

GOP LEADERS CONFERENCE

SENATOR DIRKSEN - REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK

June 11, 1964

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: We are seriously disturbed by repeated reports in responsible newspapers that the Johnson Administration is postponing a decision on the war in Viet Nam until after the election in November.

This has twice been reported by the New York Times whose highly-respected columnist Arthur Krock wrote in the May 24th issue that President Johnson fears the election campaign could "require him to make the fateful decision he hopes to postpone until after election day." In the same issue a Washington story on Viet Nam described the Administration as "moving with the usual caution of an election year though many here doubt that the critical choices in Southeast Asia can be put off until November."

The Washington Post on June 1 reported from Saigon that the Viet Nameese think there will be increased action this year "but say it will stop short of a direct challenge that might force the United States to take some face-saving action it would prefer to avoid during an election year." The story also reported that a Viet Nameese paper, the Saigon Post, in a front-page editorial had "noted that the Communist Viet Cong rebels are not hampered by any election campaign" and concluded that "what is worse, they know we have our hands tied until November."

The Washington Star has reported that no decision will be made until "December of later," while the New York Times - covering the Honolulu conference on Viet Nam said "officials hope now to stretch over a longer period of time a program of less dramatic political and military moves" in South Viet Nam.

Two weeks ago the Joint Senate-House Republican Leadership declared "indecision in Washington is dribbling away both American lives and American prestige in Southeast Asia." If this indecision is based on the politics of an election year, as the press is indicating, the Johnson Administration must be prepared to answer for it. We think all Americans will support a firm policy in Viet Nam, but they will never tolerate an election year gamble that could endanger the American position in the Far East.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. On June 1, the United States and the Soviet Union signed a consular convention, the first bilateral treaty ever negotiated between the two nations. Subject to ratification by the Senate, the convention would authorize negotiations for the Soviet Union to open consular offices in such cities as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco in exchange for similar American offices in the Soviet Union.

The agreement contains an unprecedented concession to the Soviet Union. Although a consular office is concerned principally with trade and its officials and employees do not enjoy diplomatic immunity, the Soviet

Union demanded that a provision be included for immunity from prosecution for crime, including espionage.

Only four months earlier, J. Edgar Hoover, Chief of the FBI, testified before the House Appropriations Committee as follows (and I quote him):

"It is well established that a top-heavy percentage of Soviet bloc official personnel assigned to this country actually have intelligence assignments... the number of these representatives has steadily increased over the years and the Soviet bloc works diligently to send more and more such representatives to this country."

The Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, has stated that "Communist espionage in this country is much more active than it ever has been." Yet the Senate is now going to be asked to ratify an agreement that will increase Soviet espionage and cloak it with immunity from prosecution to boot.

The State Department tells us the unprecedented immunity concession was necessary to obtain a Soviet agreement to notify our authorities of the apprehension of American nationals within three days and accord access to them within four days. We think the Senate should take an exhaustive look at this strange deal before any vote on ratification.

If the Russians are "mellowing" as the State Department contends, then the United States has paid an exorbitant price simply to get the Soviet Union to accord American citizens the same treatment that other civilized societies do.

QUESTION: Senator, does that mean that Republicans are going to vote ratification of this treaty?

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, we want to find out exactly what is involved here, what is meant by these provisions in Article 19 of the convention, because it contains three paragraphs... and as you read them, they seem abundantly clear on the point that there is an immunity from prosecution for crimes. Well, obviously, espionage is a crime, and unless we waive - there the matter would stand.

Now this is going to have to have some clarification because I think that's going to be a very difficult idea to sell to the Senate.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, I have no timetable in mind, because there are appropriation bills, there is the debt limit, there are the excise tax extensions, and a great many other items. Some kind of a timetable will have to be set up, but certainly this would have to follow because there IS a limitation, namely the end of the fiscal year, so far as appropriations and these other items are concerned.

QUESTION: Senator, this thing doesn't have to be acted on in this Congress -

SEN. DIRKSEN: Exactly so. There are other conventions pending now that have been around for quite some time on which there never was any action.

QUESTION: Have you got any information, Senator, that the Administration wants to ratify -

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, I can't say they want to ratify it quickly, but the President's statement has been made with respect to this

so-called convention and one would assume, of course, that he would not want undue delay. But I think we can be pretty well assured that this is going to have an exhaustive look-see.

QUESTION: Senator, what else do you think has got to be done before the Republican Convention... (coughing at this point)... you've got the civil rights bill... what else do you have to have?

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, on appropriation bills, of course, you can pass an interim resolution covering virtually all of your regular supply bills. I presume you could even do it so far as the public debt is concerned, although the House evidently, the House Committee is going to take action as I understand this week or next week and Congressman Halleck can speak to that - and that would be true of excise taxes also, because unless you have an interim resolution, obviously there's going to be some tax laws.

QUESTION: Speaking about excise taxes, do you expect the Senate to eliminate that package of excise taxes -

SEN. DIRKSEN: Certainly the matter will be presented in the House. I hope it succeeds. I undertook that before in the Senate Finance Committee... succeeded far beyond my expectations for a period of one day and some hours... and when I got to the Committee at 3 o'clock, I found that under a motion to reconsider it had been completely flopped about and that I lost on all four categories by one vote in the Committee.

QUESTION: If your position does not win in the House, will you then forget about it for another year?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, no, I shall certainly present the matter in the Senate all over again.

REP. HALLECK: There will be a Republican motion to recommit on excise tax extention - to cut back 5 percent and then 5 percent - and finally eliminate it all. The matter will come on under a closed rule, but that still leaves to us the right to a motion to recommit and my guess would be as of the moment that motion to recommit will prevail.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

REP. HALLECK: That's right... 5 percent the first year, 5 percent the second, which would be the elimination of the excise tax.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

REP. HALLECK: That's right.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: One difficulty there, as you know, is that the merchants have to make a return so that even if you cut the tax in half, you still have the burden upon thousands and thousands of small businesses in the country.

REP. HALLECK: Yes, but I think, Senator, if the business people who are burdened with this could look forward to the elimination of that tax, they would be very happy about it.

QUESTION: Don't you want to speak to the consumer, too?

REP. HALLECK: I trust the consumer would profit by it. And we hear a lot of talk about the consumers, but sometimes I think some of us who generally are not supposed to be for the consumer really are more for him than some other people we could think of.

QUESTION: You want to just cut the excise tax to 5 percent -

REP. HALLECK: That's right.

QUESTION: Mr. Halleck, the Ways and Means Committee hasn't reported the bill out yet...

REP. HALLECK: I think they have... I'm not sure about that. But it will be reported and will be on the floor next week under a closed rule, but as I say the closed rule will still leave to the minority the motion to recommit.

QUESTION: (Asks something about Viet Nam... does Rep. Halleck think there should be enlarged military action against Communists in North Viet Nam?)

REP. HALLECK: Well, I have been asked before just exactly what I would do in Viet Nam. I do not have... I haven't been... no one has talked to me about it particularly in quite some time, and I don't have all of the information. All I'm saying is: whatever policy we have there, it ought to be announced and it ought to be firm and it ought to be followed.

QUESTION: ... a major campaign issue?

REP. HALLECK: I would think so. I don't... many times we say that any matter involving foreign affairs should not be a major campaign issue. But there have been campaign issues against our side and I guess probably it would be quite fair to say there may be some fair issues in respect to the other side.

QUESTION: Mr. Halleck, if the civil rights bill is passed in the Senate - substantially in its present form - what will happen to it in the House?

REP. HALLECK: Well, I've said before... there are two course generally open, there could be three. There could be a motion to suspend

the rules if the Speaker saw fit to do that - to take the Senate bill. I doubt whether that course would be taken. The other course would be, because of course, /undoubtedly there would be an objection to an unanimous consent request - to send it to conference, or to take the Senate bill - that probably a request would be made for a rule to either send the bill to conference or to take the bill as finally amended by the Senate. And I think the determination as to that course would in large measure depend on just what the Senate does with the bill now that they are in the amendment stage.

QUESTION: Speaking of a more immediate matter, Mr. Halleck, do you expect a record vote on the pay bill this afternoon? Do you want the Republicans to support a move for a record vote?

REP. HALLECK: Well, I don't care what they do. As far as I'm concerned, I voted against it before and I propose to vote against it this time. Now Senator Dirksen doesn't quite agree with me in that matter, but it wouldn't be the first time that he and I haven't seen exactly alike on everything and probably won't be the last. But at least that's my position. I don't care whether they call the roll or not - in order that I may not be under any question about it, I'll just announce now that whether they call the roll or not - if they don't call the roll, that's somebody else's business - if they do call the roll, I'm going to vote "No."

QUESTION: Don't you think in view of this that there should be a roll-call vote?

REP. HALLECK: I don't want to get into that. That's a matter for the House of Representatives to determine. We called the roll before.

the measure was defeated. It has been substantially changed since that time, the increase has been reduced, and the effective date has been delayed. How much change that will make, I do not know.

QUESTION: You are still opposed to that reduction?

REP. HALLECK: Yes.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

REP. HALLECK: I wouldn't think so. Of course, we've got a convention coming up out in San Francisco - some 17 members of the House are on the Resolutions Committee, they're starting their deliberations the first week of the convention, preliminary to the convention. I had expressed the hope in many quarters around Washington where they might have something to say about it - that we ought to be cleared in the House of Representatives from July 3 to July 20. Now I know many people hope that the civil rights bill can be down at the White House before July 3, before the opening of our convention. I would... of course, Senator Dirksen can tell you much more about the timetable than I can and obviously the situation in the House can be in some measure controlled by the Chairman of the Rules Committee, but in the final analysis, while the Democrats have 10 members on the Rules Committee and the Republicans have only 5, it is no secret that Republican members of the Rules Committee brought the bill to the floor of the House and I suppose will have to be depended upon again - having some regard to the timetable that can be set up.

QUESTION: Senator Dirksen and Representative Halleck... (asks about Presidential succession...)

REP. HALLECK: Speaking for myself, I don't think so.

QUESTION: Senator Dirksen, do you want to comment?

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, the matter is still in Subcommittee. We agreed to send it to the full committee in Judiciary with reservations, of course, so that if any modifications are presented they will be considered in good faith. Now we haven't met in quite some time and that was mainly due to the fact that we were immobilized as a result of the civil rights struggle... the committees can go forward now, I think, at a reasonably early date. I might say we're having a little survey made to ascertain how many of the pending amendments to the pending civil rights bill may be called up. The last count indicated that altogether there are over 500 amendments, but we had a nose-count on our side and a very respectably modest number will be called up - many of those are, well, I won't say inconsequential, but they're not too substantial, and therefore it doesn't take too long to dispose of them. I believe a similar survey is taking place on the other side of the aisle. And we will be able to fashion some kind of a target for completion of the work on civil rights within the next few days.

QUESTION: ... Congress finish all of its work by Democratic convention time?

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, frankly, that I do not know, because it depends on how controversial and how many controversial matters may be presented after we come back from San Francisco. There will be time to get the pending business out of the way - probably a few additional things - and then, of course, we shall come back and address ourselves

as diligently as we can to the labors in hand. But there is still quite a backlog and that includes foreign aid authorization and foreign aid appropriations.

QUESTION: (NOT CLEAR... asks about civil rights bill.)

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, I said all I had to say on the subject when I made those final remarks on the cloture petition. And there is nothing further that I need add. What we tried to do... I made manifest so often and so often... was to take a bill and get out what I thought were the imperfections and the deficiencies and make it practical and workable. I think it's generally conceded that it had imperfections in it. I thought out of this composite effort there came a very good substitute - not offensive - but it is workable and it will make an excellent start. Beyond that I have no particular comment to make with respect to what might have been said by an individual Senator.

QUESTION: ... this bill would make an excellent start. Does this imply... (rest of question not clear).

SEN. DIRKSEN: Well, I'm drawing now on thirty years of legislative experience. In every session now we consider housing bills that go back to the parent bill in 1934. I don't know how many times I have voted on reciprocal trade ... it would come up either at the end of three years, two years, sometimes one year. The legislative process is a continuing process and you're dealing with certain substantive matters and they'll always be before you. The Taft-Hartley Act is, for instance, an excellent example. I doubt whether you'll ever see a session when there isn't some suggestion about modifying that act in the labor field. We still amend the Agriculture Adjustment Act of 1934. So you can't say

when a session comes to a close that you take a sharp knife - cut down the middle - and that's the end of it... and when you begin again you're wholly detached from the past because you're not.

QUESTION: Senator.... the Republican leaders across the country feel that the nomination of Senator Goldwater would mean a loss to the Republican seats in the Senate and the House. Would you give your estimate as to what would happen if Senator Goldwater is nominated?

SEN. DIRKSEN: Those are purely personal opinions by those who uttered them and beyond that I have nothing to say. The convention will speak in due course. I believe we can summon a unified effort in the interest of victory and I think it will be an excellent effort when we get around to it.

REP. HALLECK: I've been saying for a long time and I still say it... we're going to have a convention in San Francisco... the delegates are going to run that convention... we're going to write a platform. The Chairman of that Platform Committee is Mel Laird of Wisconsin who has had a lot of experience in this regard. He's... they're going to write a good platform... the 100 members of the Resolution Committee, the Platform Committee, will write it. It will be a platform devised for the best interests of all of the people of this country. I've also said that the convention will nominate a candidate. He's going to be a good man - or woman - I guess it will be a man - and he's going to be elected. As far as I'm concerned, I am as confident now as I've been all along and I stand by that position.

QUESTION: Thank you.