

THE JOINT SENATE-HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

SENATOR DIRKSEN - REPRESENTATIVE FORD

January 11, 1965

STATEMENT BY SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, first, just let me say HAPPY NEW YEAR. It's a little belated, but I think it is still in order. We're glad to see you and I hope that at each succeeding Press Conference that we have this room filled. I'm like the preacher - I don't like to see any empty benches when I prepare to hurl some assorted homilies and preachments at you. So, here we go.

When defeat comes to a major political party in this country, invariably there are outcries for revolutionary changes in party structure, party leadership and party policies. The Republican defeat of 1964 has produced these manifestations of uncertainty, unrest and uneasiness. Many suggestions, both formal and informal, for action pour from numerous sources.

We, the members of the Joint Senate-House Republican Leadership, are fully cognizant of the situation. There is no doubt in our minds that action is indicated and we are taking it. In our conversations since the November defeat we have discussed, among ourselves and with other recognized party leaders, numerous paths that we might follow. Always, certain basic facts have emerged:

First, that the only elected Republican officials of the Federal Establishment are the Republican members of the United States

Senate and the House of Representatives. Obviously and beyond dispute, they will guide Republican Party policy at the national level in the absence of a Republican President and Vice President by the record they write in Congress. It is their responsibility.

Second, that an additional repository of advice and counsel on party policy exists in former Presidents and nominees for President, in our present elected Governors, in the members of the Republican National Committee and the State Chairmen of our several states, and, of course, in the active Republican advocates at all other levels of the party structure. Their wisdom must be channeled into party policy formulation.

In the conviction that the Republican Party for a century has been and is an essential element in this nation's forward progress, and with the firm belief that all Republicans must join the effort, we, the members of the Joint Senate-House Republican Leadership, have on this day initiated a proposed mechanism to achieve a broad consensus on vital objectives for our country and our party. It is an honor to introduce my colleague, the new Republican Leader of the House, Jerry Ford, to provide the details of the proposal.

STATEMENT BY REP. FORD: May I say at the outset that it's a real pleasure and a privilege to be here and I hope to get better acquainted and see all of you more frequently.

I think it's obvious that Senator Dirksen and I haven't deliberately papered the House this morning. We propose to give the Republican Party a unified leadership, as a chart we are making public will show, we are inviting the five living Republican nominees for President - one of whom, Dwight D. Eisenhower, served two terms in that office - and representatives of the Republican Governors Association to join with us in the establishment of a Republican Coordinating Committee to continuously examine party policy and party operations.

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We have asked the Presiding Officer of the Joint Senate-House Republican Leadership, the Republican National Chairman, Mr. Dean Burch, to serve as Presiding Officer and Administrator of the new Republican Coordinating Committee, and through the National Republican Committee to provide such staff assistance and funds as may be necessary. Mr. Burch himself suggested we regard this role an implicit responsibility for him or for whomever may occupy his office in the future.

It will be the function of the Republican Coordinating Committee, composed of the eleven members of the Joint-Senate-House Republican Leadership, the five living Republican nominees for President, and the five representatives of the Republican Governors Association to facilitate the broadest party representation and the establishment of task forces for the study and examination of major national problems and

issues. The recruiting sources for these task forces, which would report to the Joint Leadership, are clearly delineated on the organization chart which we are making public today.

For the Joint Leadership, I have been asked to add these two pertinent points: First, the Republican National Chairman has been requested to immediately invite the other participants to join us in forming the Republican Coordinating Committee. Second, we are convinced that the Republican Party is not only a great force in the American way of life, but it is the only living political instrument which can make the American Dream a reality, not a mere collection of words and promises. Our goal is results and we intend to achieve them.

QUESTION: Does your statement mean now that Dean Burch will not be replaced as Republican National Chairman?

REP. FORD: This Republican Coordinating Committee was established without any relationship to that contest that may or may not take place in Chicago in January. The statement, I think, speaks for itself in this regard.

QUESTION: What effect do you think the statement will have on the contest?

REP. FORD: I don't believe it will have any impact one way or another.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, in what ways does this Coordinating Committee change the role of the Republican National Committee?

REP. FORD: It doesn't have any impact on the responsibilities of the Republican National Committee. This is an attempt by the Joint Senate-House Leadership to better coordinate the efforts of all of the segments of the Republican Party...The former Presidential nominees, the Governors, and Joint Senate-House Leadership.

QUESTION: Does this mean a new job for Dean Burch, or if he leaves, the chairmanship of the National Committee will also go to his successor?

REP. FORD: The statement clearly covers that. This will be an added responsibility of the Republican National Chairman.

QUESTION: Did Mr. Burch sit in on the meeting this morning?

REP. FORD: Yes, Mr. Burch - as the Republican National Chairman - has in the past - did attend our Joint Leadership Meeting... a

National Chairman in the future, of course, will do the same.

QUESTION: Does he go along with this -

REP. FORD: Yes, he has agreed that this is a constructive step to better coordinate our activities.

QUESTION: Mr. Burch, General Eisenhower has... (LAUGHTER)
(I'll try again!)

Mr. Ford, General Eisenhower has suggested that there should be a new structuring of the Party. Do you know if Dean has given his approval to this restructuring?

REP. FORD: I believe that he is informed as to the content. Whether or not he has specifically approved the chart which has been distributed, I couldn't tell you.

QUESTION: Has the Republican Governors Association given this at least indirect sanction?

REP. FORD: Well they, of course, at their conference in Denver a month or so ago did come up with a suggestion of a meeting with legislative leaders. This is a more specific approach, I think, and it's a broader approach than the one suggested by the governors.

QUESTION: How do you expect to give the Republican Party the new image here with this organization if you put at the top of it a man whom half the Party is trying to repudiate as a symbol of Goldwaterism?

REP. FORD: The Republican National Chairman is the proper person to handle the Coordinating Committee. Ah, the Republican National Chairman, regardless of the person who occupies that post, in my judgment, ought to handle that responsibility.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Let me amplify a little. Sam, when we set up the Joint Leadership, we didn't want to take the Chairman from either the House or the Senate or have it alternated. As a result, it was agreed that the Republican National Chairman could serve as the Moderator and we regard him as a Moderator only for purposes of recognition of those who are at the meeting and to keep it moving. So the fact that Mr. Burch was present this morning is in line with the pattern and format that we've established a long time ago. He IS the Republican National Chairman. The leadership is in being. There isn't any reason why he shouldn't be there and carry on his accustomed duty as the Moderator.

Now, if for any reason, he should be displaced, whoever the new Chairman might be will serve in that same role. So there is nothing strange about this at all. We're just continuing a pattern that was established when Eisenhower left the White House.

QUESTION: Well, Senator, this seems to be upgrading Mr. Burch. Do you see this as an attempt to rescue him?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: John, this has no effect on it whatsoever. There was no allusion to Mr. Burch or to the meeting in Chicago in January. There was no discussion about it. We just carry on a pattern that has been established a long time ago. And whoever might be the National Chairman, we will go on exactly as we have before. So there is no upgrading, there is no downgrading, and we do not mean for a moment to have any impact upon the deliberations of the National Committee men and Committee women on the 22nd of January.

QUESTION: Is there any indication that he intends to resign?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: None whatsoever. And may I just dispose of all that speculation by saying that at no time this morning was it discussed, there was no allusion to it, we carried on the meeting in the regular pattern that has always obtained.

QUESTION: Senator Dirksen, the formation on this new Republican Coordinating group implies that while it may recommend up to policy, it will still be ~~under~~ the Joint Senate-House Leadership to decide if those recommendations will be accepted. Is that right?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, the fact of the matter is that policy finally is determined by the way you vote in the House and the Senate... that's really the Party image. Somebody used the word a moment ago... I think we could have done a little more with the image in the form of a record in other days, if you know what I mean. And so, the record, of course, will be actually Party policy in action.

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE)

SENATOR DIRKSEN: You're alluding to Paul Butler's operation when he set up an Advisory Committee. This is a Coordinating Committee that is designed to pull Personnel and Task Forces together under a leadership... and then the last word must necessarily be ours. Now, how far Paul Butler went in trying to impose the views of the Advisory Committee upon their leadership, I do not know. I know what the attitude of the leadership was because their leadership, let me make it plain, because it was expressed to me in eloquent terms a good many times in a certain room in the Capitol when I sat down with a very distinguished gentleman who at that time was leader of the Senate.

QUESTION: Senator, all the functions of the Coordinating Committee... aren't they functions which ordinarily would be carried out by the National Committee?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Definitely not. First of all, the National Committee is the operating body between conventions. So much of its function is administrative in character and it hasn't undertaken to establish policy...

QUESTION: This was not establishing policy but coordinating -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, we are coordinating effort here... at every level of the Party. Now if you look on that chart, you'll notice that we make provision for a task force, the idea there is that you secure people in the Party and out of the Party who have peculiar knowledge on any given subject that is going to be a matter of some controversy when it comes to both the House and the Senate.

QUESTION: (EVERYBODY TALKS AT ONCE)

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Now, wait a minute... one at a time...

QUESTION: Senator, who are the five Republican Governors...

SENATOR DIRKSEN: ... has not been determined and probably that ought to be determined by the Governors Association itself.

QUESTION: Senator, what specific projects would you like to see these task forces do within 6 to 9 months, say?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I don't propose to enumerate them. If I did, I'd probably have to read you the State of the Union Message. But I'll just give you one. Wright Patman will introduce a proposal very shortly with respect to our gold reserve. Now that is a matter that is

going to brook some real controversy and it's a field where you've got to find people who have expert knowledge - and there you have an example of where you can well recruit a task force for purposes of measuring the impact of that policy, whether it's good or bad for the country, intrinsically or psychologically, and give us the benefit of their advice.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

SENATOR DIRKSEN: They will recommend, of course, to the Joint Leadership, because obviously we're going to have to do the voting, we have to make the determination, and it's got to come to us.

QUESTION: ... spokesmen for this Coordinating Committee... Will the National Chairman be the spokesman?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: He will be spokesman, certainly, in a sense... in first appointing personnel, appointing task forces, accepting recommendations and so forth, and generally keeping the thing into a good, cohesive administrative pattern.

QUESTION: How soon do you expect it to be functioning?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, you will notice in Congressman Ford's statement that the invitation to the National Chairman to make these invitations is almost immediate.

QUESTION: Senator, is it true that the "Ev and Jerry Show" is due for a limited engagement...we won't be seeing you much any more?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Why, Roger, you'll probably be seeing us a lot more maybe... (LAUGHTER)... well, wait a minute, let me finish. Because if the President is anxious to have a Short Session and get the boys out of the trenches, so to speak, that means that it will be a

working Session and that means that we'll have a lot of things to talk to you about and statements to be made on policy matters.

QUESTION: Is it Representative Ford's intention to have weekly "Ev and Jerry?"

SENATOR DIRKSEN: It's our JOINT intention to do so.

QUESTION: Have you thought of any new angles of the program, Senator?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Now, don't you go saying "TOM AND JERRY!"

(LAUGHTER)

REPRESENTATIVE FORD: Roger, may I answer at least in part your question. I want to be very clear. Senator Dirksen and I have worked together in the past, we will certainly work together in the future. We will very specifically have Joint Leadership Meetings in the future... they will be periodic and they will cover the matters of dual interest to both the House and the Senate. On the other hand, the House leadership will undoubtedly hold some periodic meetings and it's quite possible that we'll invite you all to join us at those particular meetings.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, doesn't the idea of the task forces of the Coordinating Committee ruffle a little the task forces your new leadership in the House is creating?

REP. FORD: Not at all. They certainly shouldn't be in conflict. I would hope and trust they would coordinate their efforts. I don't think we'll do any duplication because I'm on this particular Coordinating Committee and I think I'll have something to say about the task forces that we have as far as the House is concerned.

QUESTION: To name a specific example. You already have a task force working on a Republican alternative on Medicare. Does this mean the Republican Coordinating Committee would not touch Medicare, then?

REP. FORD: This decision hasn't been made. We had the minority members of the House Committee on Ways and Means, who are the authorities in this field, now working on alternatives as far as Medicare is concerned. This is something that might come up very quickly in the House... I would doubt that this particular Coordinating Committee task force would have time, under the circumstances, to tackle that problem.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, when you have a conflict come up in the Coordinating Committee... how much weight is given to the Congressional Representative who represents the National Committee, the Presidential nominees and any other persons involved?

REP. FORD: I think the final judgment as to whether we accept in part or in whole the recommendations will depend upon what the members of the House and Senate themselves feel ~~ix~~ concerning the task force reports.

QUESTION: Can you tell us who you recommend for the House Whip and the House -

REP. FORD: No decision has been made by me at this time on that problem.

QUESTION: I'm not clear about this thing yet. Is this merely a proposal, or is this an accomplished fact? If the Governors have not yet agreed to this, if the former Presidential candidates have

not yet agreed to serve, is this just a proposal -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Jeffry, the statement is clear...

QUESTION: Not to me -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: We have on this day initiated a proposed mechanism. This don't spring Phoenix-like out of the atmosphere, full-blown overnight... we were setting this thing in motion today.

QUESTION: But it hasn't been cleared in advance from the other groups -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: There have been informal discussions, but that doesn't mean that all has been settled. But it will be settled, we hope in reasonably short order.

QUESTION: May I follow with another question. Despite what you said about the National Committee's administrative function, officially it is the governing body of the Party. Don't you think the members of the National Committee will be offended to have no membership on this other than the Chairman sitting as the umpire of the meeting?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, the Chairman will represent the National Committee, and I expect if that is the desire, you can add to it, if you like. But we're initiating this proposal now. There will be some suggestions, I'm sure, as to whether it ought to be enlarged in one respect or another, but you can't quite say this is a fully accomplished fact as it stands on the paper, because any proposition of this kind is obviously subject to adjustment.

QUESTION: Do I understand you correctly to say that Dean Burch will name the personnel of the task forces?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: If he were the National Chairman and after consultation with every interested body here, you would hit upon somebody you would want on the task force... and frankly, that is going to offer no great difficulty, it never has...

QUESTION: Senator, this report says the Republican ~~NATIONAL~~ National Committee will finance this Coordinating Committee. What is to prevent them from cutting off the money from any proposals that don't fit in with their Goldwater...

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, I suppose if they were a capricious and arbitrary group they might think along that line, but I anticipate no such action. I anticipate no such attitude, as a matter of fact. Because, if that were the case, certainly this wouldn't become a very coordinating body, but that's the proper source from which it ought to be financed.

QUESTION: ... final power... ~~but~~ by putting them in charge of the purse strings?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, they aren't in final power so far as purse strings are concerned, because if, perchance, that question should ever arise (and frankly, I can't even imagine it with my feeble imagination) other efforts would be made to finance, and that shouldn't be too difficult. Having had four years of experience on the Senatorial Campaign Committee as its Chairman, I never ran into any difficulties on that score, and...

QUESTION: Do you have any idea, Sir, how much it will cost...

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I do. And I'll answer that by saying a substantial sum is going to be allocated for this purpose.

QUESTION: About task forces... will you have one on foreign policy, or will you have one on Viet-Nam... and all down the line?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, it's hard to tell how many you will have, but I fancy there'll be quite a number, because we expect, of course, to pick people on these task forces who have expert knowledge in the field, and one man may have expert knowledge in that field, another in the fiscal field, another in the educational field, another in the labor field... so in proportion as we need them, we'll have them set up.

QUESTION: Senator, will they be pretty much ad hoc committees, or task forces, or will they be continuing -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: John, you'll have to tell me what "ad hoc" means...

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE)

SENATOR DIRKSEN: The public doesn't know and I don't know.

QUESTION: What happened to the idea we were kicking around here last month... shadow Cabinet -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Shadow Cabinet?

QUESTION: We were talking about that last month -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Andy, I haven't even heard of the Shadow Cabinet. Are you speaking now of the legislative branch, or the executive branch?

QUESTION: Well, a Shadow Cabinet for the Executive Branch - made up of leading Republican statesmen...

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I've seen it alluded to... but insofar as I know, nothing has happened in that field.

QUESTION: Senator, will National Defense be a subject for your task force, or -

SENATOR DIRKSEN: No, I think it would be a proper subject for a task force, because it would involve, first of all, the expenditure, the disposition of your various Defense components, the taking out of being these bases that is a matter of some controversy now, the emerging of the National Guard and Reserve components... you've got a good many things in the Defense field to which you can invite a task force that has some expert knowledge.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

SENATOR DIRKSEN: May I say to you that the National Committeeman and the National Committeewoman of Illinois are Party officials and they are selected at the National Convention by the delegates. Far be it from me to undertake to usurp their powers or to impose my judgment and my will upon them. And for good measure, let me point it up finally by saying I have not even talked to either one as to what their disposition is.

QUESTION: Are you satisfied with the present Chairman?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I said I have not imposed my disposition and, therefore, I would not by word or deed, by action or whisper... (LAUGHTER)... undertake to influence the deliberations at Chicago.

QUESTION: Senator, would you see such a Committee eliminate any need for a Mackinaw Island type of policy?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, we had only one Mackinaw Island conference, and I was there. I can say in the light of hindsight that, first, it was too large, secondly, it was too far afield, third, it was too difficult to get to, and fourth, the results were so diffused when we got through that I had some doubts about its value.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, we could have held it in Saigon...

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

SENATOR DIRKSEN: No, the statement is clear on that point. We have heard these expressions of the needs of the Republican Party as it prepares for 1966 and beyond, and we believe some action is necessary and this is our method to impart vigor and strength and knowledge into the operations of the Party.

QUESTION: Thank you.