

From the office of
Senator Kenneth B. Keating

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INTERVIEW OF
THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY (D., MINN.)
ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER OF THE U.S. SENATE

by

SENATOR KENNETH B. KEATING
(Republican, New York)

On Television and Radio Program
"LET'S LOOK AT CONGRESS" *
Sunday, May 20, 1962

Senator Humphrey:

- *** Asserts demobilization of reserves will continue, despite military buildup in Far East. (page 3)
- *** Predicts Billie Sol Estes investigations "will be found to cover more than one administration." (page 3)
- *** Predicts passage of farm bill with wheat provision but says dairy program "is in real trouble." (page 4)
- *** Predicts passage of tax bill including investment credit and withholding tax. (page 4)
- *** Says economy "needs to do much better." (page 5)
- *** Tosses flowers at Republicans, but claims victory in recent verbal exchange over Capitol planting. (page 5)

*Over TV Stations:

WTEN-TV, Albany, N.Y.
WNBF-TV, Binghamton, N.Y.
WBEN-TV, Buffalo, N.Y.
WSYE-TV, Elmira, N.Y.
WOR-TV, New York, N.Y.
WROC-TV, Rochester, N.Y.
WSYR-TV, Syracuse, N.Y.
WKTU, Utica, N.Y.
WCNY-TV, Watertown, N.Y.

* Over Radio Stations

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WBAB, Babylon, N.Y.
WBTA, Batavia, N.Y.
WCLI, Corning, N.Y.
WEHH, Elmira Heights, N.Y.
WENE, Endicott, N.Y.
WWHG, Hornell, N.Y.
WJTN, Jamestown, N.Y.
WVOS, Liberty, N.Y.
WGNY, Newburgh, N.Y.
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WVIP, Mt. Kisco, N.Y.
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WBBF, Rochester, N.Y.
WGGO, Salamanca, N.Y.
WTRY, Troy, N.Y.

KEATING: This is Senator Ken Keating. Welcome to another "Let's Look at Congress" program. My guest today is well-known to nearly all TV viewers. He's a distinguished colleague from Minnesota, the Majority Whip and the Assistant Leader of the Senate, one of the men who meets weekly with the President of the United States to plan the legislative program, and a personal friend, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota. Hubert, I'm delighted to have you here and I want to ask you a few questions about the program this year.

HUMPHREY: I'm delighted to be on your program. It's always one of the more important, and I always say the most interesting, programs of the week.

KEATING: You're very kind. You are the Assistant Majority Leader in the Senate. Do you sometimes find it difficult in your leadership position to support Administration policies that you may personally question yourself?

HUMPHREY: So far, Senator, I haven't had the unfortunate experience of questioning Administration policy. I have basically agreed with the proposals and the programs that have been advanced by the President. On one or two nominations, I have expressed some doubt, but as you would do in my position, I reconcile those doubts in favor of the Administration, unless I find the doubts too strong. But the overall program of the President--the foreign policy, domestic policy, economic policy--are proposals and policies I have supported for some time and now I find it very encouraging and invigorating--in fact, exciting--to support an Administration that advances these policies.

KEATING: You were a candidate against Senator Kennedy in the primaries and you had differences. Does it mean that he has accepted your policies or you have accepted his? How does it happen that you are 100% together now?

HUMPHREY: Could we say that every political campaign is an educational experience. As you know, the President is a very brilliant man, very receptive. He's also a very good teacher and as a result of those two qualities, both of us profited.

KEATING: That's a very good answer. Do you think that the United States has acted soon enough in Laos?

HUMPHREY: Our difficulties in Laos go back many years, Senator. I suppose those difficulties go back long even before we had a policy relating to Laos. Laos was separated from what was once the colonial area of Indochina, in the Geneva agreements relating to Indochina with France and with Vietnam and North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

We decided, however, in late 1959 and early 1960 to attempt to make Laos, the Kingdom of Laos, an ally. We actually intervened at that time by backing what we called a pro-Western faction in Laos, ousting what was considered to be a neutralist group headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma. As a result, we now have a government in Laos known as the Royalist Government, friendly to the West, but in retreat before the attack of the leftist forces, the Pathet Lao. I think that we're doing the best that we could hope to do under the circumstances.

You may recall that in January 1961 the military situation was very bad. At that time or a month or two later, President Kennedy addressed the nation on the subject of our defense commitments in Southeast Asia. Without regard to Administrations or partisanship, I happen to be one of those who believes that our early military commitment to Laos, by trying to make an ally out of a relatively weak country, a very backward country and essentially a peaceful country where neutralism was the predominant force at the time, was a policy mistake. We've been trying to extricate ourselves from that mistake and in the process of doing it, we've had to suffer some reversals.

KEATING: Is Laos gone now?

HUMPHREY: I don't think so. It's in serious trouble. We are still negotiating in the hopes of being able to get a neutral Laos and I think a neutral Laos is possible.

I do feel that there is evidence to indicate that the prospect for successful negotiations has improved. Souvanna Phouma, the man agreed upon as the new Premier or leader in Laos, is on his way back to that country from France. He has now been assured by the pro-Western elements in Laos that there could be negotiations that would be fruitful and if the neutralist, Souvanna Phouma, and the pro-Western General Phoumi Nosovan could get together, that would be enough, I think, to lend some stability in that area along with what we are doing in other areas.

KEATING: Will this Far Eastern situation which is so serious have any effect on plans to demobilize the reserves?

HUMPHREY: I don't believe so. The reserve program--and you've been keenly interested in this, Senator--has been under review and adjustment. Secretary of Defense McNamara commented on that recently in the Congress before the appropriate committees. There will be a changed and a modernized reserve program but I do not believe the situation in the Far East or Southeast Asia will change the plans of letting out some of the reserves and letting them come back into civilian life as had been contemplated.

I want to say this, if I may, that our stationing of additional forces in Thailand is in my mind a very necessary operation. I felt this way, Senator, some months ago and so expressed myself. I don't believe that you can see the developments in Laos without some concern as to what will happen in all Southeast Asia unless you draw the line, so to speak, and take a position. Now we have an ally in Thailand. It's a part of SEATO and we ought to strengthen that ally. We're doing so. We're putting forces in there--combat forces. We made a commitment to SEATO and I think the entire world ought to know that we intend to keep our commitment to SEATO and we intend to ask our partners in SEATO to keep their commitment. I think this is very important.

KEATING: I want to turn to another subject much in the news now--the Billie Sol Estes case. Have you discussed this with Chairman McClellan of the Government Operations Committee?

HUMPHREY: No, I have not. But I want to say that I am very pleased that Chairman John McClellan of the Senate Government Operations Committee and the Permanent Committee on Investigations has taken this under his jurisdiction.

KEATING: You favor hearings?

HUMPHREY: I surely do. I favor public hearings. I favor a full-scale investigation and I can think of no one more qualified to conduct that investigation objectively, thoroughly and judiciously than Senator John McClellan. I applaud the effort that he is making.

KEATING: Have you talked with Secretary Freeman about it?

HUMPHREY: I have talked with the Secretary about it and needless to say he is very disturbed over the developments. The Secretary is an honorable man, a courageous man. He is totally honest. He came into a great department of government with thousands of employees. I am sure that as the investigations proceed relating to this, it will be found that this may cover more than one administration and it may also be found that many of the transgressions had no relationship directly to any Secretary of Agriculture. Secretary Freeman has indicated to the country and to Senator McClellan and to the Federal Bureau of Investigation that he wants a thorough look at this entire situation--a full-scale investigation.

KEATING: We've recently had this so-called literacy bill up on the Senate floor and you and I voted the same but we weren't very successful. Do you think the President pushed hard enough for this bill?

HUMPHREY: Well, it was the Administration's program. There are those who feel the President could have taken a more direct hand. I must say that the action of the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, speaking for the President and the Administration, was just about as forceful and as direct as you can get it. He

testified there before the committee--the subcommittee of which you were a member-- and I read that testimony. I thought it was excellent. I noticed that you gave strong support to the testimony of the Attorney General. So I would feel that the Administration and the President did actively support the proposal.

KEATING: My question was whether the President could have done more than he did in convincing some of the members of the Senate to vote on procedural matters which were so important in the consideration of that.

HUMPHREY: I think the Senate is pretty-well the judge of its own procedural matters and I doubt that the President felt that he could be very effective on that.

KEATING: We're going to take up the farm bill this coming week. Is the Administration's farm bill going to pass?

HUMPHREY: Most of the provisions of that farm bill will be passed. There will be some areas modified but the wheat provision, which is very important, will be adopted. I predict that. A feed grain program better than the present one, which is doing quite well, will be adopted. The dairy program, I regret to say, is in real trouble so we'll have to move on separate legislation on the dairy program.

KEATING: You think that the dairy program will be stricken out of this bill?

HUMPHREY: No, in the Senate it may, but in the House they'll have something and it will go into conference and we'll come out with some form of dairy program. I'm trying to say to you and I'll say it quite directly--it will not be one that I think is as good as we ought to have. Therefore we've been assured of new hearings on new dairy proposals right after the passage of the farm bill.

KEATING: Do you think the Administration's tax bill will go through?

HUMPHREY: Oh!

KEATING: Perhaps referring particularly to the withholding provision.

HUMPHREY: Well you're tossing big ones and hard ones today, Senator.

KEATING: You're the Assistant Leader--

HUMPHREY: Well, I was just going to say with your help--

KEATING: You're so persuasive.

HUMPHREY: --we could get that tax bill through, but I'm afraid that from what I've heard on other days, you do not agree with all of those provisions and that is your privilege, may I add.

KEATING: I do not, but let me say to the viewers, as they know, I never express my views on this program. I'm seeking my guest's views.

HUMPHREY: Yes. I understand that. You are very fair. The Administration's tax bill will be adopted. The feature for investment credit--tax credit for investments--will be adopted. There will be some tightening of the loophole on tax havens for foreign investment--what we call foreign subsidiaries of American corporations. I want to be sure, however, and I think I can say that that will be very selective because we do need foreign investment.

The matter of withholding on interest and dividends will be adopted. I know it will be adopted because the House has already passed it by a roll call vote and when the House has had a roll call vote on an item in a tax bill--the House that originates tax legislation--it's not about ready to compromise it away even in a conference, even if the Senate does not vote for it in the Senate bill. I do think, however, that before this is through--and it will be about a month--the Senate will adopt some form of withholding on interest and dividends. A type of withholding which will go into effect either immediately or after a transition period.

KEATING: Do you think our economy is doing well now?

HUMPHREY: No. I think our economy needs to do much better, Senator, and every one of us has an obligation to move in that direction. The rate of unemployment is too high. The rate of investment is still too low. It is true that we are doing better than we have done but we are not doing good enough.

KEATING: Do you think that U.S. aid to India ought to be reduced or any strings attached to it?

HUMPHREY: I think we ought to view the matter of aid to India strictly on the basis on what we consider to be our national interest and our national security. I surely do not think the aid to India ought to be reduced below what we have offered this year because we are a part of what they call a consortium--a group of nations and financial institutions that have banded together to help India with her five-year plan.

I don't think aid to India will be reduced as such, as aid to India. There may be some reduction in overall foreign aid from the Administration's request but I don't think India should be selected for any particular punishment. She's beginning to stand up to the Chinese communists. Her economic plans are beginning to work. She's beginning to lift her standard of living. She has just gone through a great free election and I think for those reasons, plus many others, we will continue to extend aid.

KEATING: Now I've got an entirely different subject for you. You recently lost an important Senate debate dealing with planting flowers around the U.S. Capitol. Now, do you consider that a defeat for the Administration or a personal setback?

HUMPHREY: Well now, Senator, that's one of the most weighty questions you have asked so far.

KEATING: You've got ten seconds.

HUMPHREY: Ten seconds. I won that battle. I won it because the grounds around the Capitol are still barren due to partisan opposition, may I say, and I appeal to my Republican friends whose hearts are filled with the love of nature to help plant the flowers.

KEATING: Thank you, Senator Hubert Humphrey.



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