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Guest: SENATOR EVERETT MCKINLEY DIRKSEN
(R. Ill.)
Senate Minority Leader

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Panel: JACK BELL, *Associated Press*
RICHARD HARKNESS, *NBC News*
E. W. KENWORTHY, *The New York Times*
DAVID KRASLOW, *Los Angeles Times*

Moderator: EDWIN NEWMAN, *NBC News*

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M E E T T H E P R E S S

MR. NEWMAN: Our guest today on *MEET THE PRESS* is the Republican Leader of the Senate, Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois. We will have the first questions now from Richard Harkness of NBC News.

MR. HARKNESS: Senator, it has become plain that the House is not going to join the Senate in voting to send the striking machinists back to work for at least a week, if it passes the resolution at all. Can the country take—will the country take that delay in the strike?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: If I must give you a candid opinion, I know of no good reason why they need three days of hearings in the House. I understand, however, that Mr. Staggers intends to hold three days of hearings, and then of course he will come up with a bill. I apprehend that they may do what the Senate did, and we will have no conference troubles. But every day means so much damage, the destruction of so many perishables, and the country finally loses its patience. I felt that way when we were caterwalling around with this in the Senate.

MR. HARKNESS: What happens when the country loses its patience?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: They can scold and they can fuss, but also they do have a weapon. They can't use it instantly. But there are still some primaries coming along, and there are some elections. Already we are beginning to gather a number of lame ducks, and I have an idea that they are going to be a little attentive to it.

MR. HARKNESS: Senator, isn't the Administration and Congress dealing with this strike problem piecemeal? For instance if you settle this strike there are other important contract negotiations coming up. The President said in his State of the Union Message that he would recommend legislation to deal with these strikes. What future do you see in legislation?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: We made that point, that it was in the State of the Union Message, but you know, Dick, we have gotten that word into our jargon "ad hoc," for this only, this one deal, this one dispute. So we wait, and we get that out of the way, and then we jump to something else. But sooner or later there is going to have to be some permanent legislation, whether there are labor courts or compulsory arbitration, odious as that word "compulsion" is, but something has to be done. Since the President mentioned it specifically in his State of the Union Message, I think the recommendations ought to be forthcoming. However, we don't have to wait on him, because Congress has a responsibility here also.

MR. HARKNESS: On a parallel situation, Senator, we have seen this week the airline machinists make it quite clear that they are determined to break Mr. Johnson's anti-inflation guide line. We also saw the rise in the price of steel which the White House calls inflationary. Aren't you concerned about this wage-price spiral?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Sure I am concerned, but let me make this one qualification. I notice that when they started on this increase on rolled sheets, Bethlehem actually had no price increase in the last three years. However, they have indicated that their costs went up by 11 percent.

You might absorb this into the overall profit on other items, but when you run an industry and you are doing it for stockholders, obviously you want every item to carry its own weight.

I mentioned the other day when we were having a conference up there that I wasn't going to quarrel about it. The President didn't quarrel about it or try to roll it back. If they make a case—you can't expect them to go out of business by falling behind their cost sheet. So that is where you are, and that, of course, gets us back to what do we do about this inflationary matter, but that's another question.

MR. BELL: Senator, at the risk of having you have a field day smiting the Philistines, I make the observation that I hear around the Senate that your Prayer Amendment hasn't got a prayer for Senate approval.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Do you actually believe that, Jack?

MR. BELL: Senator, it is not what I believe, it is what the Senators believe.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I'd rather let the roll call speak for itself when the time comes.

MR. BELL: Senator, I remember a roll call recently that you let speak for itself, and it didn't speak very well in your behalf.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: You will remember how tricky and abstruse that question was. But the question of prayer is so simple that it can be understood by children and adults alike, and you'd be surprised at the amount of organization that has taken place in every one of the fifty states of the Union.

MR. BELL: Why are all these churchmen coming in and saying they don't want the Constitution changed?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Don't use that word "all" quite so carelessly.

MR. BELL: Well, let's say a substantial majority.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I have listened to the testimony. We haven't even tried to get churchmen as witnesses. I was more intent on getting the two lawyers, one who was in the New York Regents case in the Supreme Court, and the other who was in the so-called Oshinsky case, which went up to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York. I didn't bother to try to get any churchmen, but we had a rabbi, and what a job he did. And we had a professor of law from Catholic University, and what a job he has done. So don't say we haven't got the witnesses. And if I had to, I'd be lugging witnesses in here from now until Christmas. I want the subcommittee to vote on this, because if they don't, you know what is going to happen. It is going to be offered as a complete substitute for a bill that is now on the calendar, and the Senate is going to vote on prayer at this session of Congress.

MR. BELL: Is this going to be in the same form it is now, or do you have an idea for any changes?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I have no desire to change it. If they want to change it when it gets to the House, that is another thing.

MR. KENWORTHY: Senator Dirksen, at the outset of the civil rights debate in 1964, you made a speech in which you started by saying "They are remaking America and you won't like it." By the time the bill was passed, you had changed your position 180 degrees and played a leading part in the framing of the bill. I asked you once why you had changed your mind, and this is what you said: "A colored man and his family sets out from Blytheville, Arkansas, for Jackson, Mississippi, and he says to himself 'Here is a highway I helped pay for through

federal and state taxes. They tax my gas, they tax my tires, they tax my car. This is really my highway. But if I go any distance and take the kids into a comfort station, I do so at my peril. It has altered my thinking.'"

How is it your thinking has not altered on the open-housing provision of the Civil Rights Bill this year.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Ned, I am surprised how forgetful you are, because you veritably camped in my office, along with other reporters, when we were preparing these bills. It wasn't me who did a 180 degree switch. The bill did a switch. It was remade. It was retailored, as you well know, and you were there all through those weeks when we worked to put that in shape so it was an acceptable bill.

MR. KENWORTHY: But it was a tougher bill.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: You mean when we got through?

MR. KENWORTHY: Yes.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, definitely not. We modified it in a good many respects, because we had to take some of the kinks out. I suppose your residual question is, where am I now on the rights bill for 1966?

MR. KENWORTHY: That is right.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I said that with some modifications I could probably accept five titles in that bill. But you have got Title IV, and in my good book you are liquidating the due process clause of the Constitution of the United States, and I am not prepared to accept it.

MR. KENWORTHY: Senator, will you take the Mathias compromise?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I doubt it.

MR. KENWORTHY: Well the other day Mr. Mathias in summing up the bill, urged his Republican colleagues in these words, "When men who say 'never' attempt to build a dam or a dike across the channel where history flows, inevitably all they dam up behind it is a sense of injustice and inequity."

Are you willing to see the Republican Party be permanently a minority party, because they must get votes, I mean, from the urban centers?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Why do you tie this to politics and throw principle overboard? With me there is a basic principle involved here, and I don't know that anybody would expect me to throw that overboard with an eye on the ballot box. To be sure I am interested in the success of the Republican Party. But

you know there is a price that you just don't pay. Lincoln wouldn't pay it. I don't think I will pay it either.

MR. KRASLOW: Senator, the Senate Judiciary Committee, of which you are a member, has had before it for many months a rather mild gun control bill. Why hasn't the Committee acted upon it?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: It got stuck first of all in the subcommittee, and the crux of the matter was this: The fight between hand guns on the one side—meaning pistols—and long guns on the other—meaning rifles and shotguns. It was pointed out that there are 20 million hunters in this country, and may I say to you in confidence, I am not one of them. I don't think I killed more than a sparrow in my whole lifetime. But there is the fight between hand guns and long guns.

Are you going to penalize the hunters, the legitimate users of long guns in order to unearth a few criminals who probably could get these short gun pistols anyway if they want to?

MR. KRASLOW: But Senator—

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Let me finish—in checking on this matter only within the last few days, I understand at long last a little spirit of compromise has entered into the proceedings, and it is entirely possible that there will be a gun bill before this session is over.

MR. KRASLOW: Will there be a bill covering long guns sold within the states requiring purchasers to register these guns?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I am not prepared to say what will be in it because I had no hand in the preparation of that gun bill.

MR. KRASLOW: Do you favor such a proposal?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I am not sure. It depends on how far they go.

MR. KRASLOW: Do you consider it any more of an infringement upon a citizen's rights to require him to register a gun than it would be for a man who is required to get a driver's license or a builder's permit?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: No, but let me answer you this way. Didn't they start out and want everybody to get a license costing maybe a thousand dollars for the privilege of selling a gun? Well, think of the little hardware stores in little towns with 100 people. A thousand dollars on the line to sell shotgun shells and rifle bullets and long guns. Those were the things they were quarreling about, and little by little they have been ironing out, but they still haven't got it ironed out. I hope they will because I am no happier about it than anybody else. But I think you can

amass such a penalty on otherwise legitimate people that maybe you pay too big a price.

MR. HARKNESS: Senator, you said a moment ago that you are concerned about the wage-price spiral.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes.

MR. HARKNESS: What you think that the administration and Congress should do (1) raise taxes or (b) perhaps vote standby controls, as proposed by Mr. Johnson?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: You missed on both scores, Dick.

MR. HARKNESS: At least I am consistent.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: You sure are.

The first place, is to put the axe at some of these "Great Society" programs. Look at the waste there has been in the anti-poverty program and elsewhere. Here we are going to consider the HEW appropriation bill. They have marked it up \$491 million over the budget estimate. If I were the President, I would scold about it. He's got two for every one of ours in both branches of the Congress. That is one on which they are going to get a record vote, if I can get enough hands to boom up in the Senate chamber when the time comes.

MR. HARKNESS: Jerry Ford has been getting a count of hands in the House. Congress consistently tops Mr. Johnson's recommendation.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes. We don't have the votes, and yet we made quite a fetish out of economy. I am going to try in the Senate.

MR. HARKNESS: Let me change the subject, if I may, Senator: When was the last time that you were at the White House for a bipartisan briefing on Viet Nam?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I have forgotten. It is a little while back, now.

MR. HARKNESS: And how long before that?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: It was quite a period of time before that.

MR. HARKNESS: Based on that, are you satisfied that the President is keeping Congress and the people informed on the progress of the war?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I scolded and fussed about it, and I remember when he called me he said, "I thought I brought you up to date."

I said, "You have, but you haven't brought the Leadership up to date."

So out of a clear sky that night we had the call for a Leadership meeting, and we went up—well, it was Saturday that we had it as a matter of fact.

MR. HARKNESS: Maybe you better make another call.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I think so. As a matter of fact I expect I will probably see the President tomorrow.

MR. BELL: Senator, Dick Nixon in Saigon said that the war was not going to be lost there but it could be lost here, and he blamed criticism of the war policies at home for the possibility of its loss, here. Do you agree with that analysis of the situation?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I don't quite know what he had in mind. I think we have been rather circumspect in our comment and general criticism of the war. I think we should be. After all when you pick a man like General Westmoreland, the cream of the crop, and then take the next two in line and make them his deputies, you can't find anything better. We sent them the best of weapons, and according to the last reports we have got 290,000 over there, combatant and non-combatant troops. If he can't win this war, certainly we can't win it here sitting up on Capitol Hill in the nation's capital.

MR. BELL: Senator, Mr. Nixon also said in a subsequent news conference that we need substantially more troops in Viet Nam—he mentioned the 290,000 figure and indicated more than 400,000, even—that we couldn't win the war out there. Do you agree with that?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I don't know. Not being an expert in that field. But I do know this, a very substantial percentage of the troops you send over have obviously to be used in the non-combatant service. That means unloading ships and doing a variety of thing that are housekeeping in nature in order to keep others up there on the front lines.

How many you have to have I can't say, but Westmoreland would probably have the best estimate of what he needs.

MR. BELL: You would give them everything Westmoreland wants?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Indeed I will.

MR. KENWORTHY: Senator, on this matter of 290,000 troops now in Viet Nam, last December 13, you joined in the statement of the Republican Coordinating Committee warning that the Johnson administration seemed to be heading into "an endless Korean-type jungle war in Viet Nam."

Would you still agree with that?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I can't tell what the end is going to be. We kept on sending troops to Korea until finally we beat out some kind of a truce out there. We haven't done that in Viet Nam, and if we need more troops, all right. How many, I don't know.

If it runs on for a year, would you say that is endless—somebody might say it—does it run 18 months, does it run two years? I just know that we can't retreat, and we can't surrender. We wouldn't dare to surrender.

MR. KENWORTHY: You mentioned Korea, Senator Dirksen. Before the Republican convention in 1952; you said, "The Democrats have given us an undeclared, unconstitutional, one-man war in Korea, now in its third year. It has become an inferno for holy blood of American youth who say, 'we can't win, we can't lose, we can't quit, we can only die'."

Do you see this as a comparable situation?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: No.

MR. KENWORTHY: Why?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I don't know where you got that. Was that in the Record?

MR. KENWORTHY: No, it was in the record of the Republican Convention, yes.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: But it wasn't in one of my speeches?

MR. KENWORTHY: Yes, it was.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, was it?

MR. KENWORTHY: A nominating speech for Mr. Taft.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, don't tell me!

MR. KENWORTHY: Yes.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I am glad somebody follows me around and refreshes me.

No, it is not analagous, because we were projected in there on a Sunday afternoon in June of 1950, weren't we?

MR. KENWORTHY: That is right.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: And nobody in Congress, not even Tom Connally, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was consulted about it.

This is a different dish. In the first place, we have an obligation under the SEATO Treaty, the Southeast Asia Treaty

Organization. In the second place we made our promises, and we assumed obligations. We thought it was going to take only a little bit, and it did take a little bit. I guess, the first contingent in there was about 6,000. Now it has ballooned and ballooned, and it may balloon some more before we get through. But the fact of the matter is that we have an obligation, and we have got to fulfill it.

MR. KENWORTHY: You won't make an issue out of it in the campaign?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I haven't. The people make an issue out of it. And if you will remember, I have cautioned my party associates. I have said "Don't make an issue out of the war. The people make an issue. They are way ahead of you on this."

MR. KRASLOW: Senator, the Republican Party turned sharply to the right in 1964 when it nominated Barry Goldwater. Does Ronald Reagan's victory in California and Governor Smylie's defeat in Idaho mean that the Party is setting out to travel the same path in 1966 and 1968?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Oh, I doubt it very much. There are a lot of us good moderates around—or are there?

MR. KRASLOW: We are asking you, sir.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I am telling you.

MR. KRASLOW: Don't you think that Mr. Reagan and the gentleman who defeated Governor Smylie have been quite firmly established as conservatives?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I have little background on the man who defeated Governor Smylie. I tried to ascertain from some people from Idaho exactly what that background was, and I don't know that he has too much political background, as a matter of fact, although I qualify that simply because I don't know.

With respect to Ron Reagan, I don't know that you can say that you are going to suddenly do a right-about and go in an extreme direction. I have some doubts about it.

MR. KRASLOW: Senator Goldwater and many of his supporters have hailed Reagan's victory as a resurgence of conservatism. Do you see it differently?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, is it actually, or do they just hold it so?

MR. KRASLOW: That is what they are saying. I am asking you.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I applauded his victory, and I don't

know that I think I am doing a sheer about-face—although who would have a better right. After all, I nominated Goldwater.

MR. KRASLOW: That is right.

MR. HARKNESS: Senator, your official title is leader of the loyal opposition—

SENATOR DIRKSEN: We don't use the term, but I like it.

MR. HARKNESS: Do you mean you drop "loyal."

SENATOR DIRKSEN: What? No, it comes from—that is a British term used in the House of Commons.

MR. HARKNESS: I was going to ask you this: As the leader of the opposition, it seems to me, every time the Administration gets into a legislative jam—be it the airlines strike, be it civil rights—the Attorney General goes to your office, the Democratic leaders go to your office, the Postmaster General goes to your office, and a compromise comes out.

Are you sort of the Administration bailer-outer? Would that be fair?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Dick, you flatter me no end. You made me feel good, but what you say is in a considerable measure true.

MR. HARKNESS: Feeling good, will you now answer the question?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes, what is your question?

MR. HARKNESS: Are you the Administration's bailer-outer?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: No, I am nobody's bailer-outer. Here is the problem. I try to see it in proper perspective, see what is possible, because they say politics is the art of the possible. You can't let a problem sit there when it cries out for action. Somebody's got to do a little thinking about it and weaving around in order to find a satisfactory solution. So I try to come up with it, and I will talk with the Administration as well as with anybody else, if that adds up to a solution.

MR. NEWMAN: Gentlemen, we have slightly more than two minutes left.

MR. BELL: Senator, as a matter of information, what happens to the House-passed civil rights bill when it arrives at the Senate door?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Several things could happen. You could try to put it on the Senate calendar and then call it up at any time.

MR. BELL: What do you wish to do?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: On the other hand, you can stop sec-

ond reading and then let it go to the Judiciary Committee, because after all it is still in the subcommittee over there.

My notion—and I have discussed this with the Majority Leader—is that it ought to go to the Judiciary Committee. There ought to be a limited time within which to report back, and I fancy that probably will be done.

MR. KENWORTHY: Senator, to revert to this prayer amendment of yours, you said that you had a Catholic lawyer before the Committee. One Catholic lawyer you had before the Committee was Father Robert Drynan, who I believe was the Dean of Law School at Boston College.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Yes.

MR. KENWORTHY: He asked why you and 47 other Senators proposed something for the public schools which the churches and the synagogues have denounced and which the educators of this country think is unnecessary and unwise. Why have you done it?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Father Drynan has used words that probably don't measure up to the facts. Obviously you are going to get some denunciation from some churches in a great big free country like this. But you'd be surprised at the priests and rabbis and ministers and churches and synagogues that are in our corner on this. It will overwhelm you.

MR. NEWMAN: We have less than one minute.

MR. KRASLOW: Senator, it is patently obvious that some members of Congress collect political funds, large and small, in non-campaign years for which no public accounting is ever made. What should be done about that growing problem?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: They have tried to hash up some kind of a bill that would cover it, but you have got to deal first with your primary, and then you have to deal with the general election.

I never felt that I had to make an accounting in the primary. If somebody asked me about it, I told them. In the general election you are under the Corrupt Practices Act, and you file it and you attest it and you swear to it. There all the world can see.

Now they have come along with bills that were just impossible and under which you could not maintain a party organization. I fought every one of them, and I will fight this one too, unless it fits into the practical political framework.

MR. NEWMAN: Senator, I will have to fight you if we don't stop. I am sorry to interrupt. Our time is up. Thank you very much, Senator Dirksen, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.

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