



## RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Laurence F. O'Brien

### NOTICE

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Reviewed by: Colonel J. H. M. Smith, 16 October 1962

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES  
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23 August 1962

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GENERAL QUILL: Admiral Rose; Gentlemen:

Although the President may frequently entertain the most influential Members of Congress at breakfast, the day to day relationship between the Executive and the Legislative Branches cannot be effective solely over an occasional plate of codfish and eggs. It is a fulltime job that demands a personality who is diplomatic, practical, and yet is familiar with the tools of power, patronage and persuasion.

Our speaker today, Mr. Lawrence F. O'Brien, frequently referred to as another "Jim Farley," has been active as a political organizer at state and national levels since 1938. A lawyer by education, and practicing businessman, he has combined his background and experience to qualify himself, stated by the New York Times Magazine in March of 1962 - I quote - "The Lobbyist for the White House on Capitol Hill, and he shows signs of becoming the ablest man on the job in years."

It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. O'Brien who will speak on "Relations Between the President and Congress in National Affairs."

Mr. O'Brien.

MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you, General. Gentlemen:

I think I caught the word "patronage," mentioned by the General. One of these days I'm going to determine where that's located. It will make the job a little

easier. I am, this morning, going to chat with you concerning the relations between the President and the Legislative Branch of the government. I think it's intriguing. It has been overlooked by historians, to a great extent. It has had its fluctuations over the years, and currently, however, I know of at least two books being written on the subject. So, perhaps, if we do not accomplish anything else in our operation with the Congress we are going to bring into focus over the next couple of years this unusual relationship - this clear line of demarcation established by the Constitution and the problems attendant to never crossing the line, but attempting somehow to establish the rapport that is essential to bring about progress in government.

The agrarian colonials who created our Constitution could hardly have envisioned that it would govern the mightiest nation that the world has ever seen and become the guiding beacon for free men everywhere. The incredible quality of those early American instincts and skills is apparent from the way the Executive, Legislative and Judicial organizations conceived by the Constitution, flourished long ago in a limited handful of states, and flourish now in Colonel Glenn's boundless universe.

I believe that the way the Presidency has developed under the Constitution, responsive to the checks and balances of the Congress and the courts, and responsible to the people at all times, is a prime factor in our progress.

Through this document we could experience the dynamism of Washington, Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt, without risk of dictatorship.

More recently Americans could applaud Harry Truman's Marshall Plan or his

aid to Turkey. Yes, they could agree or disagree even with the disciplining of a distinguished General without ever fearing that by endorsing or objecting to these actions we would set the stage for some future man on horseback to charge away from the world of people. This is a remarkable document that we live by.

The relations between the Congress, the Legislative and the Judiciary, are flexible enough to permit growth. However, they're also rigid enough to bring disaster to the President who cannot or will not relate himself and his programs to the other branches. This can be illustrated by the tragic exchanges between the Executive and the Legislature after World War I, when conflicts developed during that period, that caused America to back away from the League of Nations and attempt to live behind evaporating ocean barriers.

This morning I propose to discuss a few aspects of the current relationship between President Kennedy and the Congress. Fortunately, this President spent 14 years at work on the Hill; six years in the House, and eight in the Senate. As a historian and as a journalist he understands the institution that is the Congress. As a former Member, he also knows that the institution is a body of men and women; of individuals; but let's note this - of individuals elected by the people. To him the Senate Majority Leader is not simply an astute westerner, he is also a friend and a former colleague; a man who served his country in the Army, the Navy and the Marines; a dedicated and sensitive human being to whom country, duty and freedom mean everything.

In the House - taking as one example of a committee chairman - "It is worth noting that to this President the Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee is

not just a 9-term Congressman from Texas; he is also an old friend, a much decorated hero, much wounded soldier, who can be counted on to battle for constructive veterans' legislation and to slap down any short-sighted persons who clamor for unearned handouts.

"The President can no longer expect Mike Mansfield, or Tiger Tee, and other former colleagues to regard him in an informal manner; to treat him with informality. But he can feel a closeness; a closeness to them, that has been enjoyed by few of his predecessors."

Within this legislative body, then, as within the Executive Branch, President Kennedy's personal relationships are strong. Speaking from my own experience I can assure you that these close personal ties do not inhibit him from taking positive action. If, for example, it is necessary to do battle with persons in or around the Pentagon in order to further advance the dollar-saving reforms of the Defense Supply Agency, battle will be done.

If, as another example, constructive revisions in weapons systems or in military personnel organization cannot be accomplished without facing opposition from well-meaning persons on the Hill, such opposition will be faced.

Due, in large part, to his comprehension of the Congress and its Membership I want to note this; the President's legislative program has done very well despite considerable partisan opposition. In the first session of this 87th Congress, 80% of his program was enacted into law. And we expect to do equally as well before this session closes. I mention this because it's a little hard to determine the batting average of the President with the Congress if you carefully read the

pundits daily.

To be specific regarding the achievements of this Administration I would like to take just a few minutes to list some key measures. 863 urban and rural colleges in America, with chronic unemployment, are now being helped by the Administration's Area Redevelopment Act. There was very little of it when it was enacted into law. It is now a very effective measure in this area. 100,000 low income families and hundreds of thousands of middle income families are in the process of being aided by our housing program. 24 million workers will benefit from the Administration bill increasing the minimum wage to \$1.25. We brought another 3 1/2 million persons under the protection of this law, the first new cover since 1938.

The President, for the first time in history, gave the Congress an opportunity to vote on legislation to combat juvenile delinquency. This was a much neglected problem as we all know. The bill passed.

Currently - at the moment - the Senate Finance Committee is considering the Trade Expansion Act. This act, with its careful provisions for assistance to American industries and workers, has passed the House, and I can report to you that the outlook in the Senate at the moment is bright. And I needn't tell you or remind you that the bill, if enacted into law, will have a tremendous ~~impact~~ - worldwide impact and national impact - to our lives and the lives of our children. This represents a new era in world trade, the common market, the emerging nations, and the position of the United States.

Our tax revision program designed to stimulate business and to collect \$650

million per year in taxes that are presently due, but to put it mildly, uncollectable, passed the House. The Senate version is a much milder version than the House Bill. We do not know at this moment what is going to happen regarding this major piece of legislation, but it will be on the Senate Floor this coming week for action and we feel sure that this will represent a major step forward and will lay the groundwork for the massive tax reform proposal of next year, which will be the first across-the-board tax reforms in many many years in this country.

The Peace Corps, long a dream, has become a reality and is giving hope to millions of persons throughout the world.

You may find it interesting to trace with me the passage of two particular pieces of legislation. And I think, taking two pieces of legislation more or less at random - two entirely different types of legislation, I might add - will give you an idea of just what our operation is in relation to the Congress, and our problems attendant to the President's program in presenting it to the Congress.

I would like to discuss just briefly, our Minimum Wage Bill and the Peace Corps enacted into law. Minimum wage legislation, as you know, dates back to Franklin D. Roosevelt, to the New Deal days of 1938 when the Fair Labor Standards Act with a floor of 25¢ per hour - a rather low floor as we look at it now - under the wages of certain workers. The bill also at that time in 1938 set a legal basis for the 40-hour week. In 1949 the minimum wage was boosted to 75¢. In 1955 it went to \$1. President Eisenhower asked Congress to expand coverage. He did not ask for an increase in the \$1 per hour figure.

In 1959 Senator Kennedy pushed for a bill that would have expanded coverage

and raised the minimum to \$1.25, note, in 1959. He got the bill through his Labor Sub-Committee, but it died in full committee. In 1960, prodded by Senator Kennedy, the Senate passed a bill raising the minimum wage to \$1.25 and extending coverage to 4 million workers. A Wheat Bill passed the House. Conferees between the two bodies were unable to agree, so, again the measure died. In February 1961, President Kennedy submitted his first economic message to Congress. In it he asked for the bill he had been unable to push through when he was a junior Senator from Massachusetts.

Representative Jim Roosevelt, Chairman of the Labor Sub-Committee, submitted the Administration bill. Roosevelt held hearings, during which Labor Secretary Goldberg and other Administration spokesmen testified and presented information favorable to the bill. Lobbyists from the labor movement asked for a stronger bill. Lobbyists from many other organizations asked that no new measure be passed. The committee sent to the floor of the House an amended bill which was satisfactory to the Administration.

As the bill came to the floor, pressures mounted. Special interest groups, determined to prevent any increase in coverage or wages, mustered their forces. An organized mail campaign flooded Congressional offices. Those persons favoring the legislation neglected to write, and that is the usual situation. Those that would be effected by the legislation don't seem to write. Those opposed, in great numbers did write. Editorials and even news stories in many American newspapers sharply criticized Congressmen favoring the President's position.

The lobbying groups were numerous. One merchants' association had 100

persons at work on the Hill. On our side, Secretary Goldberg joined with me and my 3-man staff on the Hill, on the House side, in a counter-effort. Even though we had great help from organized labor we were badly out-numbered. But perhaps not out-researched or out-hustled. What looked to be disastrous struck us on the Floor of the House in March. A crippling substitute motion pushed by Congressmen Ayres and Kitchin, two long-time foes in this field, came before the Members. Desperately we worked to turn this aside.

Carl Albert, then the majority whip and now the majority leader of the House, sought to help by submitting an Administration-sponsored substitute that would have over-ruled the Kitchin-Ayres's measure. We were able to rally much Democratic support for this measure, but we knew the Republicans had pulled away virtually all of their members. Clearly, the decision would be close.

The Members filed slowly pass<sup>ed</sup> the tellers. The final count was 186 to 185; we were defeated. A roll-call vote on Kitchin-Ayres followed. This passed, dealing us our second defeat of that bleak day.

Americans reading the morning papers must have thought we'd lost an entire legislative war. Quotes were like this: "Defeat For Kennedy." "Administration Loses Control." "Congress Halts New Frontiersman." These were typical. The headlines, I might add, then were somewhat like the recent headlines we've had legislatively.

Having been rebuffed in the House we focused our attention on the Senate. The special interest groups did likewise. Despite them, in April the "Labor and Public Welfare Committee," passed an amended version of the House Bill that

restored most provisions of the original Administration proposal. The committee vote was 13 to 2 with Senators Dirksen and Goldwater opposing. The bill passed the Senate by 65 to 28, with 51 Democrats and 14 Republicans over-riding 11 Democrats and 17 Republicans. If we were to get a bill, the conflict between the Senate and House Members had to be decided in conference. Here we were again at conference after all these years. The conferees, doubtless influenced by the strong views of the President, ended many years of legislative inaction in this field by reporting out a bill that was very close to President Kennedy's original suggestion. The conference bill passed both houses of Congress by comfortable margins. And on May 5th 1961 the President signed into law this great bill, saying "This does not totally finish the job, but it's an important step forward." The 7-year quest was brought to a happy conclusion.

Now, this is one bill; one series of procedures; one review, at this point as I think back on it, and review it with you, a series of frustrations. But I think it's rather typical of the continuing relationship between the Executive and Legislative Branches of the government. We must propose; the Congress must dispose. These struggles are continuing struggles, as I said.

Now, let me take up another example of legislative progress - the Peace Corps. This is an example of a concept that became law with relative ease. The Peace Corps idea was first put forward by the late Senator Neuberger, Senator Humphrey, Senator Kennedy, and Representative Royce.

During the 1960 Presidential Campaign, Senator Kennedy pledged that he would establish the corps after his election. President Eisenhower termed it a juvenile

experiment. However, the public and the world seemed captivated by the concept. In March '61, President Kennedy issued an Executive Order establishing the Peace Corps on a temporary basis. He sent a request to the Hill asking Congress to put the corps on a long-term footing in order to, as he put it, permit our people to exercise more fully their responsibilities in the great common cause of world development. Widespread popular support of the Peace Corps, coupled with the key fact that no major special interest group was in strong opposition - and I want to emphasize that - no special interest group of major proportions was in opposition; and that generally represents the difference, the difference between a relatively easy road, or a difficult and sometimes impossible road.

This bill sailed through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with little difficulty. The tense moment for the Peace Corps came on the Senate Floor when Senator Hickenlooper offered what could have been a disastrous proposal, to slash the initial authorization from \$40 million to \$25 million. Sargent Schriver, the dedicated Director of the Corps, led the Administration's strong fight against this cut, and the motion failed by a vote of 59 to 32. Once this hurdle was cleared, the bill the Senate without trouble. It moved smoothly through the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House as a whole. The conferees agreed on a bill that virtually duplicated the Administration proposal. This passed through Congress rapidly and was signed into law by President Kennedy in September '61, a day when the corps reported to him that it already had 13, 000 applications on hand.

As a result the Peace Corps and minimum wage legislation are rapidly becoming evident. Some other results of the Kennedy Administration over-all legislative

program are not clear yet. However, I'd like to high-light just a few current items. On the domestic front, while some serious economic problems persist - and we recognize them - the country has gradually sailed away from the 1959-60 recession. The roles of the unemployed have been cut by one million persons. The number of depressed areas has been slashed 50%. Even though there is still great need for a long-term farm program, farm income is at its highest point in a decade and farm surpluses are gradually going down. Corporate profits are up 26%. Production is up 16%. Wages have reached unprecedented levels, and the cancerous spiral of inflation has been halted.

In foreign affairs progress has been good also, in our view. The nation's defenses have never been stronger. The Space Program, hobbled by years of limited action, has made progress both in the manned vehicle project and in the communications and photographic satellites. A revised Foreign Aid Program, including the alliance for progress, shows promise of bringing renewed effectiveness into this field. Serious efforts to reach honorable agreements on nuclear testing and disarmament are underway on a continuing basis. The dangerous outflow of gold, slowed in '61, drastically cut in the first half of '62, will, we are confident, be under control by '63.

We believe that much of this progress could not have taken place without an active, vigorous President in the White House. One of the reasons for this has been the nature of the Congress. These Representatives and Senators, as I stated before, are elected. But we must remember that they are elected by districts and in states. As we have seen, only a man elected by all the people - in

other words, only a President - can lead a legislative body into the broad national issues.

Recently I went on a tour of western conservation, irrigation and power projects with President Kennedy. Some of the pundits were unkind enough to call it a political tour. Standing on a platform in the dusty outskirts of Pueblo, Colorado, he discussed the fantastic Frying Pan, Arkansas, project. He told the people that this project which will bring water from west of the Continental Divide and give life to the arid lands east of the Rockies, came because 30 years ago Congressmen and citizens in all parts of the nation had recognized the needs of western states and had been led to action.

If President Kennedy failed to give leadership to the Congress and the nation now, 30 or 40 years from now 300 million Americans would find their nation with basic needs that could not be filled and they would find themselves in great difficulty. You have to anticipate the problems. I think the history of this country, to a great extent, is based on the doctrine of anticipation. More of it, however, would be helpful.

This need for leadership is at least as strong in defense and foreign policy as it is domestically. If the Commander-in-Chief cannot work with his civilian and military subordinates to establish the needs of a sound defense program, and cannot then carry that program through the Congress, the results of this failure could be fatal. If the President, as the person responsible for the nation's foreign policy, cannot use a healthy economy and a sound defense establishment as the tools to work toward an honorable, genuine, lasting peace, this failure could be

equally fatal. Here, the President's assurance that we must never negotiate through fear, but never fear to negotiate, is most significant.

I know there are many aspects of the relationship between the Executive and the Legislative Branches of the government, that I'm sure intrigue you. I thought of citing an example of a difficult bill with far-reaching effects that extended over a period of some 7 years to action, which would give you an idea of the problems attendant to Congressional relations and the White House. I thought, also, in fairness we should cite something that seemed to catch on rapidly, arouse the interest of the American people, and resulted in legislation in the Peace Corps with very little difficulty. But these are only two of literally dozens and dozens of major proposals, and, of course, hundreds of proposals of impact on a regional, local and limited basis that are constantly being presented and considered by the Congress.

I could go on in this vein, but I did want to outline to you just pretty much how we must operate, what our limitations are, and what our responsibilities are. With that background by way of introduction, I would like now to have questions.

QUESTION: Mr. O'Brien, many commentators feel that your job has been made particularly difficult by the narrow margin by which the President was elected in the popular vote, and that as a result, the Congress feels no particular responsibility to him, and therefore your success has been outstanding.

Without providing any trade secrets, can you tell us some of the techniques and procedures that you employ in dealing with the Congress?

MR. O'BRIEN: There's a lot of validity to that contention, incidentally. Just

to review it for a moment; the President was elected, as we all know, by a tissue-paper thin margin. Upon coming into office, his party in the House of Representatives lost 21 seats. Now, this is a rather amazing situation; Kennedy is elected President and the Democratic Party loses 21 seats in the House. We were in the White House just one week, as you may recall, when we had this difficult fight over change in the rules. We prevailed by five votes in that fight, with the prestige of Mr. Sam, then Speaker, on the line; proof positive of just what our problem was going to be. Since then, very candidly, we have been on the edge of a precipice; hanging on by our fingernails constantly.

Last year, with our 80% record, we succeeded in almost every major rollcall, but never by more than a handful of votes. And last year, also, we were able to secure Republican support; modest, but nevertheless, some support. 15 to 25 House Republicans would support us, generally, in a major domestic matter; of course, more in the foreign field. But southern Democrats and Republicans, supposedly, have a coalition. Well, that just isn't the case. But it has been a tradition since Roosevelt's Congress of 1938 that southern Democrats oppose Democratic proposals pretty much on a conservative basis rather than on a firmed-up coalition. But it would work out that way when you looked at a rollcall; Republicans joining southern Democrats. The average was 65 southern Democrats opposing Democratic Party legislative matters over those years.

In our first year - and I'll get to why this occurred - we were able to reduce this opposition of southern Democrats, from an average of 65 over the years, to an average of 45. And, during that time we were, as I said, getting 15 to 25

Republicans to support us. The net result was, we were winning our major roll-calls. This year, amazingly enough, we've had six major rollcalls in the House so far, and we have prevailed in five of them. I mention this because I'm sure you'll note it in the newspapers. We lost on one - the Farm Bill - and we lost 215 to 205. But this year we've reduced the southern Democratic opposition to our proposals to an average of 35 southern Democrats; never the same 35, of course, but an average of 35. However, while we've been accomplishing this we've lost all our Republican support on domestic matters.

The Tax Bill; a major bill; one Republican voted with the Administration, on the Tax Bill. And he happened to be a fellow who was a lame duck Republican; he was defeated in his own party primary, and he's not coming back anyway.

The debt ceiling; nine Republicans. And it has gone on like this.

The Farm Bill; one Republican. So, it has been a massive problem since the beginning. You look at the old statistics, as most pundits do, and say, "Why can't Kennedy handle the Congress? He has 263 Democrats in the House; why can't he?" Well, all of us know how that breaks down. But, it's a struggle.

Now, why have we reduced the southern Democratic opposition to Democratic proposals? I think, to a great extent it has been the rapport between the President and the Congress. As I pointed out, the President knows many Members of the Congress. Many of them up there know the President as a former Member. They like him; they respect him. And I have found time after time, when asking a Member for his support, that you don't get into the substance, particularly, of the bill. He'll say, "I don't know. This bill, I don't think would appeal to the folks back

home. But I'd like to go for it because I'd like to help the President." We find that in our own party. And we find - and this is an amazing statistic - that we have more Democrats supporting our legislative program in this session than have supported Democratic proposals since 1938. And yet, the strong, hardened opposition of the Republicans can in every instance make it a hairline decision, and in some instances cause defeat.

Now, those are the political realities of life. Congressman Hallek operates as the minority leader up there in, I'll have to say - I think I'm a pro - grand style. He does a fine job from their point of view. He's a tough advocate; a tough opponent; and I find him an extremely friendly fellow. We can get together for an occasional early evening drink and enjoy chatting. But that's as far as it goes.

But what do we do? Actually we trade on - to answer your question specifically - the good feeling in general, across-the-board, in the Congress - House and Senate - toward the President. Patronage, strong-arm, whips - all these things are grossly exaggerated; sincerely; I'd tell you if it were not the case. Perhaps at times I wish it were not the case. But the fact of the matter is, there is very, very little relationship between patronage and legislative action. Patronage is a responsibility. If we had 800 top jobs - I believe that's what it was when the President was inaugurated - and a total of 3,000 jobs of a reasonably high category, if we had Republicans to move from those jobs and Democrats to replace them, which is what we did, as all parties do, the fact of the matter is, it didn't bring about great pluses that could be translated into legislative action; it's a party responsibility. Of course we solicited and encouraged the recommendations of Senators and Congressmen

in many instances. And I might say in many instances you didn't have to solicit or encourage. But, I know it just doesn't hit right. I know you're saying, 'O'Brien just isn't leveling, because it has got to be more than this pretty friendly relationship and this rapport.' It just isn't.

It's maintaining contact. We have these coffee hours with Members. The President knows so many of them by their first names. He talks to them on the phone. They drop down to the office. An interesting statistic on this that I think bears out why we have had a measure of success under what I think are most difficult circumstances - the close election and the loss of seats - can be testified to. The telephone operators - and I might say that patronage doesn't effect telephone operators, so I can assure you these are the same telephone operators that President Eisenhower had and they're a fine group of girls - their books show that we have 300% more contact from the Hill to the White House by Members of Congress, than occurred during the Eisenhower Administration. I think that's the answer to whatever degree of success that we've had.

QUESTION: Who do you consider to have the greatest impact on Congress; the organized lobbyists, or the organized Press?

MR. O'BRIEN: I would say the organized lobbyists. I feel that the organized lobbyists - and it has been brought to a point in the American democratic process, of perfection, if you will, never before achieved. I have observed the lobbyist. In most instances, of course, we are fighting the big lobbyist; it's just in the nature of things. He has his job to do. He has his PR operation. But he has a great impact, I believe, because lobbyists, again, aren't fellows with hammers. They

have a broad base of operation.

The American Medical Association; I think that's a lobbying organization that we've had a great deal to do with recently, and will continue to. They have an excellent operation. I don't want to convey the impression that the lobbyist for the AMA can go up to Senator Smith and hit him or her - there are two Senators Smith - over the head, and accomplish the result, namely a vote in their behalf. But, they are so well organized that Senator Smith and all the other Senators receive - and have received - a tremendous amount of mail from back home - grass roots - brought about by the local medical associations under the direction of the national association; literally hundreds of thousands of people becoming directly involved in direct and indirect lobbying. I think, therefore, the impact is massive. And the impact can be decisive.

It's just like the minimum wage as I referred to here; the fellow who needs the \$1.25 isn't the guy who sits around writing letters to Congressmen. He's just not going to hear from him. Our job as we see it is to protect his interests and improve his position and lot in life.

But, believe me, that bill was the same thing. Literally hundreds of thousands of letters and telegrams poured in to Congressmen and Senators during that fight, from special interests - and I don't say that in a derogatory sense; businessmen who were to be affected at their pocketbook level if this minimum wage bill was increased and the protection broadened.

So, I say that the lobbyist certainly has a place in our process, and the lobbyist today operating in Washington - you know that some of them have new buildings

down there that you can look at ~~some~~ of these national organizations. They are extremely effective.

Now, so far as the President is concerned, I rather suspect that the average Congressman up there - and I was in a Congressional Office some 12 years ago - will pay a great deal of attention to his local newspaper, and little attention to the so-called major newspapers. He's going back to the "Ocean-side Review," a weekly in a county that he represents, and he's going to read it from cover to cover. The New York Times - he might read Scotty Reston if he has a little extra time during the day. But that's about what it comes down to. So, I think that the impact of the Press is the local newspaper, their attitude and their position. Incidentally, it's a very difficult position for us among those southern newspapers, and that has a lot to do with our southern Democratic situation.

The lobbyist, in the final analysis I think, presents the view of his people more effectively.

QUESTION: Would you care to comment on Vice President Johnson's role in participation with your office in your relations with Congress?

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes. As you know, the Vice President was an extremely effective majority leader in the Senate, and there are a lot of colorful and interesting stories told about him. However, he was an effective leader up there; I might add at this point, a different type fellow as an individual, and in his concept of leadership, than our current leader, Mike Mansfield. Both of them are effective. They have been and will continue to be.

The Vice President has an informal role in the sense that he feels that direct

contact on a continuing basis across-the-board in the Senate, along the lines that he followed as the leader, is just not in the cards. And that's correct. However, there are many Senators who retain a great respect for Vice President Johnson. They've had close association with him. And I can tell you candidly - and I know he wouldn't mind my saying this - that he has been a great help to me at the outset and steering me in this process, and daily whenever I call upon him. Often-times he calls me, and interestingly, ~~and~~ sometimes it's late in the evening, with suggestions and ideas that he has picked up. There's a very close, informal, rather quiet relationship that does not appear in the public view to any extent, but is nevertheless effective and helpful to us.

QUESTION: How serious is the quoted rift between Mr. McNamara and Mr. Vinson, to the President's program?

MR. O'BRIEN: Well, as you know, there has been a lot of Press discussion of a, as you say, "rift." Nevertheless, Chairman Vinson has spoken out on many occasions, concerning his feeling toward and relation with, Secretary McNamara. He has generally presented his view along the line that he is the best Secretary of Defense that the Chairman has ever seen. And he has covered them all. I feel that there is not a rift in that sense.

There are, of course, differences in views in certain matters. But I have never seen - and I can tell you this because I've been exposed to both of them, the two of them together and separately, to a great extent. I've had a wonderful opportunity to observe, and I don't know of any two men in the government who have any greater mutual respect and admiration for each other than those two. It is

interesting; high regard on both sides. And particularly, Chairman Vinson - whenever I see him - almost invariably mentions his high regard for McNamara and the great job he's doing.

There are certain areas, as we all know, where they do not agree, but I do not think that it's a rift in the sense that it would break down the progress of operations in the Defense Department or in the Executive Branch.

QUESTION: I would like to re-phrase that question. It seems to me that this was a fundamental struggle for the furtherance of responsibility between the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch, that might even have to have judicial settlement.

My question is, has this been pretty well settled between the President and the Congress?

MR. O'BRIEN: I don't know as I'm competent to answer that. You talk about judicial review; I'm not familiar with that possible area. As to a settlement between the President and Congress, all matters are of a continuing nature. I don't know at this moment, of any major problem in this area that exists between the President and the Congress. Again I say that there are differences in views and concepts in certain areas, and there will continue to be. And as I pointed out, we will press our view, and in some instances some Members of Congress will press opposing views. But I think both sides operate in the national interest. There isn't any rancor; that's what I'm saying. There haven't been any political overtones, really.

These are views, in some instances that vary, but views of responsible men who have only one purpose in mind. That's why I don't fear; I don't think that any of us fear a devastating rift, or for that matter none of us expect that there will be total accord at any given moment. It's a continuing process, but I think it's a healthy one.

QUESTION: How effective are the letters from constituents, on Congressmen and Representatives?

MR. O'BRIEN: Extremely effective; extremely effective. I recall one conversation that I had not too long ago. Let's take a Congressman who receives 400 letters on a given subject. That's mass mailing. I'd love to be able to get 400 letters on our side of the subject to any given Congressman; it's just an impossibility from our point of view. But organized letter-writing is effective.

I remember this Congressman saying to me, "Well, I've looked through these and they follow a pattern. I found, when my staff checked them out, that there were only nine variations in the letters and telegrams." And I said, "Well, there you go." It doesn't actually reflect district interest. But it still concerned him. He was still shaking his head a little bit. He was concerned. He wasn't positive that it might not represent some area of district interest.

So, whether it's a form letter type of thing; obviously, in most cases it's engendered by local pressure that starts, as I pointed out, from a national lobbying position. But it's still effective.

Congressmen and Senators may be labeled, "Conservatives," "Liberals," "Moderates," "Middle-of-the-Roaders," or what have you, but in the area of

politics they are all conservative. They don't want to take chances, and frankly I don't blame them, because we would never suggest - if we retain our senses - that any member up there commit political hari-kari. We recognize his problem of re-election. That's his major problem. He's a human being. He's like the rest of us. He's not going to dive off the board; we have to recognize that. There are some of them that have come along with us, and as I said, based to a great extent on their feeling toward the President, we say to them, "Let's try the water. Try it on this one; if you get burned from back home we won't bother you again." The interesting aspect of it though, is that those who have gone along on this basis have had very, very little burning from back home; very little. But, the letters are effective.

QUESTION: Mr. O'Brien, how do the departments and agencies of the government, each of which has an office engaged in Congressional liaison, fit in with your efforts to provide leadership, and are there ways in which their role could be made more effective?

MR. O'BRIEN: I'm awfully glad, really, that you asked that question. I should have covered that aspect. Our operation is as follows: Weekly - every week - by noontime on Monday the head of Congressional relations, for each department and agency of the government must submit to my office, in writing, a full report of that department or agency's activity on the Hill during the past week, and its projection of its activity and the position of its legislative matters on the Hill for the current week, or projected beyond that if they deem it feasible. That must be in my office by Monday noon of every week.

This is reviewed by my staff and then is put into one report highlighting all these matters that are of apparent interest and apparent importance. By Monday evening, following dinner, this report is in the hands of the President. And it's my weekly report to the President. Then the President reviews this and uses it as a working paper along with an agenda that we prepare each Monday night, for the leadership breakfast on Tuesday morning.

Every Tuesday morning the leaders meet and have breakfast with the President, and I join that meeting. We review these matters. That brings the departments and agencies into a close relationship. Now, beyond that, periodically - and it has been averaging about twice a month - I will call in to the White House the heads of the departments and agencies for Congressional relations, where we will then exchange views. Many of them will stand and present the details and the problems attendant to the individual department and agency legislative matters. We review all areas of activity. The concept of all this is, this is the President's program; totally the President's program; whether it emanates from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, or the Small Business Administration, or GSA. In my view this makes not a whit of difference. This is the President's program; every aspect of it. And therefore we must be as united as we possibly can in promoting, if you will, this program on the Hill, in all its phases.

Now, we try to help informally. One department will try to be helpful to another department at a crucial moment, only on the basis of personal friendship and contacts on the Hill. Perhaps a half dozen members of the committee they deal with generally are very close to them and they have a good relationship with them.

They will chat with them concerning another matter, of another department that is headed for Floor action.

But, there are five men in toto, including my Administrative Assistant, on the White House Congressional Relations staff. You must remember this became a formalized situation late in the Truman era. It was further strengthened and made permanent as an operation, in the Eisenhower Administration. It has been moved up to another level of operation as Special Assistant to the President, in this Administration. But, historically, either the President of the United States and the Congress were not speaking at all, or there was very, very little contact.

That line, the Constitutional barrier, was high, and closed out everything. And, as you know, at the time of the League of Nations and through that whole period, there was very, very little contact. There is a great deal more, as I told you, now, but our folks at all times must remember to never forget for an instant that our founding fathers established this and the line of demarcation is clear; never should we encroach upon the legislative. We can always consult, discuss, and review, but never encroach.

So, in order to be effective, we try to bring into the operation as best we can, and these are innovations of this Administration, the weekly report and the bi-monthly conference. And there are other contacts that are of a continuing nature; the report to the President, the leadership breakfast; Eisenhower had those too. But, this is the best we've been able to do to bring about a cohesive operation in presenting the Executive Branch proposals and promoting the Executive Branch proposals with the Congress. Hopefully, as we go along, we'll improve this

operation.

QUESTION: Mr. O'Brien, in your talk you mentioned that if it was necessary to do battle on the Defense Supply Agency to make them conform, that battle would be done. Do you anticipate another RS-70 fight on this?

MR. O'BRIEN: No. As a matter of fact, the statistics I have seen concerning this operation certainly indicate to a layman - they have no basic knowledge in this field - but they certainly indicate to a layman that progress has been made and further progress can be anticipated. I would think that to see that this is effectively carried out and that the projected savings become a reality, is what I had in mind; that we would not brook any attempt to move backward in this area. But I think progress is definitely being made - good progress.

QUESTION: We have seen, over the past year, a great deal of comment concerning the relationship of the President with the Speaker of the House of Representatives. I wonder if you would care to comment on the relationship of Mr. Kennedy with the Speaker?

MR. O'BRIEN: I'd be glad to. As you know, there is certain activity taking place in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts currently that have caused the pundits to look carefully at this situation. It's interesting also that only yesterday afternoon, Chuck Daley of my staff was present during this conversation with the Speaker. We had a very candid chat, the Speaker and I. It has had no adverse effect on the relationship. The Speaker - I know I look somewhat older than I am - said, "You know, Larry, you and I have to let these young fellows go along and they have to lead their own lives." I dutifully said, "You're right Mr. Speaker."

But, we occasionally discuss it, and there is just no ill-feeling of any kind. Whoever wins that nomination in Massachusetts I'm positive there will be no adverse effect on the relationship between the President and the Speaker. Of course, this goes back to politics as we know it in Massachusetts - the McCormicks and the Kennedys - and the feeling, particularly on the part of outsiders, that they just couldn't get along; look at the brawls over the years, and look at the internal struggle of the Democratic Party up in Massachusetts, which I am a part of. We've had our struggles, but the fact of the matter is that we have no fear of any difficulties arising from this, and I am sure that if I were talking to a group of newspaper men, that they would be rather cynical when I gave them this view. But, time will prove it. When you watch the papers and the progress, I'm sure that the relationship between the President and the Speaker, which is extremely close, will remain that way.

Incidentally, I might add I was very pleased to read in the Wall Street Journal just the last few days ago a story by Paul Duke, on the Speaker. I don't know whether any of you read it, but if you did not you should, because I think that this man has been much maligned; that he has been extremely effective. It's the old story of walking in the shadow of, and yet, those who opposed him in the House are coming around daily to the view that he is extremely effective. Certainly, that was our view all along, even before he was the Speaker.

COLONEL COLMER: Well, Mr. O'Brien, we appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule to come over here to give us an excellent presentation and a wonderful discussion period. Thank you very much.