

A LOOK AHEAD BY THE REPUBLICANS

Interview With Senator Dirksen



—USN&WR Photo

"The question is: Can you finance what is going on in Vietnam and at the same time carry on domestic programs?"

Is this to be a comeback year for Republicans in Congress, and at the polls?

What will be the decisive issues in the new session: Vietnam, "Great Society," spending?

For answers, members of the staff of "U. S. News & World Report" interviewed the Senate's Minority Leader, Everett M. Dirksen, of Illinois.

Q Senator Dirksen, do you feel that there is a good chance the Republicans can make a comeback in the 1966 elections?

A Frankly, I believe there is. Let me tell you why:

Parties do not defeat each other. Generally speaking, parties defeat themselves. A party becomes the victim of its mistakes and of its blunders because these are communicated to the public quickly through newspapers and news magazines. There are TV reports and radio reports every hour on the hour. What's more, this is a literate country. People are in a position to read, to understand and to judge.

Q Are you saying that the Democratic Party is about to become a victim of its own undertakings?

A Well, as I travel around the country, I have been astounded by a number of things. The way in which the so-called antipoverty war has not caught on is one example.

Take Peoria County, which lies about in the center of Illinois. The board of supervisors had a meeting to determine whether to accept a poverty grant. Some people were arguing: "Look, here is money out of the Federal Treasury. Why shouldn't we take some if it is there?" But the vote was 2 to 1 against so doing.

Those people just didn't believe that there was a sufficient need to reach into the Federal Treasury and take a hatful of money that could not be carefully and properly expended.

Q Do you find this attitude widespread?

A We've been making a survey of other counties in Illinois. I have no doubt that there is need in some counties. On the other hand, the poverty people went down to Livingston County—completely agricultural—and all they could find for the youngsters to do was to go along Main Street and pick grass out of the bricks in the sidewalks.

They have a library in which the librarian works a few hours in the morning and a few hours in the afternoon. For that, she received \$75 a month. But the sponsors of the antipoverty program decided to assign three Job Corps girls to the library. The little girls received more money than the woman who was a trained librarian.

Things like that become the talk of the town and of the

... "Cost of living is the highest in the country's history"

county. And what do people say? They say: "Look what's happening to our tax dollars."

Q In this new session of Congress, are Republicans going to try to sidetrack some of the "Great Society" programs?

A We'll try to cut out all the fat we can and deposit on the sidelines the things that are not necessary to the economy or that may be of doubtful value to the country.

I have looked at many of these antipoverty-program reports. There was the one that caused me to do that little ballet pirouette on the floor of the Senate. Imagine the idea of taking 437 teen-age girls between the ages of 13 and 15 out to look at a variety of occupations from "truck driving to choreography"!

That wasn't my language. It was from the official release put out by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Now I'm having trouble getting those releases. But I've asked for a copy of every release they made, particularly on Camp Breckenridge, in Kentucky. It is under the supervision of Southern Illinois University. That gives me a special interest.

The university got a 9-million-dollar grant. I discover now that of the 636 enrollees in a camp meant for 2,000 there already have been 200 dropouts. That's a lot higher dropout rate than we have in public schools. I am advised that 21 of the camp's staff have either quit or been dismissed. There was even talk that 50 wives of staff members were on the payroll. I haven't been able to verify that latter item, but I've asked for the information and I'm going to get it.

FLAWS IN "GREAT SOCIETY"—

Q What, in your opinion, is the trouble in "Great Society" programs?

A Lack of planning. You shouldn't undertake these kinds of programs without ample time for the most careful analysis.

If I need an example, I'll go back to the old WPA [the New Deal's Works Progress Administration]. Everybody was delighted when they said: "We'll build some runways at the airport in Joliet, Ill."

Now, Joliet is 28 miles from Chicago. There were many times when the Chicago airport was fogged in, but you could get into Joliet in a DC-3.

What happened? I remember landing on those runways on some occasions. Pieces of concrete flaked off—just flew in all directions—and pitted the planes' propellers. Finally, all the work had to be redone. How do you justify that sort of thing?

In my home town, they put in a sewer. But when they got to the place where they had to go under switch tracks in the industrial area to get to the Illinois River, they hadn't gotten any clearance. There was a sewer, but no outlet.

Q Do you detect a new attitude among Congressmen, with elections coming up this year?

A Well, even the Democrats are saying that it's time to sit back and take stock of what's been done. I think back to a newspaper interview of Senator Mansfield [Mike Mansfield, of Montana, Senate Majority Leader]. He stated that so much of the legislation in the first session of the 89th Congress had been so hastily done that it was in need of refinement—that we would have to knock off the rough corners, plug the loopholes, assess our capacity to meet the cost, and it was going to take considerable time.

Look at the rather peculiar situation that has arisen in Illinois. Our welfare people went on the theory that when you had a \$7 increase in the Social Security check, that you deduct that amount from the welfare that comes out of the State pocket. Of course, there was resistance right away.

People became extremely vocal about it. It's one of those little things that's going to be ventilated in connection with Social Security.

Then there's medicare. It hasn't gotten under way sufficiently at the moment to make a judgment. But the tax is starting on a new base—\$6,600 rather than \$4,800. Consider for a moment companies like Caterpillar, Cleveland Twist Drill, International Harvester, the automobile makers, and others with many people making \$6,600 or more. There is going to be a substantially bigger deduction from their paychecks. It will amount to over \$100 more than it has been in a year.

And the cost of living is going up. It is the highest in the history of the country. Don't think people are not talking about the high cost of living today. They go out and look at pork chops at \$1, \$1.05 a pound, and other staples where prices have risen sharply.

Q But doesn't that stem from high hog prices which are helping farmers?

A I know, but think of the consumer, particularly in the big metropolitan areas. And, over all, farmers are not too happy about what they're getting because their prices are still well under parity.

I just have to let these programs speak for themselves and for their impact on the producer and the consumer. It's the old story. When you begin to tamper too much with the economy of a complicated country and you start letting decisions be made in Washington, D.C., instead of in the marketplace, almost invariably you are going to develop imbalances and trouble.

Q Do you feel that is happening now?

A I think so. Business—large and small—has always complained that, when Government intrudes too deeply, the free-enterprise system is impaired.

Suppose I'm in the steel-fabricating business. I call a steel plant. "What's the price on channels and on bars and on rods?" The fellow at the other end of the line gives me a price. I say: "Put me down for 10 tons of channels and 10 tons of rods and 20 tons of bars." That's a decision that's made in the marketplace. Millions of such decisions are made in the marketplace every day.

But suppose Government comes along and says: "Wait a minute. You can't charge that much for channels." Right away troubles begin.

PROBLEMS WITH PRICES—

Q Will Republicans make an issue of President Johnson's efforts to hold prices to so-called guidelines?

A The question is: Where is the end of that road? We've had steel—twice—which caused quite a flurry. Then came aluminum, and then came copper. Then wheat. You should hear farmers remonstrating about the Administration's announcement that it would dump surplus wheat on the market.

Q Do you see signs that these "intrusions into the marketplace," as you call them, are impairing President Johnson's support from businessmen?

A I do not pass on that particular end of it because most of the developments are relatively recent, but I've heard a lot of discussion of other aspects of Administration policy.

After Congress adjourned last autumn, I took exactly four days' vacation. Then I went to work on tour—Idaho and Kansas, Pennsylvania and New York, Illinois and Alabama and Texas, wherever the schedule took me. I talked with all sorts of people—business people, waiters, cab drivers, everybody

... Vietnam: "Let's get the war over and done with"

who would talk to me—just to get their reaction. Some of it was pretty sharp.

The reaction, for instance, on our fight against the repeal of the "right to work" law was absolutely overwhelming in every section of the country where I visited with people.

There was an equal reaction with respect to our fight on the Supreme Court decision on reapportioning of our State legislatures.

And, of course, there's very strong and rising interest in Vietnam. That's a matter of deep concern to people everywhere.

HOW VOTERS REACT TO WAR—

Q What were some of the things people are saying about Vietnam?

A I think, generally, they want this thing to proceed, and with vigor, to bring it to a successful and honorable end with a minimum loss of life.

Q Are they concerned about the cost—and the draft calls?

A It wasn't that so much as it was to get it over with, because, if it can be brought to a victorious end, your draft calls, obviously, will stop, except for certain replacements, and your expenditures will diminish accordingly.

Let me make it as clear as crystal that I've said over and over that the colossal sin is not that we're in Vietnam. As Republicans, we must accept our share of responsibility by virtue of the pledges that were made in Geneva. I accept my share. I do not evade it. I have said that the real sin is that we've been there too long. It's become a war of attrition.

Who can say what the end will be? The war's impact has to show up in higher taxes, or in throwing overboard some other things that are seemingly desirable.

And the factor that you can never overlook is the bringing back of these boys who make the supreme sacrifice. Here's a lad who lands in a casket in a little town. Right away the weekly papers have a headline: "Joe is home." The funeral services are announced. The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and other organizations will be there in uniform.

There'll be the squad that fires the salute. There are the fathers and mothers. "That could have been my youngster." And the further this goes, the more diffused that sentiment becomes. You can't escape it.

Q Do people blame one party or the other for Vietnam?

A It's not a case of assessing the blame. I've said to the President that I'm in his corner where our national security and interests are at stake. Let's get the war over and done with and do what is necessary to bring peace over there.

I think it's pretty generally conceded that Vietnam is the key to Southeast Asia. Shall this Red contagion continue to engulf the world, country by country and continent by continent? Who shall say what will happen if we relent?

Q Do you feel that President Johnson is following a policy that will, as you say, "get the war over and done with"?

A Yes, I think so.

Q Would you favor using nuclear weapons if necessary to end the Vietnam war?

A The day that Pandora's nuclear box is opened, no human being is able to tell what its ramifications will be. What will be the impact, the damage? What will it invite from those who also have bombs with nuclear warheads?

Q Will the use or nonuse of nuclear weapons be an issue in this year's elections?

A I doubt it. I think that everybody in both parties has

always wanted to see that, first, restraint is exercised; and, second, that the final word rests in the most responsible hands. I can imagine a situation in which a field commander caught in a full-scale struggle saw the possibility that his whole Army corps was likely to be decimated. Should he have authority to employ nuclear weapons? But communication being what it is today, it takes only a jiffy to get to where you want to go for the word.

Q Some Republicans have been critical of Secretary of Defense McNamara. What is your view?

A I think Bob McNamara is a very able citizen. There isn't any question about that. However, Bob McNamara has not been trained in the military art. That's the difficulty. Civilian decisions are made that have high military import.

Q How do you mean? Was the McNamara decision to cut back on bombers and rely more on missiles an example?

A Yes. In fact, that's the nub of the present controversy—whether the decisions on bombers and bases do not dangerously reduce our striking power when and if needed.

Q How do you feel about those decisions?

A I've always been rather restrained about comment in that field, not having expert knowledge of such matters. How would I pit my judgment, for instance, against that of Gen. Curtis LeMay, who has worked a lifetime with bombers—particularly with the Strategic Air Command—and whose business it is to think not just in terms of Vietnam, but in terms of the whole globe?

Q Do you feel that military men like General LeMay should have more voice in military decisions?

A Well, I have considerable confidence in Curtis LeMay. He worked at his trade. There was nothing sentimental about him. He's as down to earth as anybody I ever knew, and I think his judgment and those of men like him should be carefully taken into account.

AT ISSUE: ARMS SHORTAGES—

Q In 1965, Republicans in the House made quite an issue of shortages of military equipment in Vietnam. Will this be an issue this year?

A I would rather think so, and I can tell you why:

Certainly, one of the ablest and most conscientious Senators who ever sat in the U. S. Senate is John Stennis, of Mississippi. Now, he got concerned about this question of weapons. Did we have an adequate supply? Were we cannibalizing our equipment and supplies in other parts of the world to get enough for Vietnam?

As chairman of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee, John Stennis called for an investigation. I understand that the report on that investigation is rather revealing. Strangely enough, only echoes of this report have been heard from time to time.

Q Hasn't this report been made public?

A The question always with a report like this is: How much of it can you safely release without showing your hand to the enemy? I have never been one to telegraph a punch to the enemy, or to disclose our weaknesses.

Q One more question on military matters: Will Republicans press for faster development of a defense against missiles?

A Yes, I think so, because what is there to keep these intercontinental missiles with their fabulous ranges from plowing into our cities, unless we've got an antimissile missile that's reasonably effective, accurate, and on the beam? There is no defense, unless you want to go underground.

Q Would you favor spending the money to develop a de-

. . . "If you have no country, what else matters? Nothing"

fense against missiles even though it might mean, for example cutting back on the antipoverty program?

A Yes.

Q Senator, what is your answer to civil-rights leaders who say they will protest if funds for the war on poverty are cut?

A The defense of the country comes first. If you have no country, what else matters? Nothing. If we should ever be conquered by a power that had developed this kind of frightful weapon, what could we do? We'd be at their mercy.

Q Do you think that the country has to choose between guns and butter—

A The question now is: Can you finance what is going on in Vietnam and at the same time carry on these domestic programs which Congress authorized during the first session?

For example, there has been talk of 1.5 billion dollars for the antipoverty program for the next fiscal year. I believe the highway-beautification program called for 300 million for a period of two years. Do you appropriate these sums, cut back on them, or do you lay these plans over to one side and say: "This is something that can wait"? War inevitably calls for sacrifice.

Q What other big issues do you see upcoming in this session of Congress? Do you look for a strong push by the Johnson Administration to repeal section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act—the so-called "right to work" law?

A Well, the President didn't give much time to it in his message to the AFL-CIO convention in San Francisco. But, in all honesty, I must say that when he and I discussed it, the President said, "I am committed." I said, "So am I." That was it. He didn't discuss it.

Now, a little dispatch came out of San Francisco when the AFL-CIO was meeting there saying that "associates of Dirksen" had said that I might be agreeable to a compromise on 14(b) and reapportionment.

Q Meaning you would be willing to back down on 14(b) if you could get support for your constitutional amendment that would block the Supreme Court decision that States must reapportion their legislatures on the basis of "one person, one vote"?

A Yes. But there is exactly nothing to any of those stories that have gone around. In my book, neither reapportionment nor 14(b) admits of compromise. Both of them are matters of principle, and if, in the solution of a problem, you compromise a principle, it is no longer a principle.

You'd be surprised at the amount of feeling that this 14(b) controversy has developed in the country. Why, I addressed dinner meetings and rallies of 900 to 1,000 people and more in Boise, Idaho; San Antonio, Texas; in Alabama, New York, Illinois, Kansas and elsewhere. There were businessmen, farmers, ranchers, miners, workers in every line of activity. These were not hand-picked audiences. When I came to 14(b) I said: "I'll fight on this rock, so help me." And they just stood up and cheered.

REAL STAKES IN WORK LAW—

Q Will Republicans make the "right to work" law a prime issue in 1966?

A The issue is definitely a repeal of 14(b), because the principle is simply whether an American citizen, to hold a job, has to pay tribute to a labor organization.

Now, the other thing about 14(b) is this: When a "right to work" law is in effect, the union member has a disciplinary weapon to use on the union officers. If the officers try to abuse the members, or despoil the treasury, or perpetuate

themselves in office, the union man can just go to them and say: "If that's the way you want it, then here's my union card."

We have received as much, if not more mail from union members than from nonunion people asking for retention of 14(b). We sorted out that mail by the bagful. Here was a fellow writing in longhand: "You can use my name if you want to. I've been a member of my local for 25 years. We have a good local, and the reason we have a good local is because we've got 14(b)."

REAPPORTIONMENT "CRISIS"—

Q Is there absolutely no chance that you would back down on "right to work" in order to get enough votes for your amendment on reapportionment?

A Indeed, not. To me, the principle of 14(b) is basic and must be preserved. Now, as to reapportionment, I go even further. I think this is a crisis in our Government, for many reasons.

Q In what way?

A In the first place, the Supreme Court took a single phrase in the Fourteenth Amendment: No State "shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." They took that phrase and built it into the denial of the right of the people to determine the form of their Government. And all this despite the clear intent of the Fourteenth Amendment as so clearly set out in the dissenting opinion of Associate Justice Harlan.

No. 2, the Supreme Court decision is an invasion of the sovereignty of the States which the Constitution vouchsafed to them.

No. 3, the decision disturbs the beautiful balance in our Government. It isn't an accident that Article I of the Constitution provided not for the executive or the judicial, but provided for the legislative. Members of the House serve two years. They have authority to originate revenue bills. The reason is very clear: If they tax us too heavily, we only have to wait two years to haul them out of office.

They set up the Senate for six years—a continuing body with power to advise and consent to treaties and appointments of ambassadors and other officers of the Government.

Jefferson once said to Washington: "What do you think of these two bodies?" And Washington replied: "What's the first thing you do with hot coffee? You pour it in the saucer to cool it. That's the reason for the Senate."

So we have two-year terms for House members, and six-year terms for Senators, and in between a President with a four-year term.

If Congress does a foolish thing, the President has authority under the Constitution to veto legislation and send it back. But that's not the end of it. Congress can override his veto.

Now, conjointly, the executive and the legislative branches may do a foolish thing. Over there is the [Supreme] Court. They take a look and say: "You have invaded the Constitution. What you have done is null and void." And if the Court errs, the Constitution can be amended, even as it has been 24 times.

These are the checks and balances that go all the way through our Government.

Q Doesn't the Supreme Court decision deal only with reapportionment of State legislatures, not with the Federal Government?

A But the Court has upset a balance between the central Government and the States by intruding to tell a State what it must do with its legislature. In doing so, they have violated

... Raising minimum wage "would liquidate little businesses"

the whole principle of fair, balanced representation, which it has taken centuries to achieve, and that makes the situation a crisis in our governmental scheme. Let's spell it out a little to see how these things grow: Almost immediately after the Court's decision in June, 1964, a suit was filed in Kent County, Mich., to reapportion the board of supervisors on the basis of one man, one vote.

A suit has even been filed by the dean of De Paul University in Chicago to force reapportionment of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois to carry out the edict of the U. S. Supreme Court.

Now, how far do you go? There's no end to what that rolling decision can finally do.

They talk about "rotten boroughs" and about a State senator who may represent 20 times as many constituents as another State senator. Look at the Senate of the United States. There are two Senators from New York State with a population of 17 million, and two Senators from Nevada with a population of 265,000. Just figure out the discrepancy in representation there.

PROTECTING STATES' ROLE—

Q Those who favor the reapportionment decision say that you are opposing a shift that will bring government closer to a pure democracy—

A Ours is a representative republic. I believe it is within the domain of a State to give representation and balance to the interests in that State.

Look at how control in many States will shift completely to urban areas. In Illinois, Cook County—which includes Chicago—has more than half the population of our State. That means that, if they so desire, representatives of one county can do pretty much as they please with respect to the other 101 counties.

What's involved in the other 101 counties? These are the areas where you have rural schools. You don't have rural schools in Chicago. What about farm land? Not much of that in Chicago. This one county controlling the situation may decide to put a State tax on farm land.

There's no end to what might be done. I made a list three pages long of the things that would be of importance. All those will be subject to an urban-controlled legislature under the one-man, one-vote principle.

Q Do you think the result would be a dictatorship of the majority that could deny the minority its rights?

A Yes. But there's another aspect in all this that is overlooked:

Those who are organized to resist my amendment and who want to perpetuate this one-man, one-vote ruling are smart. Mr. Meany [George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO] said he would rather give up on repeal of 14(b) forever than surrender on reapportionment. Why? Because labor leaders know that they can control both branches of many State legislatures under this Supreme Court decision. Lack of that control has been their problem.

In Illinois, for example, labor could get things through our general assembly, but when it came to the State senate there was a chance to take a look and cool things off.

Q What does your amendment on reapportionment provide?

A It would require one branch of a State legislature to be apportioned strictly on the basis of population. The other branch could be based on factors other than population. The apportionment plan developed by the State legislature would be submitted to the voters in a referendum. On that referen-

dum ballot, you would have to put on the one-man, one-vote plan, also. Now they say: "Well, it's too late. The boat has left the pier."

Q Too late to reverse the Supreme Court action?

A Not to reverse it, but to meet it. They say too many States have already reapportioned on the basis of one man, one vote.

They miss the point. Let us assume that we get this amendment passed and the States ratify it so that it becomes part of the Constitution. My State might not want to do anything about it. Tennessee might not want to do anything. The point is that I want to have available to the people of the States a weapon that they can use if they want to. Today, there is no weapon.

We want to go back to the people. They are the sovereign in our form of government. In my amendment, we have said that after every decennial census the State legislature must again submit an apportionment plan to the people. So once every 10 years, the people have a chance to vote on the matter.

Q Do you look for the Democrats to push for an increase of the minimum wage in this new session?

A Yes. They have talked about as much as \$2 an hour, and extended coverage. And, from my earlier excursion into that field, when I was on the Senate Labor Committee, I know that this would have great impact. It would involve a lot of small establishments—restaurants, laundries, groceries, notions stores, etc. Such an increase in the minimum wage, coupled with extensive new coverage, would be quite a burden. It would, as I see it, liquidate a great many little businesses that simply can't take it.

Q Looking forward to the November elections: Would you be willing to estimate the extent of the Republican gains you expect?

A No, because you still have 10 months to go. In 10 months, all sorts of things can happen. Who shall say, between now and November, what will take place with all the uncertainties in the world? All of a sudden, for example, we find ourselves with a finger in the pie over in Rhodesia.

Q Should we have a finger in that pie?

A Frankly, that's a long way from home, and, after all, what we're trying to do is to give some aid to Wilson [Harold Wilson, British Prime Minister]. But, now, here are these African countries running out on Wilson. So what's going to be the upshot of this matter?

Here we have the Dominican Republic. That's as far from being peaceful as it was the day we sent the boys down there.

And who knows what the Cubans are going to do? Chile wants to put up the price of copper. Brazil has been converted into a virtual dictatorship. Who knows in what direction President de Gaulle is going to go? Or whether Chancellor Erhard was satisfied with his conversations here?

On top of everything, there's the population increase—65 million more people in the world every year, with 15 million more in Red China alone. How will Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai feel when they get a billion people in 1980?

DECISIONS U. S. MUST MAKE—

Q What moral do you draw from all this, Senator?

A The moral is that we will be plagued with headaches, and at long last we are going to have to answer for ourselves.

Exactly what is our capacity to redress all the ills, problems, and grievances of the world? At what point must we draw the line in our own interest and for the sake of our own security and our own solvency? To me, that line has to be drawn sometime in the not-too-distant future. **[END]**