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Guest (s): Rep. Charles D. Hoeven (pronounced hoo-ven) (R-Iowa) and Rep. Thomas Abernathy (D-MS)

Title: College Loyalty Oaths

Note: Questions were paraphrased and/or shortened by the transcriber. For the exact question, please consult the audiotapes.

Morphew: Introductions...to Hoeven could you give us some background on this situation of college oaths?

Hoeven: Well, this college loyalty oath proposition is causing a great deal of controversy throughout the country. There's been some resistance on the part of some of our higher educational institutions in refusing to participate in the program, refusing to accept the money by virtue of the fact that the oath is required. It's very difficult for me to understand why any institution should make that kind of an objection, first of all, because I just can't understand that anyone who claims or professes to be a loyal American citizen would hesitate a minute in signing this kind of an oath. We all take a pledge of allegiance to the American flag, we indicate and express our love of country and certainly there can be no objection to anyone taking the oath of loyalty to the United States of America. That's particularly true of its citizens who participate in the benefits which they derive from our great country. Now, out my way, in northwest Iowa, at least, we say where there's smoke there's fire. I can't quite understand why anyone should hesitate to sign an oath or pledge an oath of allegiance to the flag or when they participate in a government program.

Morphew: The incredible thing to me is that these students are in effect going to the federal government and asking for loans and yet they object to having to say that their loyal Americans before they get that money. Isn't that like going down to the bank and asking for money and when they ask where you work, saying, none of your business.

Abernathy: Well, it's something comparable to that. Actually, I don't think the objection comes from the students as much as it does from some of the institutions where some of these students are in school. I think we ought to go back and look at the history of the act for a moment. The history of the act, actually it was born out of our concern for the advanced, because of our concern in the advancement of international communism. We were concerned about the advancement of students in the technical and engineering and

chemical fields and so on in Russia, and it was the feeling of the Congress and those who sponsored the act that the act would keep us out ahead of the Russian advancement in technical fields. It was on that basis and behind that argument that the act was actually passed. Now, inasmuch as the act came out of our concern for communism, it occurs to me that it was nothing but right and proper for the Congress to require of the students to accept the money of the government to receive their education in particular fields of technology of different kinds, that they do not advocate, take an oath that they do not advocate the overthrow of the American government by violence or by any unlawful or unconstitutional means. Of course, there are only a small group of people in the country who have expressed their unwillingness to go along with this oath. On the hand, they have made a considerable amount of noise. And they may enough last year for it to have become quite an issue in the Senate. And in fact, the Senate had the issue before it and almost passed a bill over there repealing the oath, but I am very proud that they did not and I do not think they will, in fact, I know the House will not go along with it and unless both houses of the Congress pass such an amendment, the requirement of taking of that oath will remain in that oath and it certainly ought. I don't want to take too much time on that question but I would like to mention this also: no man can serve as juror in any place in this country unless he takes an oath; no man can testify in a court of justice unless he takes an oath to tell the truth. It isn't enough for that man to come up and say that you should presume that I'm going to tell the truth, he must raise his hand and swear that he will tell the truth. A member of Congress cannot serve without taking an oath, and Mr. Hoeven and I have taken that oath seventeen times, I mean nine times, to support and defend the constitution of the United States, and as Mr. Hoeven pointed out, we raise our hands frequently in a pledge of allegiance to the American flag and they should not anymore resent taking the oath to the effect that they do not advocate the overthrow of the American government by force of violence than they do taking the pledge of allegiance to the flag. And I think it's well that we reaffirm, affirmly reaffirm, if I may say, our allegiance to our country and it won't hurt us to do it every day. I think it makes us better citizens.

Hoeven: Well, I want to certainly concur in that and then to give this further observation, that the attitude taken by some of these institutions of learning in refusing to take this money by virtue of the fact they don't want these students to sign the loyalty oath, is unfair to the students themselves, those who need financial assistance and want to further their education, who are deprived and of the government assistance by virtue of the fact that the institution says, we're not going to accept the money and we're not going to permit you to sign the oath that is being required. It seems to me they're doing a disservice to the individual student which is not quite a fair approach to a very perplexing problem.

Morphew: Do either of you know how many colleges have refused to participate in the loyalty program?

Abernathy: I think I do, Dick. My figures may not be absolutely accurate, but on checking the matter today, there were six colleges which declined from the very beginning to come into this program. Since that time, there have been either 13 or 14

additional. Now, that's only twenty out of hundreds and hundreds of institutions throughout the United States and with that small number having complained, I'm unable to see how this matter made as much headway in the Senate as it did last year or even how it is making as good headway as it is now.

Morphew: And these are private, not state-supported institutions.

Abernathy: Nope, nope. They are not all private institutions. Some of them...

Hoeven: Yes, I believe they are, but there is an association of the land grant colleges which I think might...

Abernathy: Well, one exception just lately, the University of Wisconsin took that position as I understand it.

Hoeven: That's correct.

Morphew: Are these colleges the same ones whose faculties have complained when asked to list their affiliations.

Hoeven: Some of them are.

Abernathy: Some of them are, and you know, that's something that makes me somewhat suspicious. And suspicion is a word I don't like to use because I don't like to cast any aspersions on anyone. I accord these people the right to express their feelings. No doubt they are very sincere about it, but on the other hand, as Mr. Hoeven said, where there's smoke there's fire and it makes us suspicious and with international communism having its emissaries in every corner of the earth, naturally these institutions are being eyed by these particular people now as fruitful ground for their effort and that's something they should recall and remember.

Hoeven: I'm just wondering what would happen if they would take a poll of the students in these individual schools and just see how, let them determine, not the heads of the institutions or the faculty, let the students determine whether they want to take the oath of allegiance or subscribe to the law of the oath. I say that the students themselves would fully subscribe to the requirements because after all, they're pretty good people and they're loyal to their country and they see no reason why they shouldn't subscribe to that kind of an oath, that would be my opinion. It would be interesting to see what a poll would indicate.

Abernathy: I think it's interesting to note that a man cannot serve in the army of the United States or the navy or the air force without taking an oath.

Morphew: Do you feel that in these institutions where the professors are the first to declare academic freedom, it doesn't include the freedom of their students to pledge allegiance to their government?

Hoeven: Well, I don't know whether the professors themselves are prohibiting the students from taking the oath or the institutions, let us say, the officers of the institutions. The fact that the universities and colleges who are not participating have declined to participate actually denies the student the privilege and the opportunity of taking the oath if he wants to take it. He doesn't have the opportunity to take it, he's being denied that opportunity.

Abernathy: That's right, there's no choice in the matter.

Hoeven: And I think if they had a poll of them, it'd be about, well, it would be an infinitesimal number that would not take that oath.

Morphew: are colleges a sensitive point right now in our battle against communism?

Hoeven: Well, I'm certain they are, of course, because any philosophy has its beginning, any ideas or views that a man now has, usually he gets it when he's back in school when he's in training, either in school or in the home. He gets it when he's young. There are few of us that change our opinions or views after we reach adulthood and these students are still of tender years and of course, there's the place where their lives and their philosophies and their views are molded.