

1419 New House Office Bldg.  
Washington 25, D. C.  
CA 4-3121 Ext. 5736  
January 11, 1961

INTERVIEW BETWEEN  
CONGRESSMAN JACK WESTLAND - SENATOR EVERETT DIRKSEN  
SCHEDULED FOR BROADCAST JANUARY 22, 1961

WESTLAND: One of the most capable and respected members of the 87th Congress is the Republican leader of the Senate, the distinguished Senator from Illinois, Everett Dirksen. I'm sure that anything the Senator says today will have eloquence and substance as well. Senator, it's good to have you on this program with me.

DIRKSEN: Well, Jack, it's good to be on with you. It's always a delight and I certainly preen at the flattery.

WESTLAND: The flattery is well deserved, Everett, I'm sure of that. Just to start off, what do you think will be the key issues in the months ahead of us?

DIRKSEN: Oh, we're going to have lots of key issues. But while they are key, there is an amazing thing about it. There is just a continuity of the things that have been issues in other times. For instance, in the labor field, at an early date we will come to grips with minimum wage, with secondary boycotts, with the proposal to eliminate Section 14B of the Taft-Hartly Act, which reserves to the states the right to legislate in the labor field, including the right to work.

Then, of course, the bill we passed in the shank of the last session dealing with health for the aged and the effort, no doubt, to have that brought about through the Social Security framework. Then, in the international field, ever so many things: taxes, spending, distressed areas legislation.

WESTLAND: And, of course, there's the question of federal aid to schools and teachers' salaries.

DIRKSEN: Definitely so.

WESTLAND: That would certainly be, I would assume, one of the principal issues that would be before us.

DIRKSEN: In fact, many of these bills are already introduced in the Senate and I apprehend that many of them have already been introduced in the House.

WESTLAND: Well, they have, Ev. So we'll undoubtedly have those before us and the same issues, as you say, were before us last Congress, the 86th Congress.

DIRKSEN: Well, it gives me a chance to say what the old preacher, Ecclesiastes, wrote centuries ago-and I like to go back and read him every once in awhile because he has a phenomenal line. He simply says, "What has been, will be."

WESTLAND: Well, I guess it will be and we'll have a chance to see what happens on those particular issues others besides in this coming session. Senator, there is one thing I want to ask you, in the past we've been working with a Congress that was controlled by the Democrats, but the Executive branch was controlled by the Republicans. Now, of course, the Executive branch, the Presidency, is in the hands of the Democrats. The Democrats control the House of Representatives by 164 to 272 and it is 65 to 35 in the Senate, so they really have complete charge of the whole business, don't they? What effect do you think this will have on this legislation that will be before us?

DIRKSEN:

Well, Jack, it will have several effects. The first one is this: on the theory that you cannot lick something with nothing, it means that as the minority party we're going to have amendments and substitute legislation which represents the Republican viewpoint and we're going to advance it with all the vigor at our command.

Secondly, we're going to have to be alert to all this legislation as carefully as we know how and scrutinize every line of it. Then we've got to make a crystal-clear cut case, because I discover that as members fully understand what the implications are in so many of these proposals you can be pretty sure that the vote will be one intelligently cast and spring entirely from conviction. Then, too, we know full well that members that come from the Southern areas are inclined to think as we do in our conservative frame and this gets us around to this coalition business that you hear so much about.

WESTLAND:

Yes, I was going to bring that up. What are your views on this matter. There's been a lot of talk about coalition, Ev, and I for one, don't like the word, but I'd like to get your thoughts on that matter.

DIRKSEN:

Well, I can give it to you in short compass. First, some very unfortunate statements have been made with respect to coalitions and I want to say to your people that in 27 years of experience, and my third year as the Republican leader in the Senate, I have never seen a formal coalition between Republicans and Southern Democrats. The newspaper men use it so generously and so carelessly. Now the fact of the matter is that men like Harry Byrd and Willis Robertson of Virginia think pretty nearly as I do, but that doesn't mean that there is a coalition. I have never formally sat down with any group from the South in the 10 years that I've completed in the Senate of the United States. It isn't necessary. They are of the conservative case, and so am I, and as a result we think pretty much alike on these. And, you don't have to have any coalition. So a formal grouping or coalition effect is an absolute myth, because, as you well know, there is no such thing nor is it necessary.

WESTLAND:

Well, I couldn't agree more, Ev, and I'm glad that you brought this out because the newspapers, as you said, have been full of this term "coalition" between the Republicans and the conservative Democrats and it is very, very obvious to me that no such coalition exists. Actually, the members of the House of Representatives just as you said in the Senate, vote their convictions and it may be coincidence that some of them are Democrats and some of them are Republicans who have the same points of view. This in no way presupposes they form a coalition, to my mind.

DIRKSEN:

Exactly so. A coalition as I understand it, is a formal grouping or joining of groups for the purpose of achieving a common objective.

WESTLAND:

Well, if there had been a coalition some of these Southern Democrats might have voted for Charlie Halleck as Speaker of the House and, of course, none of them did nor none of them were expected to do so either.

Ev, I'd like to get back on the track here for just a minute on some of these major issues that we were talking about that would come before this session of Congress. I recall, and I'm sure you do, in the so-called "bob-tailed" session we had last August that many of these issues were brought before us at that time. I recall, I think it was Fletcher Knebel reported after the session was over, there were "no hits, one run, four men left on base, and one man left at bat" or something to that effect. And, that was about the size of that "bob-tailed" session. Now these things came before us, before the Congress and were defeated. Now, do you feel that because Mr. Kennedy is now the President of the United States that this legislation will go through?

DIRKSEN:

I fancy in one form or another it will go through. That is why I mentioned this matter of substitute legislation and constructive amendments that will clearly present the Republican cause. I do not go for blind opposition. I think our duty is to keep the national interest foremost. I am confident as a political instrumentality that we do, and that from that stance it is necessary to modify. If we cannot bring these things to pass and make it reasonably acceptable, then, of course, I would feel a bound and public duty to oppose legislation that had not been properly modified. Now, they have the votes-65 to 35 in the Senate. When you're captain of 35 men and you've got 65 new frontiersmen in the Senate, obviously it gives you some cause for concern. But we'll do the best we can and if we fall by the wayside as a result of superior numbers that's just one of those things. So, bills will often go through the Senate that I won't like and they'll go to the House. I fancy because of the numerical majority of the new frontiersmen in your body--not all, of course--that bills will come to the Senate that we won't like and the result is that when we go to conference there is going to be a fight as there was in other days, like the Landrum-Griffin Bill, when we fought for 11 days in conference and pretty well made the House position stick, as you know. So these things will move through. Now and then, of course, it may be that they are so extreme in nature that we can always get enough votes to stop it in the Senate. And I can assure you now there will be many a nose-count in the Senate as this session unfolds and we approach these various legislative measures.

WESTLAND:

Well, I'm glad to hear you say, Senator, that the Republican position in this Congress will not be one of just plain opposition or obstructionism, because it seems to me that the function of the Republican is certainly not that. We must be constructive. We must offer solutions of our own and programs of our own which we can favor and which we would hope the majority of the people of the nation would favor.

DIRKSEN:

Jack, let me illustrate that point. One of the first major bills introduced in the Senate was the one to bring relief to so-called distressed areas. It was introduced as a result of a task force recommendation by my colleague from Illinois, but the minute he relinquished the floor I got the Senate floor and introduced a bill on the same subject which, generally speaking, represents a lot of thinking and a lot of careful scrutiny on the part of people who are experts in the field. Now late last week a bill was introduced on minimum wage. So I introduced a bill on minimum wage which is something of a refinement of what we tried to do from the Republican side in the last Congress. Now I'll do that in every case. That simply means that we've got a program. We've got an affirmative program and we mean to advance it as best we can.

WESTLAND:

Well, I think that is exactly the case, Everett. I can't forget that better than 34 million people voted for Mr. Nixon for the President of the United States, as opposed to some 34 million for Mr. Kennedy as President, and, of course, he won. We all acknowledge that. Nevertheless, I feel that it is your obligation and mine, to the best of our ability, to represent those 34 million who would have preferred a Republican Administration. It was a positive program, as you said. It was something constructive and an affirmative program and that's what I'm going to try to do on our side of the House.

DIRKSEN:

Which is another way of saying that if our friends on the other side of the aisle claim they have a mandate then we have a mandate, also--to make sure that within 112,000, of one half of the electorate who bothered to go to the polls and vote, we mean to give them some representation and that is our mandate.

WESTLAND:

I agree thoroughly, Senator. I know that your voice will be heard in the Senate of the United States along with your 34 colleagues of the Republican Party and we would hope some of the Democrats of a good persuasion. We would expect in the House of Representatives to be heard in expounding our views on the legislative program and would be joined by some discerning Democrats. In that way, I would hope that we would have a good legislative program.

DIRKSEN:

Jack, that's politics at its best, because that simply means that according to your likes and your conviction you try to do the things, as Lincoln once said of the legitimate object of government, that the people need. That's the phrase, incidentally, that so many forget, "and that people cannot do so well or at all for themselves." So it works out very well.

WESTLAND:

Thank you, Senator, for being on this program.

#