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MEET THE PRESS

America's Press Conference of the Air

Produced by: LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

Guests SENATOR EVERETT M. DIRKSEN, (Rep.-Ill.)
Senate Minority Leader
and
REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES A. HALLECK,
(Rep.-Ind.) House Minority Leader

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Panel: JACK BELL, *Associated Press*
RICHARD HARKNESS, *NBC News*
LYLE WILSON, *United Press International*
LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK, *Regular Panel Member*

Moderator: NED BROOKS

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MR. BROOKS: For the first time in eight years the Republican Party enters the new session of Congress with the Senate, the House of Representatives and the White House all in control of the Democrats. In both branches of Congress controversy already has developed over President-elect Kennedy's legislative program and the rules under which it will be considered.

Our guests today are two men who play major roles in the effort of the Republicans to stage a comeback in 1962 and 1964, Senate Leader Everett Dirksen and House Leader Charles Halleck. Both have had 26 years of experience in Congress. Senator Dirksen, a lawyer and businessman, is a high-ranking member of the Republican Policy Committee. Representative Halleck also has had an active part in policy matters, and he served as the Chairman of the 1960 Republican National Convention.

MR. SPIVAK: Senator Dirksen, the Republican platform pledged the Republican Party to "best efforts" to change present Rule 22 which permits the filibuster. What exactly in your judgment does "best efforts" mean?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: It might mean, of course, that you modify the rules so that instead of two-thirds of the members present and voting, you might hit upon three-fifths, although presently there is an effort after extended debate to have debate closed by a majority vote. However, the platform itself does not particularize, and you could go in either one of these two directions if you wanted to conform to the platform.

MR. SPIVAK: Can you tell us in what direction the Republican members of the Senate are going?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: There is some difference of opinion. I would say that a substantial majority of the Republicans would not go along with the idea of having cloture as a result of a majority vote. There is a large number who probably would accept 3/5ths, but it remains to be seen when the voting comes on next week exactly how they will comport themselves on a record vote.

MR. SPIVAK: How will you vote?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I certainly will reject the idea of cloture as a result of a majority vote. I think I am rather fluid on the so-called 60 percent or 3/5ths. I have come to no stated or settled conclusion on that point.

MR. SPIVAK: Is there no Republican policy on this? Your platform promised to make a change. What change would you

make as a result of the platform promise? You are one of the leaders, Senator.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: The point is, you are not under obligation to accept everything that appears in the Republican platform. I am not unmindful of the fact that two years ago, along with the Majority Leader, I was a co-sponsor of the rule that is presently on the Senate rule book and under which we operate.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Halleck, as Republican Leader of the House, what plans do you have to accommodate your policies with the policies of the Republican Governor of New York, Mr. Rockefeller?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: I don't know, why a particular question is presented to me that would indicate that I would accommodate the Republican position in the House of Representatives with Mr. Rockefeller. Let me just say this, that we Republicans in the House of Representatives—many of us have been there a long time. In the past and under President Eisenhower we have had affirmative programs to deal with all of the things that are presently talked about, like aid to depressed areas and school construction, increase in the minimum wage, highway improvement—I could go on with a lot more. We have had affirmative programs in respect to them, and so far as I have been able to discover, most Republicans have felt that we were doing about right in what we were doing. As far as this Congress is concerned, I have said before and I say again, ours shall not be a policy just of obstruction for obstruction. It shall be not a negative position, rather will our position be an affirmative, positive position. Might I say, so far as I can see, something of a projection of what have been the Republican-Eisenhower principles of the last few years. As far as Governor Rockefeller is concerned, my door is open to Governor Rockefeller. It is open to Dick Nixon. It is open to Barry Goldwater. So far as I am concerned, may I say again, we Republicans in the Congress have an initial responsibility to formulate a program and work for that program, a program that we believe is good for the country. If President Kennedy comes out with a program we think is good, we are going to be for it. But if we think it isn't good, then we are going to be against it, and I think that is the way it ought to be. But all Republicans will be consulted; we seek their cooperation, their advice, as we go along in these very difficult, troublesome times.

MR. WILSON: You are going to consult Governor Rockefeller?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Whether you mean by that I am going to call him up and ask him what he thinks about a given thing—I would say that Governor Rockefeller knows that he can call me any time or come and see me any time, and his suggestions certainly would carry some weight with me.

MR. BELL: Senator, you are going to have some rather controversial nominations before you shortly. Among these is the nomination which President-elect Kennedy expects to send to the

Senate of Robert Weaver, who happens to be a Negro, for head of the housing and home loan agency. Two Democrats have already said they are opposed to him. What is the Republican position on Mr. Weaver at this point?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Actually there is no Republican position on him. If you want to know my position, I think it goes back to a statement made by Senator Taft years ago when I asked him why he had voted to confirm Dean Acheson. He said "I believe one is warranted only in raising a question as to the character and competence of a nominee," and that would go particularly for the Cabinet because I believe within reason the President is entitled to select a Cabinet of his own choice. So, I would put it on that ground, and certainly discrimination as to race wouldn't enter into any judgment that I might render.

MR. BELL: Carrying that a little further, would this apply to Bobby Kennedy, too? It is all right for the President-elect to choose his own brother for Attorney General, and the Republicans would have no objections to that?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I certainly would not raise the nepotism issue. It has been in government for a long time. It has been assailed by the press and a great many others. I shall not raise it. I will confine my efforts, of course, to making a record as to character and competence and letting it stand at that.

MR. BELL: Would you raise the issue that Bobby Kennedy has not tried cases as a lawyer?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: That involves a question of competence.

MR. BELL: Is that completely competence? Isn't it merely a matter of the experience. He has had wide experience; he has been in the Justice Department before. Are you going to ask what he did in the Justice Department before, how he has conducted himself as a lawyer previously?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Necessarily you must, because the Attorney General runs the entire Department, and I think it is expected by tradition if not by statutory requirement that in cases of extraordinary moment and gravity, he should appear before the Supreme Court of the United States. Obviously you would want one with excellent legal background in order to do the job like that.

MR. BELL: Do you think the President-elect was wise in appointing his brother as Attorney General?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: It is not for me to pass upon the wisdom or prudence of the decision made by the President-elect of the United States.

MR. HARKNESS: I have heard you quoted both ways, sir; let me ask you today: What are your views on a Republican-Southern Democrat coalition in the House?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: I am glad you brought that up. There has been a lot of talk about a coalition as if it were

some sort of a sinister thing. There never has been a *quid pro quo*. So far as I know, there never will be.

I was accused on this very program something less than a year ago of having made a deal to get the Landrum-Griffin passed, and supposedly the deal was that we wouldn't do a civil rights bill. Clarence Brown, of Ohio, on the Rules Committee moved to report the civil rights bill to the floor, and we all voted for it.

I think the true situation is simply this, that we are now 174 Republicans strong in the House of Representatives. If we hadn't had one of our men in Indiana counted out in what I think was an unconscionable exercise of just straight bull power, we would have had 175. But we will make up our positions in respect to the things we believe in, and if any Democrat, North, South, East or West, has brains enough and sense enough to see that we are right, then we welcome his vote.

MR. HARKNESS: I am still not sure whether you were quoted correctly or incorrectly when you said you favored a coalition between the Republicans and Southern conservatives?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: I never said I favored a coalition. There was some statement to the effect that I have met with some of these people, and I have, and I have met with other people who are not from the South, since I got back here for this Congress, but as a matter of making agreement that would mean that on our side we would do something we didn't believe in because we carried support on the other side from certain people, that just does not exist. As a matter of fact, it was mentioned by Mr. Brooks that Senator Dirksen and I have been here 26 years. Mine has been continuous in that time. When I first came here, there were lots of Democrats who voted with Republicans. We didn't have very many Republicans, but I think it was a good thing for the republic that they did.

MR. HARKNESS: Let me put the question in a little more specific way: Will your Republican bloc in the House, 174 members, go along with this liberalizing of the House Rules Committee by purge or packing?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Let me just say this: Until I know what the Democrats are going to do, I am not in very good shape to say what we are going to do, and as a matter of fact I don't know what the Republicans are going to do.

MR. HARKNESS: It is pretty plain what the Southern Democrats are going to do, I would think.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: That is right, but the Southern Democrats are not in the majority on the Democratic side, as I understand it. I don't know about that—I served on the Rules Committee for a number of years, and the Rules Committee is cussed and discussed, but I would like to point out one mistake that many of you people in the business of disseminating news are in the habit of making. You know all five of the key Kennedy proposals came to the floor of the House of Representatives in

the last Congress: minimum wage and coverage, school construction, depressed areas, housing—well civil rights came, and there was one other one that slips me at the moment—medical care for the aged.

One of them came under Calendar Wednesday. But as I remember it, there was not even an opportunity given to the Rules Committee to report. Let me just say one other thing: We have four Republicans on the House Rules Committee under the present arrangement. I don't know whether that is going to prevail or not. One of our members was defeated, and one of them didn't run again, so I've got two places to fill, and I must say that a lot of people have kicked it around pretty loosely when they presume that you've got to have changes on the Democratic side. I don't know. I know that Carroll Reece of Tennessee voted to send the school construction bill to the floor of the House of Representatives in the Rules Committee, and Republicans voted for other rules that brought these key measures to the floor of the House of Representatives.

MR. WILSON: Senator Dirksen, Mr. Halleck has just recalled five matters of urgent legislation which the President-elect has said he would ask the Congress to enact, and quickly. Is there any item on that list of five on which the Republicans in the Senate would go along with the Democratic proposals?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I am not sure. The best answer I can give you is that we shall have substitute measures for every one of those on the so-called urgent agenda. We will not disturb—some at least, will not disturb the medical care proposal. It only went on the books last September. It would seem to me unjustified to tinker with it at this time, when it has had no opportunity for articulation and action at the state level. As for the rest of them, we shall have substitute proposals for every one and seek to offer them as amendments or as substitutes on the floor of the Senate.

MR. WILSON: They will not be identical?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: No, in every case they will not be identical.

MR. WILSON: May I ask you this: In view of the statement some days ago by Senator Case of New Jersey—I am not attempting to quote him directly, but he implied that he thought the Republicans in the Senate should support some items of the Kennedy program; he didn't say which ones—do you expect to hold all of your Republicans for the substitute proposals?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I think I can indicate what they had in mind, particularly, the so-called distressed areas bill. One was introduced from the Majority side. One was introduced by Senator Scott of Pennsylvania. I introduced the one that was last presented under the incumbent Administration in August of last year. With some refinement, that is before the Senate at the present time. So there will be different bills, but we

will try, of course, to get a common position on at least one acceptable substitute.

MR. SPIVAK: Congressman Halleck, there has been some question as to who today is the leader of the Republican Party, and I believe that when you were asked whether it was to be Vice President Nixon, your answer was, "I'm not going into that." What did you mean by that?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Mr. Nixon was our candidate for President of the United States. He made a good campaign. He stood for the things that by and large I stand for. He came within a gnat's eyebrow of being elected. Now, of course, he is going to continue to be an important voice in the Republican Party as far as I am concerned, and I am sure, as far as everybody is concerned.

Now I think—well, if you want to—

MR. SPIVAK: I was just going to ask you; I would like a responsive answer if I may get it for this: President Eisenhower was the leader of the party for eight years. Obviously he isn't the leader any more as soon as he leaves office.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: That is right.

MR. SPIVAK: I don't think he wants to be, and you don't recognize him. Is the Republican Party leaderless, or do you have a leader?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Oh, no, the Republican Party isn't leaderless. Of course, you have Mr. Dirksen and me.

MR. SPIVAK: That's two. Are you then—

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Well, now, that was a little facetious. We have more Republicans in the House of Representatives than we had before, and the Republican Party is not leaderless. I have said that the initial responsibility—we have just been talking about bills that are presently to come before the Congress, and may I say if the task forces—I have been reading the headlines in the papers—\$2.5 billion for education—

MR. SPIVAK: Let's stick to the leaders; this leader thing let's stick to the leaders.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: All right. We'll stick to the leaders. I should have gotten into the headlines about so many more billions for housing—

MR. SPIVAK: We'll get into it.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: I hope you do.

MR. SPIVAK: Stick to the leaders. Who is your leader?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: There is no one leader in the Republican Party as I see it today. As a matter of fact when President Eisenhower was President, we still had a Republican Policy Committee in the House of Representatives, and there were some occasions when there were differences of opinion about what ought to be done.

MR. SPIVAK: I know, but are you saying that you didn't recognize President Eisenhower as the Republican leader?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: He was the President and the Republican leader, but there were differences of opinion, and sometimes those were harmonized, and we tried to harmonize them.

MR. SPIVAK: Am I to understand from your answer that you do not recognize Vice President Nixon as the Republican leader?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: No, you are not to understand that. If you want me to say to you, Mr. Spivak—and I think that is putting it kind of unfairly, that Dick Nixon is going to call every shot for all the Republicans in the House and the Senate in respect to what we do, then the answer obviously is, no. If you are asking me, is his voice going to be an important one in the councils of the Republican Party for the next two and four years, the answer is yes.

MR. SPIVAK: No, sir, the question I am asking you: Is the Republican Party leaderless or not?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: No, the Republican Party isn't leaderless.

MR. SPIVAK: Who is your leader?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: I think probably it has more able, competent leaders than the Democratic Party, but we won't go into that any further.

MR. HARKNESS: Senator Dirksen, you are on the Judiciary Committee. You said the other day that the Republicans had the duty of a thorough going-into of Robert Kennedy's record. You also had this line, which rather struck me. You said that, "If the fears which some people have are materialized, we can at least say, 'This is the record that has been developed by the Republicans.'" What did you mean when you said the "fears" of some people.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Exactly what I said before. There have been any number of telegrams and letters expressing some apprehension that a young man who has had only a modest amount of indoctrination in the law and certainly no extended law practice, as everyone knows, might not have the competence to be Attorney General of the United States. You are bossing a big department, involving a good many divisions. You are expected to be a lawyer who goes before the Supreme Court and argues cases. You are expected to have good legal background, and I can think on the point of competence and fitness, the record ought to be made so that if the question ever arises in the future, we can simply say, "There is the record, and it must speak for itself."

MR. HARKNESS: Senator, there was just this exchange between the Congressman and Mr. Spivak on leadership. Do you see a Goldwater-Rockefeller fight for control of your party?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, I don't know. Having been in this business for a long time, one could easily speculate on that. You know that every once in a while words are uttered that seem a little derogatory of either one or the other.

MR. HARKNESS: There seemed to be some the other day.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Those don't bother me very much. I think there is a fine, cohesive unity in the Republican Party, and notwithstanding these little sallies in the field of personalities, we get along pretty well.

MR. HARKNESS: Do you see Goldwater and Rockefeller, marching together shoulder to shoulder in cohesive unity?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I would say this to you, if Nelson Rockefeller were the candidate, I would bet all the tea in China that Barry Goldwater would support him.

MR. HARKNESS: What about the other way around?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Exactly so.

MR. BELL: You were mentioning a moment or two ago about some of these recommendations that were made to President-elect Kennedy. I think you mentioned specifically \$2,300,000,000 for housing and some of these other spending programs. There was also a recommendation recently for a tax cut, if necessary, to counter a recession. How would the Republicans in the House feel about a tax cut and an increase in spending at this point?

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: I can speak only for myself.

MR. BELL: I think you speak very well for most of the Republicans in the House.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: I hope so. I would say this: We believe in fiscal responsibility. The country, with the draining out of our gold reserves, the other things that we all know about, must be prudent—must be prudent. We've got to be prudent in our fiscal policy. And so, to me it would be "nice work if you could get it" to spend \$15 or \$17 billion more. Apparently with these task forces reporting the predictions made during the campaign as to the additional billions that would be spent if they are passed would be true. Now, how do you protect the savings of the people, the buying power of the people, by adding to that a tax cut as was, I guess maybe as a final resort, recommended by the Samuelson task force, and maybe by the AFL-CIO? It just doesn't seem to me that that is in the works, and I would say, as far as I am concerned, I can't see that at the moment.

MR. BELL: Even if the recession gets deeper, it is your judgment the House Republicans would oppose a tax cut which seems to be agreed upon by the economists as the best way in which to shoot some money into the economy right away.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Most of the economists—and I am kind of one myself. I got an AB in economics from Indiana University years ago, but I must say much of my economics seems to be kind of out-dated. But in any event from

what I have seen in the press, most of them seem to think that maybe some of these other pump-priming operations would be better.

MR. SPIVAK: Senator Dirksen, do you think it is good or bad for Mr. Dillon to accept the Treasury job?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: It is a little hard to pass judgment. He is a competent person. He did an excellent job in the State Department. He is well indoctrinated and versed in the whole fiscal field as a result of his private enterprise, and I am confident he would make an excellent Secretary of the Treasury. If it was his judgment that he should accept, if he was invited, if he had conferred with the President on the matter and there was no objection, I for one would certainly put no obstacle in the way.

MR. SPIVAK: Aren't you going to have a difficult time making issue of fiscal policies of the Kennedy Administration with Mr. Dillon in there?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Only if Mr. Dillon may have assured somebody that he was going to relent from the positions that he took before, but insofar as I know, no such request was made and, consequently, he isn't called upon to forfeit the convictions he had and that he uttered when he was doing business under the incumbent Eisenhower Administration.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Mr. Spivak, could I make just one observation? A little bit ago I think I said something about a question being unfair. Could I take that back?

MR. SPIVAK: Yes, sir. Yes, sir, I am very happy to have you take it back.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Halleck, The New York Times quoted you recently as saying, and I quote—

MR. BROOKS: Mr. Wilson, I am afraid we are not going to have time—

MR. WILSON: I can't quote it?

MR. BROOKS: You can't quote it, and he can't answer it, I am very sorry.

REPRESENTATIVE HALLECK: Well, the Times talked about the Halleck threat, but I don't believe it is too bad.

MR. BROOKS: Saved by the gong. I am sorry to interrupt but our time is up, gentlemen. Thank you very much, Senator Dirksen and Representative Halleck for being with us.

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