

From the Office of:
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FOR RELEASE: MONDAY A.M.'s
June 1, 1964

HUMPHREY AND DIRKSEN DISCUSS CIVIL RIGHTS CHANGES

The following are excerpts of the transcript of an interview of Senate Minority Leader Everett McKinley Dirksen by Senate Majority Whip, Hubert H. Humphrey, broadcast Sunday by Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota television stations:

SENATOR HUMPHREY: My guest today is a good friend and a most distinguished member of the United States Senate and he is also another in the long line of distinguished University of Minnesota alumni serving their government here in Washington. I doubt that anyone needs an introduction to him because he is well-known through television and radio and press and public service... Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois, Republican leader of the Senate. Senator Dirksen studied at the University of Minnesota at what was then known as the University of Minnesota College of Law. I believe I am correct that you worked your way through school by selling books out in South Dakota during the summertime.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: And what a chore it was.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: And he also claims professional competence as a baker and I know that he is a playwright. I don't know how many of those plays have been produced but he is an extremely competent playwright and a gardener. He has given me several lessons on gardening in the Senate.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: See, us bakers and pharmacists got to get together.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: Senator Dirksen is truly one of the most respected men in Congress and a man recognized by many on both sides of the aisle as the most able member of his party. He has been the Minority Leader since 1959 and he came to the Senate in 1951 after a distinguished career in the House of Representatives of 16 years. He retired for a period of two years only because of what he thought would be eye trouble and then he came back to the Senate after a rather miraculous cure. Would you like to tell us a little bit about that, Everett?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Hubert, I am not going to call you, Senator. I have to call you Hubert, I've known you so long. And we have the kinship of the same great school, the University of Minnesota. But this was corneal

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SENATOR HUMPHREY: Well, thank goodness it turned out well. He sees very well, I might add, and sees things clearly. Well now, just let me say a word more about this good friend and great Senator. In 1960 when President Johnson was the Majority Leader, Senator Dirksen joined with him to help pass the civil rights bill of that year. And now, this year he plays a very important role in what we expect will be the passage of the most comprehensive civil rights bill ever presented to Congress. Now, Everett, you have really been mixing the dough, so-to-speak--you have been baking well--on this civil rights bill. Tell us a little bit about what you had in mind and what we have been doing in reference to preparing a substitute proposal.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, Hubert, I would rather tell them what we had in mind. That is to say, you and Senator Mansfield and of my number, Senator Kuchel, the Minority Whip, and myself are all equal sponsors of this new bill. But you recall when that bill came from the House... we know that no legislation is ever perfect and you know the human cry that goes out--you have got to have the House bill. As much as to say that the Senate is not part of the legislative establishment and therefore shouldn't work its will. Well, you know better and I know better from our long experience as legislators here. I could readily see its imperfections and I thought something had to be done about it. Now, there was lots of talk about rejecting the bill entirely.

Well, I mentioned on a number of occasions in the manner of Victor Hugo, that item he put in his diary the night he died: "Stronger than all the armies is an idea whose time has come." And this idea has come and it's here. And I think we both appreciate that you have to deal with it. So what do we do, do we reject it or do we perfect it? Well, legislation is the perfecting art, after all. And so, I developed suggestions of amendments and I am sure you did, too. And I lay those before our policy committee and in a little while, it's just like being a baker, you know if you take a piece of dough, work with a little, pretty soon you've got it rounded up and ready to put in the pan. And it was exactly that way here. Here was something that had to be kneaded up and rounded up and it wasn't too long before it was ready for the pan, preliminarily speaking. But then we knew also that here were differences of opinion that had to be adjusted one way or another. How to do it? Well, we could have wasted lots of time by going through intermediaries. You concurred with the idea that perhaps we all ought to get around the table. The Attorney General, the Deputy Attorney General, our people, your people, your staff, our staff and I think you'll agree we saved a lot of time doing that.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: We saved a lot of time doing it and I believe that it was one of the most effective committee processes that I have ever seen. We were sort of an ad hoc committee, you might say, of the Senate leadership, and with competent staff work and cooperation from the Justice Department... now, Senator, so that people won't misunderstand what we did, do you think that our bill--and I am proud to call it our bill and to be associated with it--do you think that our bill will weaken the cause of civil rights legislation or weaken the civil rights program?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, first let me point this out, Hubert, you know all the talk there was about watering down, about impairing it...

SENATOR HUMPHREY: Emasculating it.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Emasculating it. Every word was applied. I don't know if it had occurred to you, but there are 74 pages in the new bill compared with 55 pages in the House bill. So certainly we didn't cut out or impair, but we did some refining and I like that word that Senator Saltonstall used--purifying it. So we sort of purified this bill. But we had all hands at the table and little by little with forbearance and patience and good humor and tolerance, we got this job done. And then, of course, we had to go back to our respective conferences--our policy committees, you to yours and

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me to mine. Then we had to lay it before them and if we had anybody who wanted to modify what we had done, they had a chance to do so. So we went through this whole perfecting process and you know I think it's a great compliment that the staff was still working with the Justice officials last night or whatever night it was until half after midnight. And what a formidable job they really did. And so here's a process where every mind can make its imprint and then if there is a spirit of adjustment, you are going to get a job done. Let me take time right now to thank you for the spirit in which you've approached this. I know the pressures that you are under. I was not under similar pressure. Of course, I had thousands of people, ministers, rabbis, priests, settlement workers, everybody; but I know because you are identified with the Administration exactly the kind of pressure this was going to put on you. And you stood up like a Trojan, I was going to say like a Minnesota lumberjack.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: Well, that's good; that's a high compliment.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I would say, if not better. And it was just that, notwithstanding the pressures we were all under that we had only one purpose and no more, and that was to get a good bill that was workable and fair, palatable, equitable because we were thinking of not just one group, we were thinking of the whole country. And I believe that we served that purpose.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: And in this bill, we have, and I believe, fortified the whole process of gaining civil rights by including the local communities, the state governments, voluntary activities, seeking compliance with the law through mediation and conciliation and always provide for ultimate federal enforcement if it is needed.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Exactly.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: So we've got a good workable bill. Now Senator, do you think that... what is your prediction on when we are going to be able to bring this idea whose time has come as you put it from Victor Hugo, what is your prediction as to when the time will come for definitive action?

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Well, it can't be too long. I think there is one thing that most people don't realize that we have to deal with constantly, for instance we are getting into the commencement season. Some of our members have commencement speeches. Probably these have been made last year or commitments made early in the year. I know how it is in my own case. Well, what do you do? We want all of our people here on both sides. Indeed, when we get out into the action stage. So I am trying to find out who will be necessarily absent, what we can do to bring them back. I have already propositioned several to go and make their commencement speeches and if necessary to get a charter plane and come in here either early in the morning or yet that night to make sure that they will be on hand when the time comes. So, within the very near foreseeable future it is going to be necessary, and I think you and I agree on this, that we are going to have to file a cloture petition. We expect to get the votes to close the debate and then at long last we are going to get to vote on this substitute that the four of us introduced. And that we will wind it up, and hopefully we can get done before my party's national convention in San Francisco.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: Yes, we need to do that. Well, Senator Dirksen and I will be formal for a moment. My friend, I want the people of Minnesota and the surrounding area to know that when we pass this civil rights bill, we will not only pass one that is workable and acceptable, rational and fair and enforceable, but one that I believe will make a great contribution to domestic peace and tranquility and justice in our country. And when that happens, you, sir, can claim--and you won't but I will claim for you--a large measure of the credit for this achievement. It couldn't be done without you, Everett, and I, for one want to publicly express my respect and admiration for you and my sincere thanks for what I call service beyond the call of duty and putting country ahead of every other consideration.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: I can say as much for you, my friend.

SENATOR HUMPHREY: Thank you, Everett.

TV TRANSCRIPT

MAY 27, 1964

BOB COAR: This is Washington, and this is Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, the Assistant Majority Leader of the United States Senate. He has today as his guest a very distinguished gentleman, a close friend of his. He is the Minority Leader of the United States Senate. Now, here is Senator Humphrey.

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SENATOR DIRKSEN: I can say as much for you, my friend.

HHH: Thank you, Everett.

~~BOB COAR: Today's report originated in your nation's capitol and our distinguished guest was Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen, Republican leader of the United States Senate.~~



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