jurisdiction as it should to control the flow of water. They've allowed...the County has gone in and allowed the people to build where the water flow is. Or people have gone in and squatted. Now they are there and it offers a problem to the State and its water policy. You see? It has been left, in some places, to the local level and that has not been good. There was a great step forward when Florida was divided into five water management districts. We already had a district in South Florida. They changed it from the Central and Southern Flood Control District. The accent was all on flood control. That's when all the drainage started and that was all bad. So, that having the State now divided into five water management districts was a great step forward, although I think more work needs to be done, as a result of that 373 Act, either to interrelate the departments in some way or have some head or committee reference to it. It's still a little loose.

Marjorie Harris Carr: Right. And that, also, is a place where it's very important who the governor appoints.

MSD: Exactly! Oh, that falls back on, always, who the governor appoints. (glancing down at MHC's approaching hand), What's the matter with me?

MHC (picking a little animal from MSD's blouse): You've got a little animal walking.

MSD: (unflustered) What kind of animal is on me?

MHC: (gently removing it) Well, it's the same one that was here before.

MSD: Oh, was he? Well...

MHC: A very pretty little one. (chuckle)

MSD: No place for him.

MHC: A little green one.

MSD: (speaking to interviewer), Did we answer your question?

Interviewer: Well, do you believe that local government is important in environmental issues? And, if so, how?

MSD: Well, yes, but it's got to be coordinated with the overall picture. When you say local government, do you mean city or county or both? You probably do. In the case of the South Florida Water Management District, which is the only district I really know anything about. The county and the city should be coordinated with the plans for the overall district, but they're not sufficiently as yet, and a good deal of problem has come in because of that.

MHC: Yes, there are certain things the local government can do much better. I think those are pretty much sorted out. There's a fairly logical and obvious division of responsibility. I think what you need is increased dialogue across contacts.

MSD: I think especially of the Everglades problem, which is an overall problem for the South Florida District and the local governments are not properly coordinated with the overall plan, that's what I'm talking about.

MHC: Right.

MSD: It depends on other things being equal, I would agree with you, but when it comes to building in the Everglades, see, that's wrong. You can't do that, but they (undistinguishable).

MHC: Yes. What you need, too, in government, and we have it to a certain extent, you need several levels...several defenses so that if one group does not perform correctly, there is a secondary defense.

MSD: Like an Appeal Court.

MHC: Yes. And we...again that does seem to be in effect, but it is very important. Not to have a crucial part of the environment dependent on just one agency or just one individual.

MSD: I think that you're likely to find a political influence stronger and harder to deal with on the local level than on the state level, I think, because with the state level, all the local powers combine, but the local politics are likely to be the worst, I think.

MHC: Yes, though there's always Mr. [Bill] Chappell.

MSD: Mr. Chappell?

MHC: Mr. Chappell.

MSD: Who's Mr. Chappell?

MHC: Mr. Chappell is Congressman Chappell, from Jacksonville.

MSD: Oh, yes!

MHC: Yes.

MSD: Oh, yes. (chuckle)

MHC: Oh, yes. (chuckle)

MSD: I guess we all have our problems. (joint laughter) Shall we say 'local problems.'

MHC: He's a statewide problem. (laughter)

MSD: ... Becomes so, a burden. (chuckle) The body politic.