SUNDAY, JULY 3, 1966

GUEST: SENATOR EVERETT MCKINLEY DIRKSEN (R. Ill.)

INTERVIEWED BY: Edward P. Morgan, ABC News Commentator
and
Wally,’eran, ABC News Correspondent

MR. MORGAN: Senator Dirksen, even on this Fourth of
July holiday weekend, Vietnam must be on everybody's mind.
It is said that the President's bombing order has escalated
the war. What do you think of his action and where do you think
it will lead?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Probably the best answer I can give is
the action that was taken by the Republican National Coordinating
Committee consisting of a half-dozen members of our
national committee, a half-dozen Republican governors, joint
leadership of Republican leadership of the Senate and House,
those who have been candidates for the Presidency and the Vice-
Presidency and then, of course, President Eisenhower. And
we meet about every quarter.

Now it was on the 13th of December of last year that we met
and we issued a one-page paper on this very subject and I need
c only recite what the essence of it was.

MR. MORGAN: Do.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Because we shared the objective -- and
there is no difference about objectives, but we recommended
that there be a Kennedy-type quarantine so far as the Port of
Hyphong is concerned, and then specifically recommended that we
use conventional naval and air power to bomb strategic
targets in critical target areas.

MR. BRUNER: You are pleased, then, with the latest --

SENATOR DHRKSEN: Indeed I am pleased and I support it.
I thought it should have been done long ago. Because that was
seven months ago that we made that statement and we are getting
around to this bombing only now."

Now I am not critical of that delay. I only say that
that represented the best consensus thinking of Republican
leaders from all over the country.

MR. MORGAN: The port of Hyphong has not yet been quarantined, mined or bombed. Do you think it must be?

SENATOR DHRKSEN: Well, let's wait and see what the net
result of the two bombing strikes will be.

Now we have reason to believe that morale is diminishing
rather rapidly in North Viet Nam. In fact that was disclosed
to us at that last briefing session which was three weeks ago
tomorrow at the White House. You may remember that I had to
harrass the President a little in order to get the joint
leadership back there but we did. Among other things we dis-
covered that in the interviews of these Viet Cong prisoners
almost uniformly, now, they were talking about what was
happening to the morale in North Viet Nam.

MR. BRUNER: Well, then, you think the credibility gap that you have described is no longer a problem? You think now you are getting the information you need?

SENATOR DIRksen: We are getting the information we need. I have so stated. You see it took a long time to get that joint meeting so that we were fully advised of what the exact impact of our action was.

MR. MORGAN: In other words, you think the President is now leveling with the people and probably doing so because of your prior criticism?

SENATOR DIRksen: Well, I won't say that he has not leveled with the people before. There is such a thing as not quite disclosing all the things that we think we ought to know. He may have quite other ideas. That still doesn't open him to the charge of leveling. It is only that it gives us ammunition and it fortifies us because we are not only accessible to the public but infinitely more accessible than he and of course when you go back home there are people -- and this is the No. 1 topic in their minds, and you have got to have something more than a superficial answer.

MR. MORGAN: Senator, the President said that this bombing was necessary because we had to raise the price of aggression at the source. At every prior time that we have increased our strength, the enemy has met the price. What if the enemy
continues the price and we run out of targets in North Viet
Nam?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, now, we will know whether or not
the enemy will meet the price. The easiest way to determine
it is whether or not there is a sudden cessation in that
Viet Cong
steady march of vehicles and soldiers down the Ho Chi
Minh Trail, part of which goes through Cambodia.

Now the last figure we had was that the infiltration was
about 4500 a month, and that has been rather constant. Now
we will watch and see what the effect is going to be. When
you find a diminution in that effort then you know that the
strikes have been exceedingly effective. The only way you will
get fuel down there then will be on the backs of coolies in
the form of heavy drums of gasoline and that will be equally
ture when you try to fuel your airplanes.

MR. BRUNER: But Senator, one of the biggest concerns,
before, last January, when the doves in the House and the
Senate sent their letter to the President asking a continua-
tion of the bombing pause, one of their concerns was whether
or not Red China might come into the war on the side of the
North Vietnamese. Now if we continue the heavy bombing
raids in North Vietnam, does that not bring Red China closer to
having to make a decision?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I see no reason why. I have never been
too seriously disposed over the allegations that have been
constantly made that it is an open invitation to bring Red China into this conflict. After all, Red China is vulnerable in her own right. Here she has set up these nuclear installations and obviously we know where they are because of the effectiveness of our reconnaissance.

Now suppose it should happen and you had to go in and bomb out all these installations, the fruit of a long-time labor? Red China doesn’t have anything much that is disposable except manpower, and millions of it. But when all is said and done without weapons, what is it like?

MR. MORGAN: Tomorrow is the Fourth of July and Independence Day would hardly be Independence Day without a Dirksen speech somewhere. Have you got one booked for the Fourth?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, let me say I had one booked and strangely enough I had it booked for the Fourth of July, 1965. The same place, the same speech, perhaps, for 1966. But a year ago, two days or a day before the Fourth of July, I was in an ambulance on the way to Walter Reed Hospital because of recurrence of those intestinal spasms. This year I was so unfortunate as to tumble out of that high-geared bed in the same hospital and came up with a fractured hip and I am as full of hardware as a country hardware store -- thinking of all the nails and other gadgetry they put in, because they nailed me together.
MR. MORGAN: So you are not going to make a Fourth of July Speech. This will be the second time in how many years that you haven't?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I suppose since eternity. But you saw me hobble in here on crutches, in a wheelchair, and the surgeons don't like the idea of me getting very far from a medical base for one thing, or clamoring around on airplanes for another, so I have got to be content. But I will be thinking, I will be ruminating about that great day, which is the greatest day in our civil calendar.

MR. BRUNER: Is this going to also affect your campaigning this fall, Senator?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Wally, I am afraid so because there comes a time when this hardware has to come out and I rather dread the thought because then there will be another convalescence period. How long, I can't say, but it will be a good many weeks before commencement for me.

Now if you ask me what "Commencement" is, it is when I graduate from crutches to a cane.

MR. MORGAN: Continuing on the political business for just a minute before we have to interrupt, Senator Dirksen, since you can take somewhat of a detached view of the campaign in Illinois, how do you judge the Percy Douglas race at this point?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I shouldn't mention this because
it is my own estimate before I even knew it, but somebody only
this morning, within the last half-hour, gave me a little
fill-in. I am of the opinion that our Republican candidate
is going to win. And now to fill in, I understand these
early polls show our candidate in a preferred position.

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MR. MORGAN: Senator Dirksen, you have been a Taft Re-
publican, an Eisenhower Republican, a Goldwater Republican,
and some people even call you a Lyndon Johnson Republican.
What is your definition of a Dirksen Republican?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, a garden variety of Republican
who takes seriously the traditions of his party, the precepts
of Abraham Lincoln and very notably, of course, his constant
and unremitting dedication to the principles of the Declara-
tion of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.
And incidentally, I think that is a good note to strike, be-
cause we are on the threshold of Independence Day.

Wasn't it Lincoln, when he stood in Independence Hall in
Philadelphia who said if he had to give up those principles
he'd rather die on the spot? And mind you, he was on the way
to this man's town to take the oath as President of the United
States, but he dedicated himself to it, nor did he ever depart,
as a matter of fact.

MR. BRUNER: Senator, though, I think you will concede,
and I will say it in a complimentary way, that a few years
back -- I don't know just how many; perhaps you can tell us --
you suddenly seemed to rise above the partisan political pic-
ture and now you are in this rarified atmosphere of statesman-
ship. When did this come about and what brought it about?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, Wally, I don't know. Maybe it is
introspective.

You know, I have a favorite quotation, oft times. When
I am thoroughly frustrated I can say as Soloman said, "Lord, give
Thy servant an understanding heart," and when you get an
understanding heart and you get perception and some vision
after the manner of Aristotle, of course the road is infinitely
easier than it otherwise would be. But I think another thing
happens. You see age gives perspective, too. You look back
and you think about the people who were here before we were
here, who built themselves into the roads, the bridges, the
fields, the factories, everything that constitutes America,
and they made their sacrifice and then they moved off into
infinity, and then came another generation. So just think,
we are the legates of all those who have been in this country
before, so we have an obligation to the past that we so readily
forget, today. And with it goes a concomitant duty to the
future and that we are likely to forget. But when we remember
it, I think it begins to stabilize your views and begins to
set you up on higher ground. Whether you like it or not, it
becomes almost a very fixed thing and you are bound to take
those views.

MR. MORGAN: I think you are going to have to retract that statement that you weren't going to make an Independence Day address. You just made a capsuled one which fits in very well.

I hope you don't consider this question impertinent, but I am afraid that we in the journalistic trade may have to plead Guilty, a little, to having made sly remarks from time to time about the organ quality of your voice and your histrionics as a politician.

Has this ever angered you? What has been your reaction?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, no. In public life there is no such thing as impertinences. After all it is give and take. You throw and you are thrown at, and as Brother Truman said, if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen. And all things go. And you have got to accept it in good grace.

Look at the lawyers who go into a court room and they fight like dogs, almost to the name-calling stage. But in the evening they walk out of the court room almost arm in arm, even though they are on opposite sides of the case. So you have something of that same attribute in public service and you ought to demean yourself accordingly.

MR. MORGAN: Speaking of the kitchen, sir, we are sitting, as it were, right in front of it. This building has been your workshop some thirty years.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I am glad you used the word "workshop." It is so frequently forgotten with respect to the Capitol.
MR. MORGAN: First you were over on the House side for
sixteen years and you have been here on the Senate side for
more than fourteen. What do you consider your most important
accomplishment, legislative or otherwise?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, if I had to put it in the large,
probably it would be my endeavors to stop legislation that
was not in the public interest. Because I have followed the
old precept of Gibbon, the great historian, who said "Progress
is made not so much by what goes on the statute book but rather
by what is kept off and what is not put on."

MR. BRUNER: Can you give us the one bill that you stopped
that you are happiest about?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I think I have had a part in stopping
a good many. As, for instance, the efforts to repeal Section
14(b) in the Taft-Hartley Act. There, of course, there was a
determination to do exactly that at the expense of the freedom
of the American worker, and I took almost a solemn, reverent
vow that it would be over my dead body. As a result we
organized and we were organized on both sides of the aisle so
that it was not a partisan endeavor, it was a bipartisan en-
deavor and I was very candid with the President about it.

I said, "You shouldn't have sent it but," I said, "since
you did, you are going to get a fight, and it will be fighting
all the way."

MR. MORGAN: The Congress has stopped you upon occasion
as well. They stopped you on your effort to make a Constitutional Amendment effective repealing the Supreme Court's one-man, one-vote. Where do you think you will get with your amendment regarding prayers in the public schools?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, I am going to win. I am going to win in a great big way, I am sure.

Now on apportionment, we had a different problem. It is a little abstruse for the average citizen to explain to him and develop the kind of background--that you should have. Because as Lincoln once said, "Without the people, little can be accomplished. With the people, nothing will fail."

But try to explain what you mean by the reapportioning of your state legislatures and then you are in something of a difficulty in making the case out in the hinterland. Here we can make it because we have a familiarity with the language and with those techniques. But with the Prayer Amendment, this is just as simple as it can be. I have had the benefit of advice of those attorneys who were in the New York Board of Regents case before the U. S. Supreme Court, and also the attorneys in the Stein v. Oshinsky case, where they recited this little prayer:

"God is great, God is good, and we thank him for this food,"

and they said, "It will not do," and as a result while the U. S. District Judge upheld the parents who insisted on having
their children say that prayer, the Circuit Judge said No, and it didn't go on appeal to the U. S. Court but the Board of Regents case did.

MR. BRUNER: Well, why do you feel so strongly about this? SENATOR DIRKSEN: Because, Wally, I think prayer is a pipeline to God Almighty, and we recognize God in everything we do.

Go into that House chamber and see it chiseled in that new paneling, there: "In God we trust." We have done it on our coins.

MR. MORGAN: Is that a governmental function, sir, to provide the channel?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: We are not trying to take it a governmental function. We just say, if the parents want their children to pray in the public school, voluntarily, they ought to be permitted to do so.

You specifically in the amendment provide that no school board, no school authority, shall prescribe the form of the prayer or the text of the prayer. But if their parents want them to utter a little prayer, let there be a little corner, a little space, a little vestibule, a little room, I don't care what it is. Take them up on top of the roof of the school building if they like or down in the deepest basement of the school, but wherever it is, let them, of course, keep that connection and never cut that pipeline.
MR. BRUNER: Well, Senator, you sound like someone who has first-hand knowledge that prayer helps.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I do, Wally. I told you once before when my eyesight was in the balance and I quit that branch on that end of the Congress, I was on my knees on a Pennsylvania train and I said, "Lord, is this it, or isn't it?"

He said, "No." Just as emphatic as it could be. And when the surgeons got the old knife out to cut this eye out -- that's my good eye -- I said, "No."

You see, you don't fly in the face of the advice of a good many surgeons -- and there were seven on the staff -- without at least having something more than a slender reed to fall back on, and that reed had to be an almost consuming faith that there was work for me to do in this world and they wanted to keep me around for awhile.

MR. MORGAN: Senator, do you think all of your Republican colleagues have a pipeline to the precepts of Lincoln? I am thinking particularly of the stand politically that some of them take in the South regarding racial matters.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, I can only hope that they can see the distilled wisdom of Lincoln at all times, as these problems come up. There are actually no new problems. They have a different form, a different context, but essentially and basically, problems not unlike those that have been here before. And Lincoln knew what they were. And what was the last word
he said in the last of the seven debates? He said, "Though
the tongues of Douglas and myself will be stilled --" and
he meant Stephen A. Douglas, with whom he was debating -- he
said, "I hope I have put down some blows for civil liberty
that will count and be remembered."

That was the substance of the last sentence in the last
of those seven debates. And I try to follow exactly that.

MR. BRUNER: Senator, looking ahead, now, what are you
looking forward to most in the years ahead? What do you see
as your goal, today?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, a stable country. A country
that has stable money, a country
that goes steadily forward. And over and above everything else,
a country where the morale climate of freedom will not fail.

We are, today, what we are, because there is an atmosphere,
hero, where you can go out and you have an opportunity to do
it for yourselves. There are no barricades. No impediments
standing in the way if you can do it. So you can enrich your-
self and while you are doing it you enrich your fellow men
also.

Show me any country in the world where there are no such
barricades. Here they are the exception. But now we are
moving in that direction and that disturbs me.

MR. BRUNER: A country that has a future has to have a
past. You certainly are a man of history. Why, then, are
you supporting the change in the West front of the Capitol,
which some people say will destroy all the vestiges of history remaining in this Capitol building?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: For three or four reasons. No. 1, there is a safety factor involved, here. You must have looked at that wall and seen the bulges and the cracks. Secondly, there are five volumes over in the Architect's Office by a skilled engineering company from Brookline, Massachusetts, to show that that wall is dangerous. And if we could go over there we could see these wooden supports that they think are going to hold up that wall.

Now about two weeks ago they had a little seismic tremor down around Alexandria. Suppose we got one here? Who could give any assurance that that wall couldn't fail, and with it everything that hangs on it?

Now think of it. That is for safety. But think of it in terms of the people who go through here. Thirty Thousand a day.

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MR. MORGAN: Senator, the opponents to the change in the West wall of the Capitol argue that it can be shored up and made safe without the enormous expense of alteration. What about it?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: You can put new soles on an old pair of shoes but they are still old. And that is still going to be an old sandstone wall, and what have you got for the expenditure.
and is it safe? And think of the tourists who go through there.
Project it now on the basis that there will be 50,000 a day
in 135.

MR. BRUNER: Senator, one final question before you get
away from us, today: Is Lyndon Baines Johnson a good President?
How do you evaluate him?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, he is a skilled president. He
is a president who is founded in history. And when he was a
majority leader and we were opposite numbers, we went on a
theory that this was a two-way street and government had to
be made to work, and he still undertakes that, and his door
is open any time I want to see him. My door is open any time
he wants to see me. My telephone line is open any time he
wants to call. And so from the standpoint of a cooperative
endeavor between that part of the legislative branch that I
have the privilege to represent, and the executive branch, I
must say he has done quite well.

MR. BRUNER: Thank you very much, Senator Dirksen, for
being with us on ISSUES AND ANSWERS.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Thank you.

MR. MORGAN: Thank you, Senator,

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NEXT WEEK, W. Averell Harriman, United States Ambassador At
Large,