MR. LAWRENCE: Senator Dirksen, about 15 months ago candidate Nixon on the New Hampshire Primary campaign trail said that he could end the war in Vietnam and win the peace in Asia. Has President Nixon ever indicated to you how or when?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: No, Bill, as a matter of fact, he has not. That is, in any specific detail. But he had a general format that somehow -- first of all, you had to make progress at the Paris negotiations, and in the second place, you had to have an understanding with the leaders in Vietnam, meaning
South Vietnam.

Now, in pursuing that, he has Lodge over in Paris at the present time, and while that has been going rather slowly, I think some progress has been made.

In addition, of course, his meeting with President Thieu in Midway Island added up, I believe, to some real progress because he discovered that Thieu was quite flexible for one thing, he was knowledgeable, he understood pretty well what had to be done, and those factors taken together with the kind of counsel that he got from General Abrams, was enough to suggest that perhaps we could for the first time start bringing live bodies back in the number of 25,000 and to do it as quickly as possible.
MR. LAWRENCE: Senator, towards the end, though not at the beginning of the Korean war, the Republicans used to ... that Truman's war. Now, I noticed the other day that the New York Times called this one "Nixon's war." Is that fair?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, are they ever fair under these circumstances? I suppose I denominated the Korean struggle as Truman's war. But I point out this essential difference: You forget that Truman ordered the troops in, as I recall, on a Sunday afternoon. He conferred with no one. He took advantage of a little gap in the United States operation and ordered the troops to Korea, and titled it a police action.

Now this is a different undertaking. Behind this you have got three Administrations. The Administration of President Kennedy, that of President Johnson, and before that, President Eisenhower, and now you have President Nixon. So this is an inherited position, this is a legacy that he has gotten from his forebears, so to speak, and he is undertaking to do the best he can with a rather solid problem.

MR. DONALDSON: Senator Dirksen, 25,000 men to be withdrawn shortly, and many hints that that will be followed by another 25,000 and perhaps even more increments within a nine to 12 months' period. Do you think that the South Vietnamese Army is ready to fill this gap or are we really just trying to buy time for the Nixon Administration?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, first of all I think I can respond
directly by saying that I do believe that they are ready to fill that gap. I think in talking about pulling out troops, I'd rather think in terms of replacements by the South Vietnamese. One of the problems we had out there was to make sure that a larger number was being equipped with the M-16 rifle. That was a rather slow process. But that was one of those morale builders that really built up and exhilarated these South Vietnamese troops. So all signs being equal, I think they will be equal to the situation and to the challenge.

MR. DONALDSON: There is also a hope explicit in troop withdrawal that North Vietnam might match it, might also deescalate by withdrawing some of her own troops. Do you think that is a real possibility?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: It is hard to tell. On the basis of their expressions thus far, one might not believe so, but I think there are certain factors in the picture that add up substantially to the hope that perhaps it could happen.
MR. LAWRENCE: Senator, during the Korean War again you
and other Republicans were quite free in your criticism of the
way the war was being conducted. Why are you so extraordin-
arily sensitive now when Senator Kennedy suggests that maybe
Mr. Nixon isn't running this war right?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Bill, I don't believe I can recall that
anybody on our side of the political fence ever cast any
aspersions whatsoever on our military command in Korea. But
you see, the statement that the Senator made was a direct
affront, I thought, and a direct reflection upon our ablest
commanders in Vietnam.

Now, who will deny that General Creighton Abrams is one
our very finest commanders and a man who studied in the
military art?

Now, when you talk an operation and say it was senseless
and irresponsible, well, whoever ordered that operation was
then senseless and irresponsible in doing it, and that, of
course, had to be taken at face value and some response had
to be made.

MR. LAWRENCE: Senator, I didn't mean to suggest that
you ever criticized General MacArthur. Far from it. What
was talking about was your criticism of Mr. Truman. I remem-
ber the criticisms of the Republicans that you wouldn't bomb-pay
the Yalu, the privileged-sanctuary theory, the terrible
casualties you were taking at Heartbreak Hill, which I suppo
is just another name for Hamburger Hill in another
piece of real estate in the Far East. We didn't hold
Heartbreak Hill either. We gave it back in the settlement.

Didn't you make those criticisms?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I made my share of criticisms at that
time, but I was very careful not to reflect upon the capacity
of those who were leading the troops.

Now, the Commander-in-Chief is a different thing. He
is not a military man --

MR. LAWRENCE: He is fair game.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: He is fair game in the sense that he
is President of the United States and he is a policy-maker.

MR. LAWRENCE: And he is another politician.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: He is the Commander-in-Chief but he is
not an officer in the field and that sets him apart.

MR. DONALDSON: But Senator, we have a fundamental
question here of how to fight this war when we are engaged
in negotiations. Let's look at the search and destroy
operations and the operations like the one on Ap Bia
Mountain, Hamburger Hill. There are many people, including
Ambassador Governor Harriman, who believe we have to de-
escalate the fighting; we have to de-escalate the engagement.
Do you approve of continued military operations that throw
American units against the enemy in these fierce assaults when
then they give up the territory?
SENATOR DIRKSEN: Sam, I could make you a kind of a mixed answer but I don't think I shall, and for a very good reason. I am not over there. I can't tell, 12,000 miles away, what the situation dictates, what they should do at a given instance, and how should they do it. That is a military decision that has to be made and if I were to make it, I think I would lay myself open to the charge that I am trying to run the war just like this Committee on Conduct of the War, that we had when Lincoln was the President.

MR. DONALDSON: Well, are you saying Senator Kennedy is disloyal then? You almost --

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, no, not for a moment have I ever ventured in that field. I tried to be temperate as I could. I insisted that what I said didn't dislocate my affection for him, but I did believe that it was an unwarranted affront to the judgment of our military commanders over there without knowing, without having been there, or being there, and understanding very fully.

MR. LAWRENCE: Senator, I think it is fair to say that the American people have an attitude that they want to give Mr. Nixon plenty of time to settle this war by negotiation, but they do want it settled.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes.

MR. LAWRENCE: How much time does he really have before he has to show some real progress?
SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well now, we have made this much progress at least: The first contingent coming home in a month or two. Now, behind that there ought to be some action. How long would it take? Well, of course, you are dealing with difficult people, with an oriental caste of mind. My own belief is that probably, after this first contingent comes home, you will have a four or five months period when nothing actually developed, but then something can very suddenly develop.

MR. LAWRENCE: Politically you better settle this before the '70 elections though, hadn't you?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, this is a considerable distance in the future.

MR. LAWRENCE: I know, but isn't it true --

SENATOR DIRKSEN: But a lot of progress ought to be made not only -- well, not in fiscal '69 because that ends up on June 30th, but in calendar '69 there ought to be reasonable progress.

MR. DONALDSON: But what about Bill's question, if you don't settle it by the '70 elections, are you going to fail in an effort to win seats? Are you going to lose seats?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, obviously it is going to have an impact on the electorate in this country. We have been at this now a long time. I have said time and again we have been there just too long, and the longer it goes, the unhappi
our people become, and, of course, the way they register
unhappiness is on election day.

(Announcements)

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MR. DONALDSON: The big vote coming up in the Senate
is on the ABM Safeguard Missile System. Do you think that the
President can win that vote without a further compromise?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Sam, is there a compromise?

They indicate, of course, that if you re-label it and call
it "Research and Development," that that might make it
easier and more palatable to swallow, but that is not a com-
promise. That is just changing the label on the can.

MR. DONALDSON: But you are not deploying then?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I know, but for myself I just don't
want to go down that alley. This is a very serious business.
And, insofar as I know -- and obviously I can't put words in
the mouth of the President -- but insofar as I know, there is
no compromise. It's got to be a deployable ABM and if we
can't get that your hands are tied.

MR. DONALDSON: Are you saying then that you would not
at this time entertain any compromise? You are known to be
very flexible when a big issue is important and you think it
needs to be gotten through the Senate.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Sam, I think you ought to ex-
press that another way. I become flexible upon occasions when