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Guest (s): Rep. Frank Smith (D-MS) and Rep. Kenneth A. Roberts (D-AL)

Title: Presenting the Southern View

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

Morphew: Introductions...to Smith...what are some of the problems in presenting the problems the south has to present to the rest of the nation?

Smith: I think that one of our major problems is in presenting the case to people in the rest of the country in terms as they see it that fit the individual situation in their own communities and states. Too often, the problem has been viewed as only one of a southern problem, and too often we haven't clarified the issue, so to speak, in presenting the fact that so many of the problems we have in regard to the way we worked out our solutions to individual situations in our own area are not comparable to that in the rest of the country. I think we've got to make it clear that this is the question (sic) which have been raised, strike at the very heart of the American system of government, the systems of freedom that we've built up over the years and that that's more than just a symbolic problem, that it boils down to individual situations in individual cities throughout the North, individual communities everywhere than can bring in justice to the vast majority of the people in this name of so-called rights for minorities that will in the end bring about a loss of rights for the great majority.

Morphew: To Roberts, do you think that the north looks at the problems in the south as only ones of race relations when actually race is part of an overall problem?

Roberts: I would agree that that is true. The segregation issue is not the whole picture, it's a matter of states rights and I think we have to go back to the beginnings of our form of government. The founding fathers realized that this was to be a great, large country, made up of people of different races, of different faiths, of different political beliefs. They recognized that you couldn't govern this country from one central place, say, Washington, that it had to be governed locally. The people at the grassroots had to be able to solve many of their own problems without bringing them to Washington. And that, in my opinion, is the fight that we in the South are making. We are making a fight for constitutional government. We are making a fight to preserve the system that our forefathers fought for and bled for and believed it. And that, to me, is a much broader

question than the segregation issue. I think we're making a fight that will benefit the people not only in the south but benefit the people in the West and East and in the North and in all sections of the country.

Morphew: To Smith...isn't the question of race relations is only part of the question of whether we are going to continue to have local self-government and constitutional government in this country?

Smith: Exactly. We have seen the issue perhaps more sharply drawn in regard to this question of race relations because unfortunately too much of the fight being made for constitutional government has had to be centered around some of these so-called civil rights proposals, but basically, the whole idea is one that involves something more than race relations or any other type of human relations. It involves this situation of whether we are going to find a way to meet our desired ends that all of our people have in their individual areas, their individual states, without having to have centralized decisions or dictatorships from the outside. Unless we can find ways to work together as a great community of states we're not only going to fail to resolve our domestic problems but we are going to weaken our country so that we'll be unable to meet the great challenge of international leadership which has been thrust upon the United States. We've got to be internally strong if we are going to meet this problem of being able to provide adequate leadership for the free world. And a lot of these people who talk in terms, in relation to the civil rights issue, about how it affects us in the rest of the world forget that it's far more important than any idea about the end relation of the rest of the world that the United States stay strong because we have to stay strong to meet this responsibility of leadership.

Morphew: To Roberts...is one reason that race is being used, an attempt to isolate the south from the rest of the country?

Roberts: Well, I think there's no doubt about that. Not long ago, the national chairman of the Democratic Party practically invited the south out of the party. He has since retracted that statement but it's a very popular thing in some areas of the country to make the South the whipping boy. And by doing so certain politicians can appeal to large, bloc votes, and they do it at the expense of the country, in my opinion. And just as Congressman Smith has pointed out, that thing, if pursued far enough, will weaken us internally, will make us weak in the face of international communism and I think it's one of the most serious problems with which we are faced not only in this Congress but in every Congress since I've been here. And when you realize that the southern group in congress which consists of only about a hundred men who can be counted on to vote to uphold the southern ideals and the southern way of life, I think you can say that we have given a pretty good account for our people.

Morphew: To Smith...do the northerners understand the situation or have they been misled by the propaganda tactics of the other side?

Smith: I think they have been a great deal misled, although I believe there is a rising understanding of some of the real problems involved. I've, upon many occasions, talked about these issues with, both formally and informally, with groups from outside the South and I find that there's a, at any time that you get an opportunity to frankly speak about them, that you find a surprising amount of sympathy with the position that we have. Unfortunately, there's been not any concentrated, organized or perhaps clearly defined effort along this line to present the case of the south to the rest of the country and we ourselves are somewhat to blame on this field because it's been too easy sometimes to make blanket indictments of people in the rest of the country just as we have been victims of that same type of indictment. We've got to restrain ourselves sometimes when the temptation might be very great and realize that we have this problem and this urgent necessity of selling our system, selling is not the right word, of explaining our system because once a proper explanation is made, I think that we'll find sufficient support for our ideas to the rest of the country. It'll be a long endeavor that will never be clearly won but it's one where we can make progress daily, and as such, feel that we are gaining victories along the way.

Morphew: To Roberts...do you share his opinion that northerners would be on our side if they just knew the basis of this struggle?

Roberts: I would agree with that statement and I think that there is a responsibility placed on people in public office to try to give out statements that shed some light on the subject instead of creating a lot of heat. It's very easy, as he says, to victimize people who may be sincerely wrong, and I think that if we could show, explain our problem and that they could understand it, I don't think, as he said, it would be a selling job, I think it's merely a matter of explaining our position and the things that we're confronted with in our section of the country.

Morphew: I've been wondering why people in the rest of the nation want the south to change its social patterns and wondering if, since the south did not feel the effects of the economic repression, if there is some economic jealousy...

Roberts: Well, I think undoubtedly that we have had a large number of industries that have gone to the South because of natural advantages, because of the fact they can work practically every day in the year, because of the nearness to certain raw materials, and because of the new technology in the pulp and chemical industries which are making many of our southern states a great deal richer. There is a certain amount of economic jealousy present and it has been expressed by certain federal officials. Not too long ago, one of the cabinet members, I believe it was Dr. Fleming, made the statement that impacted area funds might not go to any of the schools which continued to practice segregation. Well, clearly, that is an economic tool that's being used to try to change our pattern of race relations. And I think undoubtedly that certain politicians are using it against the South, making us a whipping boy, to try to placate people who are disappointed and disillusioned because of the flow of industry to the South.