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2 TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "ABC'S ISSUES AND ANSWERS."

3 I S S U E S A N D A N S W E R S

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5 SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 1966

6 GUEST: Senator Everett M. Dirksen (R. Ill.)
7 Senate Minority Leader

8 INTERVIEWED BY: Bob Clark, ABC Correspondent
9 and
10 Frank Reynolds, ABC Correspondent

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12 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator Dirksen, you gave President
13 Johnson consistent support on Vietnam all during last year
14 but that was in a time of military escalation of the war.

15 Now, we are in the midst of a peace offensive. Do
16 you support the peace offensive and would you go to the
17 conference table now if the Communists make the appropriate
18 response?

19 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, when you mention that there has
20 been a break-up in the Johnson-Dirksen alliance, first I
21 never knew there was such an alliance and, secondly, I am
22 afraid you have been reading the New York Times. I read
23 that headline and I got a little snicker out of it, and I
24 know the reporter, of course, quite well. So let's dispose
25 of that once and for all by saying that there has been no break
up between the President and myself with respect to our views

1 on what is taking place in Vietnam.

2 Way back when we had the first conferences when we dis-
3 cussed the matter -- and we assured him of our support, after
4 we had an opportunity to offer our suggestion, any sub-
5 stitutes, any proposals that we had, but when the decision
6 was made, we felt it was our duty to go along with the
7 Commander-in-Chief and we have consistently supported him.

8 MR. REYNOLDS: Are you willing to go to the conference
9 table now, or for the country to go?

10 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I put it on this ground -- and
11 I am afraid this is the reason why there may have been some
12 misapprehension about what I said: I can't imagine any
13 human being who isn't interested in stopping blood-letting,
14 and I can't imagine any American, and particpularly in
15 public office who is not anxious to save every possible young
16 American life.

17 Now, that is the golden goal that we all pursue.
18 The question is, how do you achieve it finally, and then do
19 you achieve it honorably and successfully, and do you redeem
20 your pledges to the Vietnamese people at the same time?

21 Now, you can offer that in any language you desire, but
22 I always think of the practical terms and the practical frame
23 in which you have got to work, and those have to be considera-
24 tions when you stop and think about negotiation and, finally,
25 can you have, or can we rather, have any successful negotiation

1 if we negotiate from weakness rather than from strength. If
2 the North Vietnamese believe that we are ready to throw in
3 the sponge or that we are getting tired, what a propaganda
4 weapon that is. It suggests "hold on a little longer and pretty
5 soon we will have them on their knees at the bargaining table."

6 MR. CLARK: Well, Senator, we certainly couldn't negotiate
7 from a position of strength at the moment. What you are saying
8 would seem to rule out negotiations at this stage.

9 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I went back to refresh myself
10 a little on all the discussion there was about a peace feeler,
11 over a year ago, that went to the late Adlai Stevenson when
12 he was in London. Now then, that is a feeler that came along
13 when the Viet Cong thought they were winning.

14 Now, at the present time they have no reason to believe,
15 on the basis of the reports we get, that they are not at
16 least even, if not winning.

17 Now, perhaps you read the report of the Majority Leader.
18 I only got a copy of it yesterday because it was prematurely
19 released in Paris, but I examined it pretty carefully and it
20 is anything but an encouraging report. So, when you read it,
21 you conclude that we have got a lot of work cut out for us
22 and there would be no disposition and no tendency on the part
23 of the enemy to be anxious to negotiate with us at the present
24 time. If that is the case, then how do you get a successful
25 negotiation? How do we retrieve the pledges we made in 1954

1 in Geneva and how do we carry this off successfully?

2 MR. REYNOLDS: Well then, Senator, are you in favor of
3 escalating the war still further??

4 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I will do whatever is necessary be-
5 cause I believe in what MacArthur said: "There is no sub-
6 stitute for victory."

7 MR. CLARK: You were quoted this last week as saying
8 that we should seek military victory before going to the peace
9 table. Does this put you now among the Republican advocates
10 of total victory before we go to a confrontation --

11 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well now, you are injecting a word
12 that I did not put in when you say "total" victory."

13 "Victory" can mean many things. You see, I go all the
14 way back to the Armistice in the first war in which I served.
15 When they came with alternative suggestion, Marshall Foch
16 said no. When Lee sent overtures to Grant in the Civil War,
17 and Grant was almost ready to do anything to stop it, that
18 dispatch went to Stanton, the Secretary of War. He talked
19 to Lincoln. He said, "Mr. Pres'dent, under no circumstances
20 do you go along with this kind of an undertaking."

21 Now, you see, you have got to be pretty sure that you
22 are in a position of strength, and how can you tell at this
23 stage exactly what the situation will be when at long last it
24 appears that they are ready to sit around the table? And,
25 along with it, who is going to sit at the table?

1 The fellow who has no chips in the pot hasn't got any
2 business sitting at the international poker table.

3 MR. CLARK: Would you agree, Senator, that the sense of
4 what you are saying is that there is going to have to be
5 some further expansion of the war before the time is right
6 to go to the conference table.

7 SENATOR DIFENSE: Well, I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

8 Now, I rather think that General Westmoreland has that
9 idea. At least I got that from the Mansfield Report. And
10 on that, committee, as you know, you had a number of very
11 capable Senators who are good observers, and they came back
12 with a report that was anything but encouraging, and you
13 couldn't do other than believe that they felt that this war
14 had to escalate before you got to a point where you could
15 successfully negotiate.

16 MR. REYNOLDS: Well, Senator, your position as leader
17 of the opposition is what prompted us to pursue this question.
18 Is it going to be politically feasible, or politically damaging
19 to the President to undertake negotiations now before we reach
20 this position of strength which you believe apparently we
21 are not yet at?

22 SENATOR DIFENSE: Oh, I can't comment on that particularly
23 because that is somewhat in line with questions that have been
24 asked all over the country while I was touring: was the war
25 going to be an issue?

1 I said a political party doesn't make war an issue.
2 People make it an issue because their youngsters are out
3 there.

4 I had that experience in 1950. I can make public
5 confession here now, 15 years later, that I wasn't making
6 too much progress talking about taxes and agriculture and a
7 lot of other things, but when the troops went in in June of
8 1950, that was it. They didn't want to hear about anything
9 else. "What about Korea?"

10 I remember when I was campaigning all through the west
11 for Dewey; "Mr. Dirksen, will he have a new cabinet?"

12 "Will he have new commanders?"

13 Well, I said, it is within not only the power or the
14 prerogative, but it is traditional that the President picks
15 his own family. These mothers of sons that they were
16 thinking about as possible cannon fodder for Korea just walked
17 away without any comment. We didn't make it an issue; people
18 made it an issue.

19 MR. REYNOLDS: The question is, are you going to exploit
20 that issue as the Republican leader?

21 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, you don't exploit it as such.
22 You don't as a leader. I never exploited Korea. There was
23 one thing about it I did exploit and that was this: That
24 decision was made and put into effect, as I recall, on a
25 Sunday afternoon. No Congressional leader either in the House

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1 or in the Senate, not even Uncle Tom Connally of Texas was
2 consulted about it. That -- who made the decision, who
3 advised it, I don't know to this day, but at least that wasn't
4 done.

5 I am confident from all of the discussions we have had
6 with the President that before a very aggravated move might
7 be made, that he would consult with his Congressional leaders.
8 He has always done so. He has been a part of that body and
9 he knows them.

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1 MR. CLARK: Senator, you have said that the people are
2 going to make an issue of Vietnam, an issue in the elections.
3 How does the voter who may be concerned over Vietnam to the
4 point where he would like to vote against some politician,
5 know who to blame when we have many Republicans in Congress
6 giving total support to the Administration's policy,
7 including, of course, yourself?

8 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, don't forget the American public,
9 and particularly the American voter, is probably the most
10 literate, the best informed voter on earth. Look at what
11 is available. The broadcasts, TV, radio, magazines, newspapers,
12 fresh copy every day. He needs no instruction, and he will
13 do what is in his heart.

14 MR. CLARK: Well, I would think it would be up to you
15 to help inform him as to what should be in his heart, Senator,
16 as a Republican leader in the Senate.

17 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, obviously you present the facts
18 in the case. From then on it is his judgment.

19 MR. REYNOLDS: Senator, there is probably going to be
20 mounting pressure on the President to escalate or to aggravate
21 the situation, as you indicated a moment ago, if there is
22 no satisfactory response from Hanoi. How far should we go?
23 Should we start bombing Haiphong, should we blockade North
24 Vietnam?

25 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Those are all military decisions, but I

2 1 think this is an appropriate place at least to make one
3 observation. We have the ships of our allies going in there
4 with supplies. That to me is an astounding thing, because
5 we are all members of NATO, and we have pledged ourselves
6 to help them. But we tried to keep them from doing business
7 with Castro and couldn't get any cooperation. Now that is
8 either a two-way street or it is no street at all, and
9 yet that is what we are confronted with out there in Vietnam
10 at the present time. These ships supplying North Vietnam.
11 All right, there are two types of blockade. We mentioned
12 in our coordinating policy report a Kennedy-type quarantine
13 blockade. That is where you warn them and say "Look,
14 you go in and you go in at your peril." That is not an act
15 of war.

16 Now when you get to the point where they are willing to
17 run the blockade notwithstanding, then, of course, you are
18 in troubled waters. But you are going to have to cut off
19 these supplies. That is the reason we made that recommendation.
20 So I think people ought to always keep in mind two
21 types of blockade, and the one particularly that we are
22 thinking of is not an act of war.

23 MR. REYNOLDS: You are dissatisfied with the help our
24 allies are giving us in Vietnam?

25 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I definitely am. When I stop to
consider, perhaps I had better not make mention of countries,

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1 But what we have done through foreign aid and elsewhere,
2 there is a lot that they owe us for what we have done and
3 yet we haven't gotten that cooperation, not even from the
4 top echelon of countries. Now that gives me a chance to
5 say the time has come to make clear, unequivocally clear to
6 them "This is a two-way street. If you don't play, then
7 of course we will have to consider that, foreign aid being
8 a mutual operation, we are going to simply have to take
9 advantage and say 'No more. If you are not going to help,
10 that is the end of it as far as we are concerned.'"

11 MR. CLARK: Senator, I think you are talking about
12 France and Britain among other countries.

13 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, I didn't mention those countries.

14 MR. CLARK: I am sure you would be including two of our
15 major Western allies who are engaging in commerce with North
16 Vietnam, but they are both allies to whom we are giving no
17 foreign aid. There is nothing we can cut off from France or
18 Britain.

19 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, let me say I include everybody.
20 Because when they come to us with a tin cup as mendicants
21 and say "Oh, please, sir, now, Uncle Sam, we need a little
22 assistance," but when the time comes for us -- didn't we try
23 to stop the shipment of an order of motor trucks to Castro,
24 and what kind of an answer did we get? We were just waved
25 aside. Now is that mutual or isn't it?

4 1 MR. CLARK: Of course that was by Britain again not
2 receiving any foreign aid. What form of pressure would you
3 apply on France and Britain?

4 SENATOR DIRKSEN: I would simply say "Look, we could
5 draw the line. Now you are in difficulty at home" -- and when
6 I say "in difficulty," you know very well that Britain is in
7 domestic difficulty. Who knows what will happen to the pound?
8 And who knows what will happen to the franc? Brocher deGaulle
9 can't raid our dollar supply or our gold supply forever.
10 There is going to come a time when we are going to say "Thus
11 far and no more." But don't you forget that we put up the
12 money for the most part, and the troops, and the weapons
13 in order to keep NATO alive. It probably would have foundered
14 before now only for the United States and its assistance.
15 Now, if they can't call on us, then what?

16 MR. CLARK: Well, now are you saying again you might
17 consider withdrawing some of our support from NATO unless
18 France and Britain stop selling to the Communists in Vietnam?

19 SENATOR DIRKSEN: When you talk about NATO, NATO is only
20 an aggregation of countries, and their ships fly their flags.
21 And when a ship shows up at Haiphong Harbor carrying a flag
22 of one of our allies, what do we say about it? If in the
23 next breath they come and say "Look, make us a loan," or
24 "Let's get a loan through the International Bank for
25 Development," or whatever it might be -- and we have a score

1 of such agencies -- are we going to be so faint-hearted and
2 so soft-hearted forever? I think we have gotten to a point
3 where we are going to have to put our foot down, and if
4 the President asks me about it, that is what I shall say to
5 him.

6 MR. REYNOLDS: Well, Senator, Congress comes back now
7 tomorrow, and the fun begins -- or does it? Is this to be
8 a year of consolidation, retrenchment? What sort of work is
9 Congress going to undertake?

10 SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, it is the old guns and butter
11 argument, isn't it? Can you have a Great Society with all
12 these authorized expenditures and push up that administrative
13 budget, and run a war at the same time? And believe me a
14 war is a costly business. We are not going to get out of
15 this so lightly. You can estimate what you like, but I have
16 an idea that deficit will be infinitely larger this year and
17 next year than we anticipate.

18 How what are you going to do? Put up your taxes? You
19 don't put up taxes in an election year, if you could possibly
20 avoid it. Well, where else do you get the money? You borrow
21 from your people. Give them pieces of paper that you call
22 "Victory Bonds" or "Liberty Bonds," and then you add it to
23 the public debt. Up goes the debt. Up goes the interest
24 on the debt.

25 The interest on that public debt every 30 days is \$1 billion.