

## James Burrows Edwards

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3 **London: We are talking with Dr. Jim Edwards. Dr. Edwards you have had a**  
4 **varied career from an oral surgeon to a senator to a governor to president**  
5 **of the Medical University. Through the years you have seen various walks**  
6 **of life. Given this, can you give us a sense of what your vision is for**  
7 **the State of South Carolina over the next decade or so?**

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9 **Edwards:** Well, thank you very much my wife says I had a hard time holding a  
10 job. So, I think you just verified that but you know I have had opportunities that  
11 very few people have had and I have enjoyed them all. It has given me an  
12 opportunity to look at various problems of the state from different perspectives. I  
13 have enjoyed all my jobs by the way. When we talk about South Carolina and  
14 what our needs are, the needs are so many that it's hard to really put them in  
15 priority. Of course, they are the same issues today that they were when I ran for  
16 state senate. Those issues are all education, education, education. If you  
17 educate our people, then all the other things seem to fall in place. The quality of  
18 life, because an education usually leads to higher income, higher income leads to  
19 better health care, better jobs, and better quality of life generally for the people of  
20 South Carolina. We were a state that was basically a rural state. When I was a  
21 boy, I remember the unpainted houses along the highways and byways and the  
22 people plowing their mules out into the rural area and farming was one of the  
23 biggest industries we had. Of course, that's all been modernized in recent years  
24 and it's helped an awful lot. But the tide that has risen across American has not  
25 always raised our standard of living in South Carolina. And now we are in a  
26 process of getting some prosperity here. I have gone around my whole life selling  
27 South Carolina. Come to South Carolina, bring your industry to South Carolina,  
28 move to South Carolina, where we have a wonderful climate. We have all those  
29 things that you need to have a successful business and a beautiful quality of life.  
30 And now all of a sudden this is a terrible thing that's happened, we are having  
31 growth and a lot of people are disturbed about the growth. I am delighted with the  
32 growth. It means prosperity for people who have never experienced prosperity  
33 before and education will lead to these things, and the prosperity of the South  
34 where people are moving in here, where we are developing and we are  
35 developing very nicely. We are learning from other areas that have made  
36 mistakes in development, we are learning from them and those states that have  
37 previously had problems. I'm just delighted with growth, I like growth, and I  
38 welcome growth. We have a lot of crazy thinking on the part of some of the  
39 environmentalist and some of the environmentalist groups. I am an  
40 environmentalist. I love to hunt and fish and I've spent many of my wonderful  
41 hours out in the rivers and the woods and fields. But the environmentalists  
42 today, in my opinion, are taking it too far and they are trying to preserve every bit  
43 of land that there is. We do need to continue some growth so we can continue  
44 our prosperity.  
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1 **London:** You mentioned two issues, many issues, but two of the primary  
2 **ones are education and working within the environment. In education,**  
3 **what are some of the things that you feel like we need to be tackling so that**  
4 **we can be better educated and that we can continue to draw growth, smart**  
5 **growth or quality growth.**

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7 **Edwards:** Quality growth, I like that better than smart growth—smart growth isn't  
8 very smart sometimes. But, smart growth where it leads to prosperity for a lot of  
9 people. I think get back to education, if we educate our workforce. I think our  
10 technical colleges in the past have done a very good job of training people to  
11 fulfill the needs of industry and we need to recruit more industry, of course, we  
12 want to choose what industry we recruit, but if we recruit more industry and  
13 educate our people to fulfill the needs of industry, we will continue to be  
14 prosperous. We have all the things that you need for industrial development, we  
15 have really an unbelievable amount of fresh water in the State, we have a  
16 wonderful climate, we have the port of Charleston. That's another thing, the port  
17 has to expand if we are going to meet the needs of our state and also when the  
18 port expands, it expands the prosperity of the area and it creates jobs. Of  
19 course, we have to control that growth so it doesn't get out of line with the  
20 environmental protection of our waters and our rivers, but we need to attract  
21 more industry, get more jobs and in education I always ask this rhetorical  
22 question, I guess you call it. How do you get more or better education from  
23 paying the same teachers more money? Now, if you will, answer that question  
24 for me. I was the first governor, I think, in South Carolina if you will look at the  
25 record, I was the first governor to bring the teacher salaries up to the elusive  
26 Southeastern average. When I was governor we met that average and I was  
27 very proud of that. Then I started thinking we increased the salary of the same  
28 teachers. We have to be more selective in our teachers and we have to put on a  
29 full court press to attract more and better teachers into the profession and of  
30 course the way to do that is to make it pay more and let them get more money.  
31 My mother and father were both schoolteachers, so I have a more bias idea of  
32 what a teacher should be. But mother and dad were dedicated schoolteachers.  
33 Between the two of them, they taught 99½ years, so I feel like I can talk pretty  
34 well as an authority on schoolteachers. We have to pay them more money and  
35 attract better teachers. In days past, a woman's movement, and I'm not against  
36 that, I think it's wonderful that women are moving up and out and the glass  
37 ceiling has been broken and shattered. But back in the old days the woman's  
38 movement has really hurt education and nursing. Back in the old days, these  
39 wonderful old school mams really had no opportunities other than you could be  
40 a secretary, you could teach or be a nurse and that was really all the professions  
41 that were open to women. It has hurt us and we have to get back somehow and  
42 continue to attract good people to education and that's the fundamental basis of  
43 all our problems in South Carolina, is the poor quality of our education and of  
44 course we have the problem of when we integrated our schools. Prior to the  
45 integration our schools, most people in the South really, I have to confess very  
46 few of them cared about who taught in the black schools or who taught the

1 students in the black schools. I lived through this period and I'm glad it's behind  
2 us. But now that we've integrated, we had to integrate the schools as well as the  
3 teachers and some of the teachers were not qualified to be transferred and we  
4 are getting over that now and we have to attract black and white teachers that  
5 are really top quality teachers to come into the classroom. We have to pay them  
6 more and furnish them a peaceful place to teach and another one of my big  
7 complaints about education is for some reason in the South particularly, we have  
8 moved our little neighborhood schools that were so good and we have moved  
9 them into great big mega schools. We have a brand new one over in Mount  
10 Pleasant and I have forgotten exactly how many, maybe three or four thousand  
11 students in this one area. They bus them and we have problems with the school  
12 buses, we have big articles in the paper every day about the poor quality of the  
13 school buses and back in my day and back the way it should be if I could do it  
14 myself, I would have local schools where the kids could walk to the schools. The  
15 parents could go down to the schools when they have a complaint about the  
16 schools. The parents become more involved in the schools. They don't have to  
17 go to these mega schools and get lost, they don't even know where the teacher's  
18 office is or principal's office is. I think the worst thing that has happened to  
19 education is these big mega schools that we have. If I could change that, I would  
20 surely like to do it. These are just some thoughts off the top of my head about  
21 some of the problems of the State. Industrial development, we have to create  
22 more jobs and of course we have to do that in the face of all our manufacturing  
23 jobs moving overseas for economic reasons. We are in a global economy. We  
24 have to compete globally. Of course, that leaves us with high tech jobs that  
25 require better educated, better quality people coming into the job market into  
26 these high tech jobs and so we compound the problem by not having the  
27 education system that fits the need of our people.

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29 **London: You are talking a lot about the professionals, the teachers, and**  
30 **employees that will be needed to support the industry. At the same time I**  
31 **continue to hear about brain drain. We are losing our professionals to**  
32 **other states and I wonder if you have some thoughts on that.**

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34 **Edwards:** I have a lot of thoughts on that. For example, one of the things that I  
35 did—the first thing that I did when I was governor. It was not my original idea; it  
36 was the President of the College of Charleston, Ted Sterns' idea to create a thing  
37 called the gifted and talented school. It's a summer time experience for six  
38 weeks to get the top one percent of all the brains in high school to invite them to  
39 Charleston for a six week tour in what we call the gifted and talented student's  
40 school. The whole purpose of that was to stimulate these people and get them to  
41 know other people around the state that were equally gifted and talented and try  
42 to get them to stay in the state or at least come back to the state after their  
43 education. Every day, we lose wonderful people. For example, they had a  
44 scholarship over at the Medical University named in my honor. The first time we  
45 had that, it would pay all your tuition and it would give a \$14,000 a year stipend  
46 to the student so that he/she would not have to work during their time at the

1 Medical University. I was very excited because a very bright minority student  
2 was one of the ones that we were considering had practically a 4.0 record in high  
3 school and college. I particularly wanted this minority student to be one of the  
4 first Edwards scholars. We worked like mad to get him, but there were so many  
5 other schools around the nation that were looking for minority students that were  
6 bright and so we lost him to Harvard. I should look him up and see if he ever  
7 came back to South Carolina, but I bet he never came back to South Carolina to  
8 practice medicine. But that's the kind of thing that's happening all the time and  
9 the only way I know how to improve that is to improve our educational system  
10 and fully fund our institutions, particularly to give scholarships that don't have to  
11 be paid back if they come back to South Carolina to work and live and make a  
12 living. That's the only way I know that we can keep that from happening.  
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14 Well, with all the growth that seems to be occurring and the recognition of the  
15 high quality of life, I'm hopeful and optimistic that we will continue to see people  
16 want to stay here in our lovely state.  
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18 There is another thing that is one of the issues that has gotten to me somewhat.  
19 It is this wetlands issue. Everybody that I know of wants to save our wetlands  
20 and we have been led to believe that our wetlands are very, very valuable to us  
21 and they are; but it is taken too far and some of the zoning ordinances for  
22 example in this very county in Charleston County and across South Carolina.  
23 The zoning ordinances require that before you can get your plat recorded down  
24 at the Courthouse, you have to demarcate the wetlands and before you  
25 demarcate the wetlands, there is no law that says you have to do that, but they  
26 do that anyway. Once you demarcate the wetlands, you can't develop it all. It  
27 really is not your land; they are taking away your land just because it has certain  
28 growth on it, certain plants growing on your soil then it becomes wetlands. It  
29 doesn't have a thing to do with the amount of water that stands on your land. It  
30 doesn't have a thing to do with the elevation above sea level of your land, but it is  
31 categorized as wetlands because of the foliage that grows on it and that has to  
32 be corrected. I don't know how we do that. There are laws. This country, one of  
33 the big problems we have is that we are being choked to death by rules and  
34 regulations promulgated by people who are not elected to office. The elected  
35 officials have to be responsible for it because they should write the laws that do  
36 not permit that, but the bureaucrats run this country today and the elected  
37 officials should be running the country and making sure that the rules and  
38 regulations comply with the laws that are passed. That's one of the big things.  
39 Another thing that environmentalists want is open spaces. For example—my  
40 own personal example. My sister and I bought a piece of land from my estate, a  
41 little farm over there in Mount Pleasant. We like open spaces too, so we decided  
42 not to sub-divide this eight acres. Then along comes the tax assessor and the  
43 tax assessor assesses the value of the property on what it would bring if you did  
44 sub-divide it, and so they tax you at a level that doesn't allow you any other  
45 alternative really unless you are very wealthy. The only other alternative is that  
46 you sub-divide it and sell it off, and so then there goes your open spaces. That's

1 just one of the little laws that sometimes I look at it and wonder where we are  
2 going in America and where we are going in this state.

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4 **London:** So, we need to be more reasonable about our growth.

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6 **Edwards:** Correct. And how we manage that.

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8 **London:** Dr. Edwards it's been a pleasure talking with you and I want to thank  
9 you for spending this time with us.

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11 **Edwards:** It's been very pleasant to talk with you and I hope we haven't rambled  
12 too much.

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14 **London:** Definitely not. Thank you.

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