

MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE JOINT REPUBLICAN
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS CALLED FOR MAY 26, 1961 AT 8:30 A.M.
IN THE OFFICE OF SENATE MINORITY LEADER, EVERETT M. DIRKSEN

Members Present:

Representatives Halleck, Arends, Byrnes, Brown, Hoeven
Senators Morton, Dirksen, Bridges, Saltonstall, Kuchel

Also Present:

Robert Humphreys, Bryce Harlow, Mark Trice, Harry Brookshire,
Robert Allett

The Presiding Officer, Senator Thruston B. Morton, called the
meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. The agenda of the meeting is as follows:

Tractors for Castro

Kennedy Spending

Kennedy-Khrushchev Conference

Before proceeding with the agenda it was agreed there would be no
meeting next week because of the June 1 Republican \$100 plate dinner
at the Armory.

Senator Morton announced this would be his last meeting as Presiding
Officer since he is retiring as Chairman of the Republican National
Committee.

Tractors for Cuba

Senator Bridges labeled as blackmail the proposal to exchange U.S.
tractors with Castro for U.S. prisoners, and added there is nothing to
prevent any nation from making "ransom demands" on the U.S. for tractors
or practically anything if the United States goes along with Castro on
this deal. General discussion followed and it was agreed that since
the President had suggested and sanctioned the tractors for prisoners
exchange Citizens Committee the rest of the world could only interpret
the project as U.S. action and not a project of private interests.

Congressman Byrnes brought up the President's reference to tax
exemption of the tractor funds involved in the scheme and said he had

written Chairman Mills of the House Ways and Means Committee regarding the matter.

General discussion followed as to whether the tractors for prisoners deal should be "hit" by the Leaders in this morning's Press Conference. It was agreed it should be and Senator Dirksen read a statement dealing with the matter. The statement was approved and a copy is included at the end of these minutes.

Senator Dirksen reported on his off-the-record meeting with Vice President Johnson covering the Johnson trip in Asia. Senator Dirksen said the Vice President indicated in so many words Laos "is down the drain."

Kennedy Spending

Congressman Halleck read a statement for use at this morning's Press Conference dealing with the spending involved in the Presidential messages sent to Congress this session. The statement was the result of research by the Leadership Staff, Congressional Library, Republican National Committee, Minority Staff members of House and Senate Committees. The cost of the Kennedy New Frontier spending program is estimated at a minimum of \$60 billion additional spending over the next 5 years.

Senator Dirksen said that the deficit President Kennedy has already estimated will be "indefinitely" larger in view of the additional proposals he has made to Congress and he referred to the statement Mr. Elmer B. Staats, Deputy Director of the Bureau of the Budget under Eisenhower and Kennedy, made before the National Industrial Conference Board in New York - that President Kennedy had under-estimated his deficit, "it probably will be double."

After general discussion of Congressman Halleck's Press Conference statement it was approved and a copy is included at the close of these minutes, as well as an itemization of the \$60 billion spending figure.

Kennedy-Khrushchev Conference

Congressman Byrnes suggested the release of a Leadership statement for the 27th or 28th of May relating to the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting. The statement would be in the form of helpful suggestions to the President at the Vienna meeting with Khrushchev. It was agreed such a statement should be released and a copy of the statement that was released is included at the end of these minutes.

Before adjourning the meeting the subject of Freedom Riders was discussed and it was agreed the Leadership should not discuss it at this morning's Press Conference.

The Presiding Officer adjourned the meeting at 9:38 a.m. in order for Congressman Halleck and Senator to proceed with their 9:45 a.m. Press Conference.


Acting Secretary

Approved by the
Presiding Officer