

in one individual). What would your response to that criticism be, Mr. Skelton?

Mr. SKELTON. You would get timely, you would get straightforward undiluted advice. Would it not be absolutely fantastic to have a Gen. John Vessey as that Chief of Staff being the one giving the President and Secretary of Defense advice? I envision someone of that caliber. I think it would work very, very well in that you would have the advice coming quickly and timely without a debate, and possibly compromise, before it got to the advice stage.

Mr. LALLY. The criticism, however, Mr. Skelton, is that, for example, a General Vessey might not be thoroughly conversant with carrier aviation or Air Force bombing missions. Would he be as qualified as the current joint group to provide this information?

Mr. SKELTON. I think that someone that reaches that plateau, has had extensive joint training and experience, that an aircraft carrier is nothing new to them. They have worked with the Navy and other services in many ventures and I think it would be relatively easy for someone of his caliber to be the Chief of Staff.

Mr. LALLY. Thank you, Mr. Skelton.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. NICHOLS. Mr. Barrett.

Mr. BARRETT. General Vessey contends in his statement, which will be made later this morning, that the JCS is working well now, that good people and cooperation is what is needed. You appear to claim that the JCS is not working well now because it cannot render meaningful advice on tough questions, like how to prioritize the budget, or how to deal with slicing up the world in the unified command plan, or how to deal with interservice matters, or issues looking toward the future, like space. Also, you contend that, even if we presently enjoy a variety of Camelot for this brief period with the Chiefs all working in harmony, this is one particular JCS and one administration, and we still have these long-recognized organizational defects.

Is this a correct characterization of what you are saying, that we may be in a period of a honeymoon, but it is not good even now?

Mr. SKELTON. You said that in such a way I would like to say I wish I had said it. Quite honestly, we have an outstanding group now. They do as well as the system will allow them to do. I think that given this same group of outstanding military leaders, under a different system, I think you would find an ability to pick and choose between programs, rather than coming to us with the entire programmatic wish list. I think that the present system is inherently flawed because you cannot ask, regardless of how bright and able they are, people to serve two masters. In essence you are asking too much. You are asking them to serve two masters.

In addition to that, let me point out an additional problem. You now have from time to time a different Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I think it is based on a quarter of a year, in my recollection. So, at any one time, you will have a person serving as a service chief, at the same time serving as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and also at the same time being Acting Chairman, when the Chairman is indisposed. You are asking a great deal of a human being. I think the very system itself is at fault, certainly not the gentleman serving. We should be so fortunate from here on