

file: 788NS CR 1213

RECEIVED  
DEC 19 1963

FOR: NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY

PROGRAM Today

STATION WRC-TV and  
NBC-TV Network

DATE December 16, 1963 7:00 A.M.

CITY Washington, D.C.

TAKING A LOOK AT CONGRESS

HUGH DOWNS: "At the end of the week -- this week that is -- Congress is expected to begin its Christmas recess. It has functioned for the past three weeks in an atmosphere of crisis that was the natural result of the Kennedy assassination. In both houses a monumental work load is left undone, must be dealt with next year. This seems an appropriate moment to assess what has been done, and what faces the Congress when it returns. Our Washington correspondent Martin Agronsky has asked the leaders of the Senate and the House to make that assessment for us today and next Wednesday.

"This morning we begin with the Senate -- Minnesota's Hubert Humphrey, the Majority Whip speaks for the Democrats, and Massachusetts' Leverett Saltonstall, Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference Committee speaks for the Republicans. Martin?"

MR. AGRONSKY WAS SEEN SEATED WITH HIS GUESTS,  
SENATOR HUMPHREY AND SENATOR SALTONSTALL, IN  
THE WASHINGTON STUDIO.

MARTIN AGRONSKY: "Good morning, Hugh. Senator Humphrey, let's begin with you, as a spokesman for the majority. How would you evaluate the major things that have been accomplished by this Congress, and the major things that are left unaccomplished?"

HUMPHREY: "Well I suppose one should start with the negative, but of course the major items not accomplished thus far are the tax bill and the civil rights measure, and I might add that those are two of the most controversial measures ever to be before any Congress, and naturally have taken a great deal of time, and resulted in some slow-down of the congressional process. But Martin, we've done quite a lot. We passed over 800 measures -- important measures. We've ratified the nuclear test ban treaty, which within itself was a very important act. The railroad legislation was adopted. We passed a permanent feed grains program, manpower training, military pay, housing for the elderly, two huge educational bills -- in fact this

Congress will go down in the Record book as having passed more legislation affecting education and helping education, than any other Congress in the history of this nation -- medical education, library services, higher education, vocational education, the two mental health acts -- one for mental retardation and the other the basic medical health act; water pollution control, clean air act, the extension of the Peace Corps; the extension of the disarmament agency, just to mention a few.

"I think we've been at work, plus these big appropriation bills which my colleague, Senator Saltonstall who is a ranking member on that committee can tell you more about."

AGRONSKY: "Senator Saltonstall, would you agree with that optimistic estimate?"

SALTONSTALL: "Yes I would, to a surprising degree. I think the most important things that we've done on the foreign relations is the test ban treaty -- I think that will stand out as a historical event in this Congress. I think we've kept the peace, it's been an uneasy peace of course, in South Vietnam, and other places, but there is no major war, or our troops aren't engaged in a great major war anywhere. Now in domestic legislation I think the most important thing are the education bills that Senator Humphrey has mentioned. We've done more for education, as he says, than any other Congress in history. And we've done it in the right way. We haven't interfered, as I see it, with local determination of how to go about education. We've helped in construction, we've helped in making it possible for students to get loans. We've given grants to certain colleges for construction purposes, and so on. And then the mental, and medical assistance, scientific assistance.

"Now ahead of us is the care for the elderly, and I think we'll do something about that, maybe in the next session. The great question is not what we shall do, but how we'll do it. And then, as Hubert has so well said, civil rights and taxation will be major domestic issues in the next Congress. One thing I forgot is the military pay bill, which is very important."

AGRONSKY: "Senator Saltonstall, your colleague, Senator Javits of New York called this a 'stand-still' Congress yesterday, marked by a loss of respect throughout the nation."

SALTONSTALL: "I don't agree with that at all. I think the newspapers have been hammering that we have lost respect. I don't think we necessarily have. We want to remember that one of the great leaders of Congress of recent years, Sam Rayburn, said that one of the greatest statements ever made by anybody was 'Just a minute,' and William S. White, the columnist says 'Negative inaction on unwise proposals is just as important as positive actions on wise proposals.' And I think, as Senator Humphrey has said, some controversial measures we've given considerable time to in debate, and ultimately they'll be passed."

AGRONSKY: "Well, negative inaction on what unwise proposals -- would Bill White have meant civil rights?"

SALTONSTALL: "Well, that's just a broad general statement, that we think a lot before we act. I think ultimately we'll pass the civil rights bill, just what will be in it today neither Hubert nor I can tell you, but there'll be a civil rights bill, and there will be a taxation bill -- just what will be in it today nobody can tell."

HUMPHREY: "Martin, I would like to join with my colleague here, Senator Saltonstall, on this. You know the Executive Branch will take a full year to prepare its budget to send to us, and they have thousands of people working on it -- "

SALTONSTALL: "Eighteen months --"

HUMPHREY: "Eighteen months, and they have thousands of people working on that budget, and the Congress gets that budget, and we're supposed to scrutinize every item of appropriation. If we don't we're criticized by our constituents as being spenders. And we have a few months to go over that very same budget, and to adopt it into law. It's one thing to make a recommendation, and it's another thing to put the final touches on it, and to make it into law."

"Now this is true about other pieces of legislation just as well. I don't want to indicate that there is no need for improvement in the Congressional process. It's my view, Martin, that we ought to have a continuing body, a continuing joint committee of the Congress, that constantly re-evaluates the institutions of Congress, the procedures of Congress, to update them in terms of modern needs. I think that ought to be a permanent joint committee -- not just one that we appoint from time to time."

AGRONSKY: "You've repeatedly emphasized that there is an enormous population growth, and Congress is certainly not organized to contend with it, and Congress is not organized in terms of expertise to compete on the same plane with the Executive."

HUMPHREY: "That is my view, Martin. I believe that, number one, you need a continuing joint committee on reorganization so that you do keep your Congress in touch with, and in line with the changes in population, the shift in population, and the tremendous new work load that comes upon the Congress, because things have changed drastically, with modern transportation and communication, and the growth of population. I think we need more joint committees, at least on a subcommittee level, to handle some of our legislative activities, so that we can proceed more readily and rapidly. And I also think that the Congress needs to equip itself better in staff. You cannot compete with the Executive Branch, without having the technical people and the professional people that you need around you. I propose, for example, that we have a sort of a congressional institute that is something like a -- that can plan ahead, can look ahead -- of scholars, intellectuals, not who are going to work on day to day legislation, but they can look down the road on the problems of urbanization, on

the relationships between what you might call the vast open areas, and the industrialized urban areas -- automation and so forth."

SALTONSTALL: "I think, Martin, that I agree with Senator Humphrey up to a point. I don't think it ought to be a continuing committee, or commission, because if you have it continuing -- your constant demand to change the rules. And we've got to have a certain permanence in rules in order to get ahead. Now the last committee was LaFollette and Munroney in '47 -- it's time for another. I joined in sponsoring a bill for another committee, and I think it's time to do it."

AGRONSKY: "Well, gentlemen, we can dig into that in a moment..."

\* \* \*

AGRONSKY: "Senator Saltonstall, you were making some observations on the need for a new committee to replace the --"

SALTONSTALL: "Yes, I think periodically I think Congress should revamp its rules and bring it up to date. I would agree with Senator Humphrey on that. Where I would disagree with him is that I don't think it ought to be a continuing committee. I think it ought to be a committee that sits this year we'll say, revamps the rules, then we'll have another one in ten years, or fifteen years from now, but not a continuing one, because that would mean the rules would constantly be being changed, or demands for being changed."

HUMPHREY: "Well, Leverett, I'm not speaking just so much of rules -- I'm also speaking of committee structure, and I wouldn't argue about whether or not it ought to be continuing. It is my view, however, that it's so difficult to get a reorganization committee appointed, as we saw here the other day, that we ought to establish this machinery and periodically -- I would agree -- periodically take a look at the structural organization of the Congress, because the work load of that Congress in mail, in constituents, in legislative proposals is intensified every year, as you know. In your own record of fine service, you know the tremendous growth of activity as the result of the growth of population, improvement of transportation --"

SALTONSTALL: "We are expected to do more for our individual constituents."

HUMPHREY: "Exactly."

AGRONSKY: "Gentlemen, could we return to current events for a moment, to some very basic simple questions, I think everybody in the country is enormously interested in. First of all, are you going to finish up by Friday, do you think? Both houses?"

SALTONSTALL: "My answer would be we will finish by Friday, in any event, because the men of Congress insist upon going home for



Christmas, and there I agree with them. We might possible finish up before Friday, in my opinion, if -- unless we get unanimous consent by all that we will complete our foreign aid bill by Friday night."

AGRONSKY: "Do you think you will get it?"

HUMPHREY: "Well I think we'll finish up by Friday, but I'd like to say a word of admonition to my colleague. The best way to make sure that we finish up by Friday is to finish up the work. We ought to pass the foreign aid appropriation, and we have other items of legislation, and we're working fast now -- we're getting legislation through quite rapidly; in fact the last two weeks has been nothing short of amazing in terms of results."

AGRONSKY: "Well gentlemen, what makes you so sure you can finish with the foreign aid bill, and particularly when there is this enormous cut in the House bill, and how are you going to compromise that with the House in conference --"

SALTONSTALL: "If I may answer that briefly. The Senate passed an authorization bill of three billion, six --"

HUMPHREY: "Right."

SALTONSTALL: "The House has cut that down to 2.8 billion, but has re-obligated, or re-appropriated 209 million dollars in round figures. Now the House will probably pass a bill today. That will mean we'll get it tonight --"

AGRONSKY: "What do you think the House version will be?"

SALTONSTALL: "I think the House very soon will be what the Senate -- the House Appropriations Committee agreed to, two billion and eight, with 209 re-obligated money. Now that means three billion, 10 million dollars will come over to the Senate. I think our Senate committee will up that to a certain amount -- how much it will up depends on the individual feelings of the committee members, and who is present when the vote actually comes."

AGRONSKY: "The compromise I hear is three billion, 200 million. Now is that correct?"

SALTONSTALL: "Ultimately it might be that, or a little higher. I know that President Johnson would like something more than that."

HUMPHREY: "Well, Martin, I must say that if the Congress of the United States doesn't give the President the tools to do his job in national security, then we're going to prove to the American people that we're incapable of assuming responsibility. I think these drastic cuts such as we've seen here in foreign aid go beyond what is reasonable. Now I believe in economy, and I think that we've proven that our government -- that our Congress can economize. We cut back

drastically on the authorization of foreign aid, but when you go back to two billion, eight, even though you carry over 200 million dollars, you simply cannot do the job that the foreign aid program is required to do. And I want to repeat once again that if we take these -- this type of precipitous action that really has no background of fact to support it, then all we do is undermine the people's confidence in the congressional process. I'm confident the Senate, with the help of my able colleague here, Senator Saltonstall, will restore a considerable amount of this money, and I would predict that we'd be able to come out with a little better than three billion, 200 million dollars, and if we're able to do that, Martin, at least, we'll be -- well, we'll squeak by. But I don't think it's fair to the President of the United States in this critical period -- by the way a period when we ought to be moving out in front when the Soviet Union is in serious trouble, when the Russians are having trouble at home -- this is the very time that we ought to be pressing our advantage.

"Instead of that, in order to save a few million dollars, when the whole cause of freedom is at stake, we're cutting back. I don't think it's smart -- I really don't -- I protest it sharply."

AGRONSKY: "Well do you gentlemen both agree then that three billion, 200 million, or a little bit more will be the final compromise, and do you have any reason to suppose that the House will accept it?"

SALTONSTALL: "As one who has sat on that conference committee with the House and Otto Passman for a great many years, I think that we will get a 50-50 split. Now what that split will be depends on what the Senate action is, and if we put in something above that, then we'll get a three billion, two. I would agree with what my friend here at my left says, but I think that the whole foreign aid program has got to be revamped and made more popular in the country. The reason that it's reported down by the House is that it's unpopular at home, and I think we've got to revamp it and make it, make people believe that it is to the assistance to the security of our country to do this foreign aid."

HUMPHREY: "That's what the President is doing right now, in the appointment, for example, of Mr. Thomas (Mahan?) as the new Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, and subsequently I hope, an Undersecretary title and position. He is re-organizing the Alliance for Progress, which is one of the major areas of our foreign policy. President Johnson is determined to strengthen this foreign aid program, but all I'm saying is that the same Congress that votes 50 million dollars for military defense, which I think is essential, ought not to be going around chopping away at foreign aid, because foreign aid is as important a part of the security of this country as military defense itself. We've had plenty of instances where our military program didn't produce immediate results either."

AGRONSKY: "Well, gentlemen, we have about 15 seconds to get an answer to this question -- do you think that when the Congress comes back to work, after this Christmas recess, that they will pass a civil

rights bill and give us a tax cut?"

SALTONSTALL: "I do."

HUMPHREY: "I surely do, and they'll both be good ones."

SALTONSTALL: "I'm not sure what they'll be, but they'll be."

HUMPHREY: "With your help, they'll be good ones."

AGRONSKY: "Well, gentlemen, thank you very much. Hugh."

DOWNS: "Thank you, Martin, and Senators Saltonstall and Humphrey."



# Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



[www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)