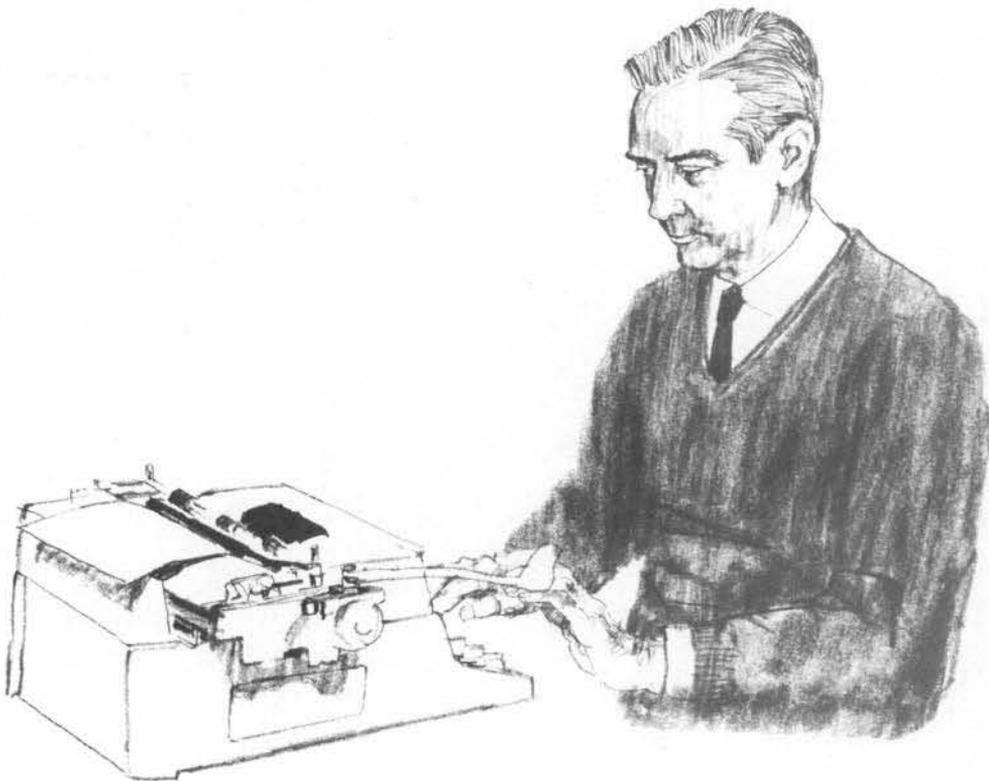


HOWARD K. SMITH

News and Comment

Wednesday, April 18, 1962

ABC TELEVISION



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"Does Congress Represent Public Opinion?"

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MR. SMITH: Good evening. At his news conference today, President Kennedy announced a new American proposal for total world disarmament. The chief new features of the proposal are that a UN peace-keeping force should be built up as the nations disarm and that inspection to see that everybody is obeying be on a spot-check basis, the same way Internal Revenue checks for possible tax evasion. The idea sounds good to us -- but it still insists on what the Russians have called unacceptable: inspection.

Though the President opened his news conference with that announcement today, reporters' questions afterwards indicated that still the biggest news in the world this week is President Kennedy's devastating victory over Big Steel which raised its prices a week ago then backed down under a withering White House bombardment.

If Mr. Kennedy had somehow been removed from the Presidency eight days ago it would have been hard to sum up what his contribution to the history of that high office has been. His only distinctive piece of legislation, not a carry-over from the past, was the Peace Corps. His only other clear contribution was a certain style -- youthful, vigorous and affirmative, which people found attractive.

Mr. Kennedy was germinating some big plans, it was obvious -- plans to turn the cold war around from defense to initiative...plans to meet and solve the problem of recurrent recession and start the economy growing. But they were long range plans needing a long time to build up. So far, not much that would make a paragraph in history had actually matured.

The Steel fight changed that. Like hot-house treatment, it caused a much faster maturity than had been expected of one of the President's major plans.

His problem was this: The annual wage battles between management and labor in big industries has long since ceased to be just their own concern. The broad American public has become the major victim or gainer from, for example, a hard-fought agreement in the steel industry to raise prices or wages, or to have a strike. But the public has not been represented; it has been left to steel management and to steel workers.

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A year and a quarter ago when the President-elect was appointing his cabinet, it was pretty clear that he meant for the government to become a third party, and for its effect to be restraint.

Arthur Goldberg was named Secretary of Labor. He was the lawyer for the Steel-workers Union, and there is not much doubt that he was appointed partly because one of their own could persuade the unions to be restrained in demands.

And to the two big spending jobs, two Republicans were named.

Douglas Dillon was made Secretary of the Treasury.

And Republican Robert McNamara was made Secretary of Defense to whose department the House Appropriations Committee voted nearly 48 billion dollars to spend this week.

Those appointments gave the President leverage to induce restraint on management.

The Steel Agreement was the pay-off. Goldberg induced the Union to accept less than its increase in productivity. Management was a little tougher to handle. But it is now handled. And it is probable that the President's prestige in forcing restraint on the giant industry will carry over now into lesser industries. The government has been put into collective bargaining as a third party...to stay.

The second big consequence of the steel fight has been to bring into the open a subject most people have been unwilling to face -- are we pricing our goods in the right way?

Adam Smith, who wrote the bible of private enterprise, said the market would make prices. If you sold your product at too high a price, people would stop buying it and force your price down. If you sold it at too low a price, people would buy more of it and force the price up.

In fact, prices in steel and many other things are dictated by management and subject to no market laws.

Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota states the problem:

SENATOR HUMPHREY: If big industry wants to remain free and competitive, then it must look to its own pricing practices. How do you determine the price of a ton of steel? How does anyone determine what the price is of a ton of ore out of a Minnesota mine? Of the great Mesabi iron range? What about these...this vertical integration that you have of steel companies, where they own the railroads, where they own the docks and the wharves, and where they own the iron ore

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and where they own the steel...the iron ore processing plant, and how each little subsidiary prices itself to the other -- in other words, there's no real competition at all.

MR. SMITH: The steel affair is the first substantial event which sets the Kennedy term in office apart from the past. But there may soon be other events due to a change in the temper of Congress. Does the American Congress truly represent public opinion? A report on that in a moment after this word from Nationwide Insurance.

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The "Out for Easter" sign is about to be placed on the Capitol in Washington.

Normally there are 535 members of Congress working in the Capitol making our laws. Tonight the lawmakers begin leaving Washington for home and the Easter Holidays. By Friday, the Capitol will be emptier of legislators than it has been since the session began in January.

The Easter recess has become one of the most important milestones of the political year. It marks just about mid-point in the congressional session. It is an occasion when our lawmakers renew contact with the people, find out what voters are thinking, and whether they -- the Members of Congress -- have been doing the right things. It has been noted that Congressmen and Senators returning to Washington after Easter frequently behave differently from the way they did before Easter.

I suggest to you that this year that change may be more conspicuous than ever. We have done some research, and it indicates that Congress, mainly the House of Representatives, has rarely been so out of line with the American people as is the case at present. We devote the balance of this program to a report on what we expect our lawmakers to find out about what the people think in the coming week.

Our sources are our own contacts and some private reports from many parts of the nation. And, two young Congressmen with solid reputations for political acumen:

Congressman John Lindsay, Republican, New York, often mentioned as a Presidential possibility whenever his party begins to look over its rising generation.

And, Richard Bolling, Democrat, Missouri, who learned politics from the late Speaker Sam Rayburn and whose office you keep in touch with if you want to know how a vote will turn out before the vote is taken.

Also, we will call on Dr. George Gallup, head of the Gallup Poll, and for three decades far the best known prober of public opinion in this country and abroad.

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Fully aware that sampling of public opinion is an imperfect science -- but equally aware that techniques have improved greatly and that in most provable cases Dr. Gallup's samplings have shown themselves to be accurate -- we questioned him about a wide range of issues. First, what is the latest assessment of the President's popularity?

DR. GALLUP: He's extremely popular in terms of percentages. His popularity rating was 79%, which is extraordinarily high; it's phenomenally high.

MR. SMITH: Have you any idea how the steel crisis will affect it?

DR. GALLUP: No. We'll be polling in the next few days and we'll have a chance to see how it has affected his popularity.

MR. SMITH: Can you tell what that popularity derives from? Are you able to distinguish his personal magnetism as against his political stands as a source of popularity?

DR. GALLUP: It isn't possible to do that in any scientific way, but I think the American people view him as a very personable, highly articulate man. They were a little fearful that a Catholic in the Presidency might follow some different line, and then a good many more were wondering about his political orientation - whether he would continue this middle-of-the-road policy of Eisenhower, or whether he'd veer sharply to the Left. Now, he has allayed the fears of the public on all three of these points, so he's won back a good many of the Democratic Protestants, who voted against him because he was a Catholic. He's handled himself so well that his youth and inexperience aren't held against him, and he has followed pretty much a middle-of-the-road policy.

MR. SMITH: Well, Dr. Gallup, we frequently hear that there is an unusual wave of conservatism sweeping the nation. Have you seen any indications that this is true? Or false?

DR. GALLUP: Well, we have indications that that is not the case. I think the reason that this idea persists is that the extreme Right Wing -- the Conservatives -- have in Senator Goldwater a very attractive, articulate, intelligent spokesman. But when we sound out opinions -- political opinions -- whether it be on the Birch Society, or the U.N., or what not, we find very few conservatives. As a matter of fact, I think there are probably fewer Conservatives in the country today, than there were at the time Senator Taft was leading that wing of the Party. And we hear it said that young people on the campuses are turning conservative. Well, in the studies that we've made on the campuses, we haven't found this to be the case. In fact, the evidence is always to the contrary.

MR. SMITH: What's the latest information on the people's preferences in the coming Congressional election?

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DR. GALLUP: As of the present time, the Democrats are far ahead. As a matter of fact, the Democrats have a bigger lead than they've had for many, many years.

MR. SMITH: Do you know what the figures are, perchance?

DR. GALLUP: Our last figures on the popular vote was 61% for the Democratic candidates and 39% for Republican candidates.

MR. SMITH: Well, can you tell me about your latest findings on some specific issues? Medical Care for the Aged?

DR. GALLUP: We have polled on this very basic issue and the basic issue is whether the older people will be taking medical care? Will it be a Government responsibility? Or will it be a private responsibility? Whether they'll -- in other words -- do it through Blue Cross or private insurance and all? Now, as between those two -- those two ways of taking care of the medical means of older persons -- the public votes by not a big margin, but a fairly good sized margin for Social Security. Now, the interesting part about this is that the older people sort of get a free ride with Social Security, and when you ask the very young people -- the youngest voters -- who will have to pay through the years for these benefits, then the vote is pretty even.

MR. SMITH: Well, how about the new Trade Bill that the President is pushing?

DR. GALLUP: The country prefers lower tariffs, generally, to higher tariffs, and the public has through the years.

MR. SMITH: Do you know what your latest figure on that is?

DR. GALLUP: No, but it's about two to one as you get to the more -- and better -- informed groups.

MR. SMITH: What about the question of Federal Aid to Education?

DR. GALLUP: Federal Aid to Education is also supported by a majority of people in the country. Of course, the big problem in this case is whether the Federal Aid should go to Catholic Schools? The public - the Catholics, of course, vote pretty overwhelmingly on the side that it should, Protestants on the side that it shouldn't. But the over-all vote is again about five to three in favor of Federal Aid and for limiting it to public schools.

MR. SMITH: Is there any sign of deep public concern about Government spending? Is that a lively issue?

DR. GALLUP: It's not a very lively issue at this time. People complain about taxes. Just recently, this being income tax time, we found that about half the people of the country think that their income taxes are too high. But the public is never related directly. They complain about high taxes but they're not too much concerned

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about Government spending because they've never seen a direct relationship between the two. They're inclined to think, if money's spent by Washington, that somebody else spends it. It's not their money.

MR. SMITH: Well, the outcome of the last Presidential election rather destroys public interest in whom the Democrats will nominate for the Presidency, but there's great interest in whom the Republicans may nominate. Which of the possible candidates do you find is the most popular at present?

DR. GALLUP: Well, if there were a national Republican primary today, Nixon would get more votes than anyone else, followed by Rockefeller and then Goldwater, and then Romney. Romney has entered the lists, of course, only in recent weeks and months and he's extraordinarily popular, having come from nowhere.

MR. SMITH: Do you know what the latest figures are? Nixon's on top with what?

DR. GALLUP: About 50%. Rockefeller comes next with about 23%, then Goldwater with about 17%, and Romney about 10%.

MR. SMITH: Dr. Gallup has no political bone to pick. He is judged entirely by the accuracy of his statistics. The two Congressmen we talked to are seekers after political truth too. But they are also actors on the political stage. Yet there is pretty close alignment between what they told us and what Dr. Gallup measured statistically.

First, we asked Congressman John Lindsay if he thinks Congress is attuned to the wants of the people?

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: Generally speaking, I would think the Congress is a little behind the American people. This is true of most Congresses. It's hard to tell what the wants of the American people are. They have to be led, like any people do. I don't think this Congress is moving too far ahead of the wants of the American people. They may be even but my best guess is they're a little behind.

MR. SMITH: Congressman Richard Bolling on the same subject.

CONGRESSMAN BOLLING: I don't think that the Congress has demonstrated yet that it is attuned. But that's sort of inevitable in the first few months of the session, because it takes us a while to really gear up, even though this is the Second Session. And, of course, I personally feel that the Congress had demonstrated a great deal more slowness in action than the American people expect and want. But, in a sense, I would apologize for us on the grounds that we hadn't really finished up the session, and it wasn't fair to judge us until we did. But at the same time admit that I didn't feel that the Congress - particularly the House - was in tune with the wants and desires of the people. I think it's quite clear that the Presidency and the Supreme Court and Senate are more in tune with the attitude of the people as a whole than the House.

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MR. SMITH: Congressman Lindsay on one method whereby he keeps in touch with voter sentiment.

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: You can use a questionnaire. I just recently sent out 140,000 questionnaires to my constituency asking how they felt about 20-odd issues. And I received about a 40% return -- 35% maybe would be closer -- which is a very high return. It shows you how interested people are. They have to put a 5¢ -- 4¢ stamp -- will be 5¢, on that envelope and send it back to you.

MR. SMITH: Could you tell me any of the things you've learned from that?

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: Well, you get a variety of opinions, but I've learned how people feel generally about education. It's given me some guide-lines on Medical Care for the Aged; their feelings towards the United Nations and the Bond Issue question, for example. All of those are very helpful. I found, for example, that people feel that the Bond Issue should be supported, and that the United Nations has been an effective instrument for Peace in the Congo. Whereas, if I weighed my mail on the subject I would find that the heaviest weight was on the side of those who were opposed to the Bond Issue, and did not think the U.N. had done an effective job in the Congo -- indicating that mail can be misleading. People aren't right very often when they're mad about something. Either they're mad at their Congressman or they're mad about something else that's happened, and then they fire off a letter. People who favor certain proposals, or who think that the Governmental stream somehow is going in the right direction on a particular issue tend not to write.

MR. SMITH: Now you've mentioned three issues on which people think one way, but those bills are actually in trouble in another way in the House of Representatives; Medical Aid is not doing too well, Federal Aid to Education is certainly not doing well, and the U.N. Bond Issue is much in doubt in the House of Representatives.

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: That's why I said to you, at the outset, that it's my general view that the Congress is not ahead of the American people, and if anything is probably a little behind.

MR. SMITH: Congressman Bolling on whether constituents influence a Congressman.

CONGRESSMAN BOLLING: Constituents certainly have an effect. You pay attention to their mail. You may not vote the way the majority of the mail tells you to, because you may have a suspicion that certain groups are a little bit better organized in producing mail to you, than are other groups. The ones that really impress you are the ones that come in, either typed or not typed - hand-written - which demonstrate that the individual has thought out a problem for himself and has a really deep conviction. Pressure mail is much less influential than thoughtful mail.

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MR. SMITH: If our 535 federal legislators, now going home for Easter, are keen of eye and ear, they may learn that the Conservative wave is a myth; that people want to support the U.N., that they want a Medical Care Plan financed by Social Security and they want Federal Aid to Education. They may learn that Congress is out of line with the people and that the Republican Party is in political trouble. A comment, in a moment, after this word from Nationwide Insurance.

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The question is often heard -- Can the United States, a free loose-jointed Democracy with long drawn out legislative processes, compete in a world of very swift change against totalitarian regimes in which power is concentrated and decision is quick?

The answer probably is, America can compete -- if its government can meet the nation's real problems swiftly and successfully, and create and sustain a high public morale.

There is great doubt that the U.S. Congress, especially the House -- in sharp contrast to the Executive Branch of the Government and the Supreme Court -- is doing these things. The reason -- Congress, especially the House, is out of line with the needs of the time and the wants of the people.

What can happen to bring the Congress back into line?

Here we get into controversy. I believe that Democrats cannot help much. Northern and western Democrats are, with some exceptions, as much in line as can be expected of a free political party.

Southern Democrats are not in line, but they are unlikely to change that very quickly. Due to the South's peculiar problems, southern politicians can still win elections by staying out of line with problems.

The hope, therefore, has to reside in the Republicans. Here is a party which is losing because it is, with many admirable exceptions, out of line. It stands to gain if it gets back into line. Therefore, at some point in its losing progress, it can be expected to change, and to get in line.

Let's look at that progress downwards:

In the Congressional elections of the past thirty years the Republicans have won control of Congress in only two elections. And the Democrats have won control in twelve elections.

If Dr. Gallup's survey is right, Republicans who lost two years ago and who by tradition should now gain in this year's off-year election have, in fact, declined in popularity from nearly 45% of the votes in 1960's election to a 39% popularity rating in the nation today.

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For an "out" party to decline in an off-year election when it should gain shows it is badly out of line.

What should disturb Republicans most is that their citadel, the Middle West, has turned badly against them. In the 1960 elections the Republicans led the Democrats there fifty to forty-nine. But today, according to the Gallup Poll, the Republicans trail the Democrats thirty-nine to sixty-one. This, I repeat, is in the Republican citadel, the Middle West. And that finding is nothing less than a political calamity.

Republican Congressman John Lindsay comments on his party.

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: I came into political office through the soul-searching process to begin with. I was dissatisfied with the status quo in my own party. In fact, I ran a primary fight against the established organization to get nominated for Congress the first time I ran in 1958. That was the result of a lot of soul-searching, and I've been soul-searching ever since. And I and a few Republicans are satisfied with our accomplishments today, and we think there's a lot of room for improvement.

MR. SMITH: Do you think the changes will be made?

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: There have to be changes made in the nature of our Party and the way in which it goes about selling itself; campaigning, winning elections. If we don't do that, why we can relegate ourselves to the status of the "permanent minority". I think the biggest change that has to be made is one I've been arguing for for years which is that we have to start campaigning and winning in the big cities of this country.

MR. SMITH: The Republicans have a problem. They have an incentive to solve that problem. Perhaps this Easter recess, and a fresh contact with the people, may make them aware of both the problem and the solution and begin the realignment of politicians with people which the nation needs.

Good night.

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