

PLEASE CREDIT ANY QUOTES OR EXCERPTS FROM THIS ABC TELEVISION
AND RADIO PROGRAM TO "ABC'S ISSUES AND ANSWERS."

ISSUES AND ANSWERS

SUNDAY, JULY 3, 1966

GUEST: SENATOR KENNETH McKINLEY DIRKSEN (R. Ill.)

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

MR. MORGAN: Senator Dirksen, even on this Fourth of
July Holiday week-end, Viet Nam must be in 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 Coordin-
ating 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
only recite what the essence of it was.

MR. MORGAN: Do.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Because we shared the objective -- and

HOLD FOR RELEASE
AT 1:30 P.M. TUESDAY

1 there is no difference about objectives, but we recommended
2 that there be a Kennedy-type quarantine so far as the Port of
3 Hyphong is concerned, and then specifically recommended that we
4 use conventional naval and air power to bomb strategic
5 targets in critical target areas.

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

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

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

14 MR. MORGAN: The port of Hyphong has not yet been quaran-
15 tined, mined or bombed. Do you think it must be?

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

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

1 happening to the morale in North Viet Nam.

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

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

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

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

22 MR. MORGAN: Senator, the President said that this bombing
23 was necessary because we had to raise the price of aggression
24 at the source. At every prior time that we have increased our
25 strength, the enemy has met the price. What if the enemy

1 continues the price and we run out of targets in North Viet
2 Nam?

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

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

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

24 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I see no reason why. I have never been
25 too seriously disposed over the allegations that have been

1
2 constantly made that it is an open invitation to bring Red China
3 into this conflict. After all, Red China is vulnerable in
4 her own right. Here she has set up these nuclear installations
5 and obviously we know where they are because of the effective-
6 ness of our reconnaissance.

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

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

15 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, let me say I had one booked and
16 strangely enough I had it booked for the Fourth of July, 1965.
17 The same place, the same speech, perhaps, for 1966. But a
18 year ago, two days or a day before the Fourth of July, I was
19 in an ambulance on the way to Walter Reed Hospital because of
20 recurrence of those intestinal spasms. This year I was so
21 unfortunate as to tumble out of that high-g geared bed in the
22 same hospital and came up with a fractured hip and I am as full
23 of hardware as a country hardware store -- thinking of all the
24 nails and other gadgetry they put in, because they nailed me
25 together.