FACE THE NATION

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Republican of Illinois

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exceptional political skill, but there is always a first time."

Does that mean you think he has about had it?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I just mean that when you put into a bundle
the problems of Viet Nam and the dissidence that is developing
in the country, this question of rioting, and certainly there
are people who will feel that the Administration may in part be
at fault; and then of course the request for a 10 per cent
surcharge, and add to it a few other things, you have got
yourself quite a package. And it is by the accumulation of
those difficulties that parties ultimately defeat themselves.

It is like the old ship that gets enough barnacles to put it
out of business.

MR. AGRONSKY: Well, Senator, where do you stand on those
particular issues? Will you support the President on a 10
per cent tax increase, for example?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I take them as they come. I think my views
on Viet Nam have been pretty well known. I have supported
the President. I go on the theory that in his corner he has
the Chiefs of Staff, he has the best military talent we have,
he has these reports from Viet Nam, probably every hour on the
hour. And obviously he is in better position to know about
what the situation is than a layman back here 12,000 miles from
the scene of operations who has not been to Viet Nam in a long
time, and who is in no position to judge.

Now, take, for instance, these last rather massive assaults that
have been made in the last few days. How telling and how
effective will they really be? They may add up to something.
I am in no position to tell at the moment, on the basis of the
dispatches that come from there. It may be effective.

MR. LISAGOR: Your House colleague, Representative Gerald Ford,
has said of the Viet Nam war that it has been shockingly
mismanaged. He seems to know what is going on there. Do you
agree with that, or don't you?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I hope there is somebody who knows.
But I think it would be high pretense on my part if I tried to
undertake the role of an expert on Viet Nam. I have to take
it for what it is. And I try to be a realist about it. Who
do we have the Joint Chiefs? Why do we have the best that the
Army could offer by way of a staff under the leadership of
General Westmoreland out in Viet Nam? And then of course
either ignore or brush aside their demands and their advices?

MR. AGRONSKY: I find it hard to believe, Senator, that you
would abdicate in effect the role of the critic of Viet Nam
policy or any other policy because you feel the Administration
has the experts and you are not an expert. You certainly
do not subscribe to that, sir.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I undertake the role of a critic when I have
sufficient information on which to predicate what I think is
sound criticism.

MR. HART: Well, Senator, are you going to support the
President all the way on guns and butter, facing the deficit and the necessity of a tax as we face this year; are you going to support him all the way, or is there a breaking point?

SENATOR DIRksen: Now, you are asking for a rather anticipatory conclusion.

MR. HART: Well, do you anticipate any breaking point?

SENATOR DIRksen: Wait just a minute, until I finish an answer. That tax surcharge proposal will go to the Senate Finance Committee. I am a member of the Committee. We will probably start with the Secretary of the Treasury. We will have witnesses galore. And I trust I can be at every session of the Committee and hear the testimony.

What I want to know is what will be the impact of a ten per cent surcharge upon the economy of the country, and what will be the impact of a possible $30 billion budget deficit on the economy. One must necessarily outweigh the other.

Now, I read the statement by the economist for the Bank of America this morning who thinks that a tax increase would be shocking from the standpoint of what it will do to business. Well, we will have to find out. And I want to find out. Then I am in a far better position to render judgment.

I would hate to think of a $30 billion deficit staring us in the face and what its impact will be on inflation, because we may have to pay more in the grocery store, in the clothing store, in interest rates, in tighter money, in nearly every
other phase of activity than you would if you had a tax increase.

But I just don't close the door -- why should I -- until
we have had that testimony.

MR. HART: Well the question is could the strain become such
that you would withdraw your full support of the war.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I have to see what the effect there
will be. What are the alternatives? Shall we withdraw?

Where does it leave us? Where does it leave our prestige
so far as the world is concerned? Will we have to make a
stand elsewhere at some other time? Because if we did, there
is no defense line between Saigon and Singapore.

Now, what do we do with our Pacific defense line -- pull it
back to Alaska and Hawaii? Then they are only 2,000 miles
from California.

There are some strategic and long-range objectives that have
to be evaluated before you come to that kind of a conclusion.

MR. AGRONSKY: Senator, clearly you support the President's
policy in Viet Nam.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I definitely have.

MR. AGRONSKY: OK. Now, what we have today everyone agrees
is a question of priorities. We must fight the war in Viet Nam.

You support that completely. And at the same time we must
deal with the problem of the cities and these riots.

Now, your junior colleague from Illinois, Senator Percy,
has said that if we can spend $66 million a day to save