

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

SYMPOSIUM

JACK KEMP AND THE REAGAN REVOLUTIONAIRES
IN THE HOUSE

March 6, 2012

PANEL 1

THE "REAGAN MANDATE" AND
CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL THOUGHT

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.

James H. Billington: As Librarian of Congress, it's my pleasure to welcome you all here today for this very important symposium on Jack Kemp and the [Ronald W.] Reagan Revolutionaries in the House. My job is to introduce it and then get out of the way so the distinguished panel behind me can get on with this important program. It's sponsored by the Jack Kemp Foundation and the Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, and led by the first Jack Kemp Scholar in Political Economy at the Library of Congress, Morton Kondracke, or mor-TON, as I remember he used to be sometimes referred to. I won't in the presence of this distinguished and experienced panel and audience, I'm not going to attempt to encapsulate the extraordinary, versatile career of Jack Kemp. I do want to especially welcome Joanne Kemp, his great wife and longtime companion, to be here with us, an inspirational person in her own right. I will shortly turn it over to [Jeffrey A.] Jeff Kemp, who will be in charge of moving on with the program. Let me just say that as a football player, as a nine-term member of the House, as a cabinet member, as a vice presidential candidate, as an inspirational speaker, as a man who was enraptured with the American idea, communicated his enthusiasm, helped us learn about enterprise zones, so much else, it's a great pleasure and honor for the Library of Congress to be not merely welcoming this attention by a remarkable group of panelists of one of our important and consequential figures in American life, also an inspirational speaker to so many and a tremendous enthusiast. Just one example: I don't recall anybody more enthused about a project we once had here at the Library to have an exhibit of Winston Churchill. Without his enthusiasm, that exhibit never would have taken place, and we would have never discovered the 17 letters of Winston Churchill that we had in the Library of Congress all along. But until his *enthusiasm*

wore off on all of our curators, we didn't discover those 17 letters that described his experience as, in fact, as a trench warrior in the army after his defeat at Gallipoli, so Jack Kemp has been a historical figure who has helped enrich history and enrich some very neglected side of our history, which David [G.] McCullough pointed out at the joint session of Congress—the 200th anniversary of the Constitution—when he pointed out how little attention has been paid on the national scale to the history of the Congress. So with the experimental nature of the Kluge Center, we are very fortunate that the Jack Kemp Foundation has enabled us to have this important testimony of oral history. Congress willed and ordained that we have a Veterans History Project, which is now the largest oral history project in American history, and so we're pleased that the head of our Manuscript section, [James H.] Jim Hutson, is here; the head of the Kluge Center, Carolyn [T.] Brown is here. The Kemp Project at the Library has two elements: the Jack Kemp Collection in the Manuscript Division, and the Jack Kemp Chair in Political Economy in the Kluge Center. The Kemp Chair in Political Economy is intended to advance the study of political economy as its name implies, and to enable original research, based in part on the rich variety of issues and opinions and inspiration that Jack Kemp gave and the collection has been very importantly and generously conferred on the Library, and it's our pleasure and our honor to have it. It was initiated by a gift from the Jack Kemp Foundation and the first scholar is Morton Kondracke, the inspiration behind today's event. He is writing a book about Jack Kemp's Congressional career and his leadership in so many ways. He's particularly well qualified for this work, having covered all phases of American politics and foreign policy as both a print and a broadcast journalist. He recently retired after 20 years as executive editor for the Capitol Hill newspaper, *Roll Call*, from

1977 to 1991 he was the executive editor of the *New Republic*. His list of accomplishments is almost as broad in his field as Jack Kemp's was in so many. So this symposium brings together key colleagues who lived and molded events during the Reagan years. It's kind of unique gathering of very important and consequential figures in their own right, who came together around and in the recollections and reflections on Jack Kemp's life and career. This will inform Mort's research here in the Library as well as create a record for future researchers who will be able to consult it, so we're very glad to welcome all here in the presence of Stadivarius music [indicates exhibit of Stradivari violins in the room] for a little, the strings are silent but the strings of memory are very rich here, so it's a great pleasure to turn the proceedings over to the next generation of Kemps: Jeff Kemp himself a quarterback and a perpetuator of the Jack Kemp legacy, to introduce the program. Thank you very much, Jeff, and the Foundation.

Jeff Kemp: Thank you Dr. Billington. It's great to see everyone here. On behalf of the Kemp family, the Jack Kemp Foundation Board of Directors and its president, my brother [James P.] Jimmy Kemp, who today is in San Antonio with Henry [G.] Cisneros, holding the Jack Kemp symposium on housing. Appropriate that the Reagan Revolution and this application to housing and empowerment would be happening at the same time. Thus Dad, I guess, had the foresight with Mom to have two sons so one of us could be at each place today. And we're grateful for the partnership, particularly with the Library of Congress, where the Kemp Scholar resides, Mort Kondracke. We're impressed and looking forward to all the work that he's been doing at the Library of Congress with the Kluge Center during this Kemp Legacy Project.

This project today is aligned with it but not exactly the same thing. This is the Kemp Oral History Project and we look forward to the fabulous discussion that will ensue about the Reagan Revolution, the ideas that are applicable today, and going forward, which is what Dad's passion was, that we take the best of the past and we apply it to the present and the situations of the future. The Oral History Project has been excellent so far. I think Mort has interviewed 36 different leaders among the 60 that he eventually will. He's talked to [William W.] Bill Bradley and Vice President [Richard B. "Dick"] Cheney and many others including some of the esteemed gentlemen with us today at this panel. The relationship with the Library of Congress is one that we've very honored to be in association with. We thank you Dr. Billington, Dr. Hutson, Carolyn Brown, and we're really looking forward to all the work that Mort is doing as the scholar and to see these ideas, the American ideas that Dad called "the American Idea," stewarded well, crafted well for the future and that advance to reach as many people as we can, so this country can maintain and build upon its great heritage. I think I'd just like to summarize what I'm hoping to see from all of this in three words, and the three words would be, number one, the one that Dr. Billington used, "enthusiasm," that there be enthusiasm for great ideas, enthusiasm for this great nation and enthusiasm for people, which is why we have such a great nation and what these ideas serve. They give people the potential to be all that they were meant to be, and that meant so much to Dad. The second word is "growth," and we know that that's what the Reagan Revolution was about, it's what our nation needs today, and it's what the world needs, obviously fiscal discipline combined with entrepreneurial systems that lead to growth and get people to potential to reach their highest and best. And the last word is one that came from Secretary

[William J.] Bill Bennett, who summed up Dad's life by the word "lift." As we delve into the history and the ideas, we look forward to using all of those in the spirit of lift, that lifts other people and isn't about ourselves or our own interests. On behalf of the Kemp family and the Jack Kemp Foundation Board of Directors, we're very thankful to the Library of Congress and Dr. Billington and look forward to this program with you, Mort, and with your esteemed partners up here. So thank you. Let's enjoy a great day together.

Morton Kondracke: Thank you so much Jeff and Dr. Billington, and thank you, and thank you, Reagan revolutionaries, for all being here, and those who covered them. Let me introduce the panel first and then we're going to have a video to set off. On the far end there is [Robert S.] Bob Walker, a former congressman from Pennsylvania, who served with Jack from 1976 until Jack's House career at least was over at the beginning of 1989. Next is [John V.] Vin Weber, who served from 1980 to 1992; next is former congressman and Senator [Cornelius H. M.] Connie Mack [III], who was in the House with Jack from 1982 to 1988; [Robert L.] Bob Livingston, who was here in Congress from 1977 to 1998, and with Jack from '77 to '88. At the far end is current Congressman [Daniel E.] Dan Lungren, who's done two tours in Congress and was here from '79 to '88 with Jack; Allan Ryskind, who is the editor of *Human Events*, a major conservative publication and my partner in crime here [Frederic W.] Fred Barnes, formerly of the *Baltimore Sun*, later of the *New Republic*, now the *Weekly Standard* and Fox News. Before we begin the discussion we're going to play a video that comes from Ronald Reagan's tribute to Jack Kemp when he left the Congress.

[video]

Kondracke: Well, I don't know that anybody can do better than that, but let me start by asking each of you a couple of questions, beginning with Bob Walker. How would each of you characterize Jack Kemp's role in the Reagan Revolution, and what difference did it make for American conservatism? Bob Walker?

Bob Walker: Certainly Jack was the idea foundation for the economic program that Ronald Reagan put forward. It was Jack who drove that agenda. There were a relative handful of us who in the early days of the Reagan campaign back in the period of time around 1978, who came on board, and Jack was one of those. And Jack came on board with a lot of ideas at that point to try to focus Reagan on the idea of growth economics. As a result, the Reagan administration economic policies, I think, were a major success, because of Jack's enthusiasm and his intellectual capacity.

Kondracke: Vin?

Vin Weber: There were really three main areas of issues that Reagan ran on. One was growth economics, another was obviously winning the Cold War and national defense, and the third, which is a little harder to define, was a different approach to social policy. And in all three of those areas, Jack, in my view, was really the preeminent leader in the Congress and in the country in helping to both educate and popularize those ideas. He gets most attention, of course, for supply-side economics, which is understandable because even when I came to Congress, I would say that those of us that really believed in

that were in the minority, even in our own party, I think. I still remember, maybe Dan Lungren remembers too, I remember Barber [B.] Conable [Jr.] was the ranking member on the Ways and Means Committee, and he carried the bill, and Kent [R.] Hance, a Democrat, was the Democrat cosponsor of the bill, and I remember when Barber Conable got up and introduced the next speaker, "his partner in crime on this measure, Kent Hance," and I thought "I think Barber kind of really believes that." Economic orthodoxy was you need to worry about the deficit first, and this notion about reducing tax rates to spur growth is still not proven, even though as Jack had pointed out and as President Reagan pointed out in the clip we just saw, you could go back a long ways in history and show that it worked out for Coolidge and Kennedy, it still was not what most people in our party believed, but Jack did, and Jack carried the Conference along and carried the country along on supply-side economics. But I think you also have to talk about winning the Cold War, which was also a controversial topic. We have a hard time believing that now, that winning the Cold War was ever a controversial topic, but it really was. We were thinking about how to maintain sort of the balance of terror, but the notion that we could ever win the Cold War was unthinkable. Jack was also a leader in that. And then the third zone, which I think deserves a lot of attention was social policy, domestic policy, a little less defined and frankly of less interest to the Republican Party, still to today of less interest to the Republican Party, and not as big in any of our lives as supply-side economics or winning the Cold War, but Jack was always the guy in front, trying to talk about ways to approach the problems of the inner-city, trying to figure out ways to reform education, housing later on, and that whole zone of policies which even to this day are still owned pretty much by the Democratic Party.

Kondracke: Connie Mack?

Connie Mack: Well, let's see, my involvement began in '82, so I was not in the Congress when the bill was passed, but the influence that Jack had was way beyond what was taking place on the floor of the House or the Senate. And I think I'm right about this, that he wrote a book called *American Renaissance*, which I was reading as a candidate for office in probably late 1981 and 1982. So I think the element that I think of when I think about Jack—and Vin is so right in all these different areas that Jack had influence—but the thing that struck me the most was the absolute conviction that he brought to the discussion of the ideas. The power of his personality. As a new member of the Congress in 1982 it wasn't long before you knew who was the leader. When Jack walked on the floor and asked you why you voted a certain way, he was determined that he was going to educate you about the importance of growth, low taxes, sound money and a strong national defense and the expansion of freedom throughout the world. So for me he was a true mentor, a true educator. Those are the thoughts that I have, again, for a fellow who wasn't actually there when the bill was passed.

Kondracke: Bob?

Bob Livingston: Well I have to agree with what everybody said. He was a mentor to me as well. I ran first in '76 and lost, and the guy that beat me was nice enough to go to prison and I had another shot at it. [laughter] I got in in a special election in '77 and Jack had been writing in that process, and I'd read a lot of his stuff and was using it

on the campaign trail just as Connie did subsequently. And it helped me. But I didn't really get to know Jack other than to read his stuff and to observe him on the floor and to watch his rhetoric transform the Reagan campaign into one that propelled him into the presidency. But I got to know him on a personal basis because of his efforts and Ronald Reagan's landslide in 1980. I got transferred, unwillingly at first, to the Appropriations Committee, and worked with Jack during those formative years of my career on Appropriations, on the same subcommittees, particularly Foreign Operations. And I got to know him personally and work with him and understand his ranting and raving about the multilateral organizations, the Ex-Im [Export-Import Bank of the United States], the IMF [International Monetary Fund], hear about the gold standard. But I also got to appreciate his keen proselytizing demand for respect for individual liberties and for civil rights. Through him I got to know [Ernest] Ernie Ladd and Roosevelt Grier, guys he had played football with, who loved the guy because he was one of the few outstanding players in the NFL [National Football League] and in football who stood up for equal opportunity, equal rights for minorities in football and beyond, and he took that with him. So I guess I just came to appreciate so many facets of Jack's career and his personality that I look back at the praise that Ronald Reagan bestowed on him and say that was probably more eloquent than any of us can attribute, but it may have been understated.

Kondracke: Yes, that was the poetry, this is the prose. Dan Lungren?

Dan Lungren: Well, if I were to use a scriptural reference, Jack was the John the Baptist of the conservative movement. Ronald Reagan was the one who made us capable of being able to actually have the

conservative movement, and ended up in changing America and ultimately changing the world. Jack was there before Ronald Reagan was in Washington, D.C.; Jack had the power of his ideas. One of the things that I was thinking of is there's an expression that someone leaves you breathless, someone comes into a room and takes all the oxygen away, Jack was just the opposite. Jack came in and he gave you all this oxygen. You talk about him being larger than life and in a sense he was, because he came in and you immediately were attracted to him, but it didn't detract from who you were, it built you up. Like somebody who's a very good player in football or basketball, you talk about the playmaker making everyone else around him better. I always felt did that with all of us. For those of us who formed the Conservative Opportunity Society [COS], a little rump group of, I would call us, progressive agitators, constructive critics, Jack was our lifeline to the leadership. We were able to do certain things that perhaps we wouldn't have otherwise been able to do because Jack was able to talk to the leadership and explain that we actually had a reason for what we were doing. We weren't just agitating, we were agitating to change things. I remember seeing Jack at Knott's Berry Farm [Buena Park, California] when he was on his bus tour for Kemp-Roth, and that was exciting in that atmosphere to see him. You'd come back here and it was exciting to see him. Occasionally we'd have to remind Jack that we weren't in a huddle and he wasn't a quarterback and maybe he should listen to us, and he took it well, particularly if we ever used the name of Joanne, because that was one person he responded to. And I'm reminded, of all the things we've talked about, there was a specific foreign affairs aspect that Jack took personally, and Joanne joined him in that, and that was the cause of Soviet Jewry. There was a constant, persistent, effective campaign

on behalf of those who were being persecuted for no other reason than the wish to engage in their religion in some meaningful way, and Jack would be on the floor talking about that, Joanne led groups of spouses here, reading the names of those who were behind the Iron Curtain and being persecuted because of their faith. I think one of the things, Jack made it cool to be conservative. It wasn't the green eyeshade, rigid Republicans of the past. Jack was this guy who embraced people. I don't think Jack ever met someone who he didn't like. I'm sure there are some people who didn't like him for some reason, but that would have just been a challenge to Jack to make him a friend, and ultimately convert him to the gold standard. [laughter] That's a little inside joke there. But I mean he transformed the Party by giving us energy, not taking energy away, and making it okay for us to appeal to people we hadn't appealed to in a very, very effective way. He was able to touch people's hearts and speak to them where it really mattered, and he helped us convey our message in that way. He was substance and he was message. I'm privileged in my lifetime to have been here with Ronald Reagan and with Jack Kemp.

Kondracke: Allan?

Mack: Could I just—

Kondracke: Yes, sure.

Mack: Back to the central point of your question, I think was, conservatism, what effect did he have. And I think what we all have collectively been saying is that he brought to the table a series of new ideas and new approaches to solve problems, whether it was

empowerment or enterprise zones. The whole notion of lower tax rates, not lower taxes but lower tax rates. He gave us a whole series of different ideas to solve problems, which enabled us to be able to go to speak to people who we never were able to reach out to before. I remember going back with some pride, telling Jack that I had spoken to the African-American community in my hometown about ways that we Republicans and conservatives could change their lives and give them a future and give them hope. So we've talked about enthusiasm, the ideas, as Dan said, he kind of made it cool for us. We could go talk to people that we were not comfortable talking to prior to that, and I think that was a huge gift that he gave us.

Kondracke: I want to let Allan and Fred reflect.

Allan Ryskind: I would give a little bit about, because I thought actually, I'm with *Human Events*, editor of *Human Events*, and *Human Events* was we preached to a lot of conservatives, eighty thousand, I think we had subscribers, at one point, and, Mort, you said not to be a hero worship, you didn't want us to hero[ize]. Everyone here is worshipping Jack and I myself worshipped Jack, and I remember when he came in in 1970, we followed him religiously, we portrayed him in *Human Events* as again, everyone here has talked about it but he was good on everything so far as we were concerned, foreign policy, defense, obviously economics. I want to say that in my view he has been under-appreciated because, I'll tell you why, it's because of the liberal community. And the liberal community, when Jack died, the ideas that they thought, I think they viewed him as the only Republican, white Republican, who liked blacks. That's why they liked him and they talked about empowerment zones and they talked about

his civil rights views, but they never gave him credit for what I think is key to not only our economic health but winning the Cold War, which had to do with supply-side economics. And the fact is that Kemp-Roth was in my view not only something that was important for Republicans, and [he] persuaded the House Republicans, but more important he persuaded Ronald Reagan, and that's what makes him such an historic figure in my view. As a result of supply-side economics we restored our economy, we had a booming economy, and [Mikhail S.] Gorbachev saw that and it seems to me that when it came to ending the Cold War, my own view is it has to do with Reykjavík. At Reykjavík, Reagan decided not to give up the Strategic Defense Initiative and I believe at that time, I'm not just speculating, in other words I've seen this, is that Gorbachev, you know, white flag of surrender because he felt that he couldn't compete with us economically and that was obviously Kemp-Roth, and he felt that he couldn't compete with us militarily because Gorbachev felt that there was no way that he could match us militarily because they were in such dire straights economically. And I think Ronald Reagan, in my view he was one of the great presidents, and he was one of the great presidents because of what the first thing I talked about, obviously economics, and we know about the growth and restoring the American economy. Secondly he won the Cold War, and Americans did not die when he won the Cold War. We didn't have a large amount of casualties as a result of that. And I believe that it was Reaganomics based on what Jack Kemp did that was key to that victory, and I feel that to the extent that Ronald Reagan was great I feel that Jack actually gave an enormous contribution to that. I think without him it's not even clear that Reagan would have actually embraced supply-side economics. I have one more point here to say about this is that

one thing to say is that when Kemp gave a speech before in Miami, I think it was in June or July of 1979, Jack told me it was before union officials, and Jack told me that Reagan, because of *Human Events* we reprinted it, and the fact is that Jack told me that as a result of all the stuff that we had said about Jack in the past and publicizing supply-side economics and all of that, and Reagan read us religiously, as people knew, so therefore he felt that that particular speech of his was key to Reagan's adopting supply-side economics, and the fact is that in August, [Martin] Marty Anderson then came out with a plan for Reagan about what his economic plan was, and it was based entirely on Kemp-Roth and as a result of that, and Reagan when he actually announced for the presidency talked about Jack Kemp being one of his top economic planners. So it's key anyway. The point is that it was Jack Kemp that was instrumental in both our economic recovery and also in winning the Cold War.

Kondracke: Fred.

Fred Barnes: Very good. No hero worship here. You know I first met Jack Kemp in 1981. I was a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*, a paper that was once very influential but not at least not when I was there. And so Jack had no real reason to pay attention to me, but I did not know what supply-side economics was, and I certainly, all I knew was that it was a phrase and it was something that Jack Kemp talked about and Ronald Reagan had adopted, and so I decided I'd write a piece for the *Baltimore Sun* about it and got ahold of Kemp's Congressional office so they said "Why don't you come on this one-day trip with Jack back to Buffalo?" So I said fine, and we flew together on a private plane up to Buffalo. Jack talked the whole time. I don't think I asked

a question. [laughter] But he talked the whole time, it all came up, supply-side economics, tax cuts, the gold standard, and so on. Jack was, I'll have to say for me, a young reporter, overpowering, a force of nature. Obviously I would not be a strategic ally of his, but he was in the full convert-me mode that Congressman Lungren talked about. I have no idea where we went in Buffalo that day but he had some events and then we flew back. He talked the whole time when we flew back, and invited me to some meeting that it turned out he wasn't supposed to invite me to. It was a meeting of his economic team. It was altogether one of the extraordinary experiences I've had in journalism. Just a remarkable guy. And I wrote a piece, I wound up writing a piece about supply-side economics, I'd obviously learned a little about it before I write, though that's not mandatory in journalism. Wrote a long piece, a few thousand words leaning heavily on what Jack had told me, and I interviewed some of his allies like Jude [T.] Wanniski. Jack wanted to convert everybody. Everybody was a potential ally, including a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*. And I'll have to say, the way he treated people was to make them feel more influential and important and powerful than they really were, particularly in my case. But I became a fan and hero worshipper of Jack Kemp that day in 1981. It wasn't just that he was a guy with an idea about taxes, and a guy with a bill, the Kemp-Roth bill, and that's fundamental that he was such a great idea person. But the truth is he was also tremendously important because he could put those things through, he was successful. When you think of the important events that came along in the seventies, and particularly one was the discovery of Jack Kemp by the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page. Obviously a hugely important event, the *Wall Street Journal* became a paper with, I mean it has an extraordinarily influential editorial page,

and became a champion of supply-side economics. So one, you have that meeting, and then you have the meeting that Allan referred to when Kemp and Jude Wanniski and [David M.] Dave Smick and some others went out to California to convert Reagan. And Reagan was obviously, turned out to be a willing convert. But absent that meeting, remember in the Reagan campaign he was stressing the welfare queen, and cutting spending and not tax cuts. But he wound up adopting supply-side economics, getting it passed through Congress and not only that, supply-side has now become something that will never go away. It's the orthodoxy of the Republican Party. It's been followed in countries all around the world if they truly wanted to invigorate their economies, and it's all a result of one man, Jack Kemp.

Kondracke: Good. Good first round. [laughter] I just wanted to ask people down this line whether any of you have any standout personal memories of Jack, or what is your standout personal memory. Some people have already cited one; you don't all have to throw one in, but if there's something that really stands out in your mind. Is there?

Walker: I'll give you one. It's kind of a famous story that's been around now for a while about Jack, but there's a point that isn't often made about it that I want to make, and that is Jack was in Puerto Rico at one point, and he had gained some prominence by this time with all that he had been doing on the supply-side economics thing. He was walking in Puerto Rico and a woman walked up to him and said, "Aren't you Jack Kemp?" And Jack, of course, smiled and said, "Yes I am." And she said, "Aren't you a congressman?" And Jack said, "Well yes I am." And she said, "Well then you know Bob Walker."

[laughter] And this had come from the C-SPAN [Cable-Satellite Public

Affairs Network] work that we had been doing on the floor that Jack was not totally enamored of, you know, Jack didn't think that that was the way in which we ought to proceed on doing things. But when he told me this story he said to me "Walker, I played second fiddle behind [Orenthal J.] O.J. Simpson at Buffalo. I'll be darned if I'm going to play second fiddle to Bob Walker in the Congress." So he said "I think what I'm going to have to do one of these days is run for president." I said, "Okay, Jack, but it sounds like I need to run against you." He laughed. But the fact was that he had a sense of humor about this stuff too. It was typical of Kemp and typical of the style of leadership that he brought to all of us, and I certainly agree with all my colleagues here today who said that when he walked into the room, he was somebody who really brought with him a sense of leadership that was not emulated by anybody else in the Party at that point.

Kondracke: Anybody else have a standout personal memory that they want to share?

Mack: I do.

Kondracke. Okay. Connie?

Mack: Triggered by Bob's comments, and this has to do with I think the only time that I saw Jack kind of taken back, and Joanne, I think, is going to remember this, but we were having dinner, [Ludie] Priscilla [Mack] and I with Jack and Joanne, and I think that [C.] Trent [Lott] and [Patricia T.] Tricia [Lott] were there. I can't remember Vin or

Weber: Where?

Mack: This is at the Kemps' home.

Weber: Could have been.

Mack: We were having dinner and as Jack would, as soon as we sat down at the table it was democratic capitalism small d, democrat lower tax rates, growth, incentives, and my wife, Priscilla—some of you know her—she's a fairly small gal, she looked at Jack, flapped the table and said "Nobody gives a damn, Jack." [laughter] He reared back in his chair, stunned for maybe half a second, and then proceeded right on.

Weber: Bob made me think of something because we were always trying to get Jack to do more special orders, because, you have to give [Newton L. "Newt"] Gingrich credit for that, Newt understood the power of C-SPAN. And he said to me, "Jack will listen to you. Go talk to him and tell him he needs to do more special orders. Tell him that he might have a half a million people watching him, that's a great audience." So I went to talk to Jack, and I said, "You really need to participate more in special orders. We're educating the country, this is what you're best at. You've got a half a million people watching these things." He says, "Yes, but I can't hear them cheering." [laughter] I thought that said a lot about the kind of energy that he would get out of a crowd just wasn't there. That was not what he was going to do.

Ryskind: I have an episode here. [M. Stanton] Stan Evans used to put on these seminars and all these people would speak. Jack would be about maybe next-to-last or something like that, and he would just, as people know, a little bit verbose from time to time. It was 20

minutes, a half-hour, 45 minutes past, he's still not moving, and Senator Hatch is the one who's supposed to speak next. So somebody runs up to Jack and says, "Senator Hatch is here, it's over time" and all that, and he takes it and he actually ripped it up. He ripped it up and he talked again for another half-hour. So after that we scheduled Jack last. He was the last person to speak so that nobody else would come in. It reminded me of a story of Jim Roberts [phonetic]. He might have been fired or something as a result of this, but there was a story that he told about Jack about being this apocryphal story about being captured by the Nazis in World War II, and then the Gestapo agent comes up to him and talks to Jack and says, "Mr. Kemp, we have ways of making you stop talking." [laughter] Anyway, those are my—

Kondracke: Now, let's go back to before Reagan. In '74 Jack began promoting basically business tax cuts to stimulate job creation, and then in '76 he develops Kemp-Roth, 30 percent individual tax rate cuts. That was first introduced in 1977. I gather that his interest in taxes, because he wasn't on the House Ways and Means Committee, comes from the hardship in his district. Is that a correct assumption?

Weber: That's what he always told me. The economy took a dip and he was not, maybe Joanne could answer this question better than we could, but as he explained it to me, he didn't come to Congress, really, with a well-formed economic philosophy. He came to Congress representing a district that was going through very great difficulties, and he realized he didn't have anything to go back and tell them. And so he started studying economics and trying to come up with something positive to say to a blue-collar town that was in decline, as

most manufacturing towns were at that time, and that set him on the course of learning what we then started to talk about as supply-side economics. But it was a necessity for him to go back and actually have something positive to say, a plan for the people in his district who were hurting.

Livingston: It wasn't just sloganeering, but he used great slogans like "a rising tide lifts all boats," he must have used that in just about every speech. And he did work with Jude Wanniski as Fred pointed out. They were conspirators with supply-side economics, and they preached it. I can remember him coming up to me and saying "You've got to read the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal* every day, because that's going to get you on your way. I did. It kept me going for a while.

Walker: It was an attractive idea from the outset, because I ran for the first time in 1976 in an 11-way primary, and one of the things that set me apart in an 11-way primary was the fact that I adopted supply-side economics. Now it was literally in its infancy at that point. Jack had just begun talking about it. It struck me as being attractive—

Kondracke: Where did you pick it up?

Walker: I was an aide on Capitol Hill at that point, I was working for my predecessor, and picked it up largely because Jack was promoting it among the other members of Congress beginning in the '74-75 timeframe, and then was moving it toward what eventually became Kemp-Roth in '77. And so I picked it up along that way, and it immediately struck me as the kind of visionary approach to politics

that Republicans hadn't taken before, and it proved to be a pretty positive element in my primary campaign in the spring of 1976.

Barnes: Let me tell a story I just heard recently. What made it so important for Kemp to go out and talk to Ronald Reagan in 1979 about supply-side economics and actually convert him was because Reagan by then took Jack Kemp very seriously as a person he admired and listened to and paid attention to in Congress. Earlier in 1979 as it turned out, and I heard about this from Dave Smick, who was the chief of staff for a while when Kemp was in Congress. Kemp had put together a paper on the exciting subject of urban policy, and it was seven or eight pages, and he sent it out under the frank to a huge mailing list, and to his surprise he got a response to it from Ronald Reagan. And Reagan had taken this long thing on urban policy and written all in the notes, but not just things like "good point," or "glad to hear you're interested in urban policy." Reagan had written all up and down the sidelines about what Kemp had written about, on the back of the pages he'd written more about his own experiences in urban policy as governor of California, and on and on. And it was a remarkable thing, and of course Kemp was very pleased to see that Ronald Reagan, he didn't even know Reagan was on the mailing list much less would respond in such a serious way to a subject like urban policy. He said "If you want to talk about this I've had these experiences" and so on. Remarkable. But it was important that by then Ronald Reagan took Jack Kemp very seriously. This is something like early '79.

Kondracke: Kemp is not on [House Committee on] Ways and Means, he starts getting into tax policy, and it wasn't only the Democrats who

were criticizing him, but Republicans as well. Ways and Means Republicans, Chowder and Marching Society Republicans, what do you remember of the kind of flak he was taking from his own Conference?

Walker: Voodoo economics.

Kondracke: That was the '80 campaign, that's George Bush, well, Gerald Ford actually didn't like it either. Yes, George Bush. So what do you remember about the kind of reaction that he got from his own House colleagues? Connie?

Mack: A thought comes to my mind of the Chowder and Marching group, of which Jack was a member—

Kondracke: And were you?

Mack: Yes. I remember one situation where he came in, and the same enthusiasm. Most of these guys in Chowder and Marching were not what I would classify as people who had great enthusiasm about anything, but Jack just coming in stirred things up. As you go around the room, each person makes their own report about whatever they want to talk about. On this particular day Jack said, "If we follow these policies that I've been talking about, the market's going to go to 3,000." Now this is 1983, and I don't remember what the market was. It might have been around 1200, I'm not sure, but at some point he said "And you're going to see this market go to 10,000." Well, of course after Jack got through, out he went. Well you should have heard the rumbling around that room. "This guy is crazy." What the hell does he know? He's a quarterback. This is in 1983, so this is

after Kemp-Roth is passed, and the Old Bulls are still, "What the hell does he know?" But Jack did know, and he always made sure that you knew.

Kondracke: So the Old Bulls just thought he was crazy, or did they resent that he was playing on their turf?

Livingston: There was resentment. There was a lot of grumbling, because Jack had the ability to appeal to the press in a Reaganesque fashion. He could appeal to the American people, and a lot of guys, without naming any of them, resented that. They didn't have that capacity and also they frankly took the old view that you count the beans and you don't worry about growth, and Jack was about growth. Frankly that continues to be a problem today to convince people that you can grow if you cut taxes. Doesn't make sense, it's not intuitive, but he was right then, it worked, and it should work again.

Mack: Cut tax rates, not taxes.

Livingston: Cut tax rates. Thank you, Connie.

Ryskind: Let me ask you a question here about that, because the point is that in '78 as I understood it, the Republicans almost unanimously were backing Kemp-Roth, in other words in the House. And the point is I think there were only like three different people who, at least as I recall—

Livingston: I don't think it was Kemp-Roth so much. I think it was just personalities, guys—

Ryskind: No, but what happened in '78? Why did all these Republicans suddenly now support it. In other words you're talking about the Old Bulls opposed to it, and in '78—

Weber: Preliminary, Victor, I wasn't there but the [William A. "Bill"] Steiger Amendment, which cut the capital gains tax, was actually the first supply-side victory.

Ryskind: Okay. What about California? How about the [Howard A.] Jarvis thing, did that have an impact? I'm just asking, I don't know.

Livingston: When was that? '82?

Kondracke: That was '78 too. Look, Allan is right. In the '78 election, the Republican National Committee adopted Kemp-Roth as policy, and absolutely every member on the House Republican side was behind it. I was going to ask you, how did that happen, those who were there?

Weber: I can give you a political answer. In 1978 I wasn't in Congress, I was managing a campaign for [Rudolph E.] Rudy Bosowitz for the United States Senate, and [Richard B.] Dick Wirthlin was our pollster, who was President Reagan's pollster later on. And I do remember sitting down with Wirthlin to talk about the issues. And the biggest issue in the country was inflation, but Dick said to us at that time, "The problem is nobody in the country thinks you can do anything about inflation. They're not right, but people don't think you can do anything about inflation." But the impact of inflation on the steeply progressive tax code had had the effect of pushing everybody

into a higher tax bracket, and so his advice was people do think you can do something about taxes. They may not understand anything about inflation, they don't believe politicians who say they're going to cure inflation, but they do think you can do something about taxes, and taxes is what you should run on, even though the polls said that inflation was the biggest issue.

Walker: That was in 1978 when we were just beginning to recover. When Bob and I were running in '76, it was a very, very bad year for Republicans following the Watergate mess, and it was just a horrible time. By '78 we were beginning to see the possibilities for recovery, and this was a great new idea that was out there that Republicans could get around. But not everybody in '78 had bought into the larger theory behind this because there was still the feeling that the most important thing was to do something about deficits and so forth.

Barnes: I have a question and some of you all might be able to answer this. You'll remember back, that [Robert D.S.] Bob Novak was promoting Jack as a presidential candidate in 1980, which turned out obviously to be Ronald Reagan's year, and Jack didn't run, but how seriously did he take that?

Lungren: Well, I remember him talking with a number of us, and I remember when he endorsed Ronald Reagan with the words, "Ronald Reagan, the oldest man and running for president with the youngest ideas." Now, Jack loved them because they were his ideas, but I remember when he said that, and I remember he was committed to Ronald Reagan at that time. I ran in '76 and lost and I remember one of the reasons we lost, because I listened to the debate where Gerald

Ford unfortunately freed all of Eastern Europe, if you'll recall. Three times asked whether he made a mistake, and if you'll recall that was not the highpoint of his campaign. In '78 we had malaise, remember that? We had a president of the United States putting a sweater on and saying we're all going to have to hunker down together and just kind of go through it. There was a lack of enthusiasm, there was a lack of vision, there was a lack of excitement. Jack Kemp, for us as Republicans running in '78 gave us that in the non-presidential election year. There was Kemp-Roth, there was something we could rally around, there was something positive. And I know we talk about the Old Bulls, but let me just put a good word in for [Robert H.] Bob Michel. Bob Michel was sort of like the friendly uncle of Jack Kemp. He was part Old Bull, but part intrigued by this guy Jack Kemp, and I think frankly Bob Michel gave Jack some leash that he wouldn't otherwise have. Barber Conable was a different type of guy, but a very respectful guy, and when we had that debate on the floor of the House to pass the tax bill, Barber actually divided the time up. I mean I even had a time that I was in charge for the young guys to speak on it. He was open to what Jack was saying. Jack converted him. So it was partly the substance, but it was also the personality, and I've always thought that it does go back to Jack working as a football player and a quarterback who had to inspire his teammates. And there was a sense of inspiring us and frankly there wasn't anybody else around on the Congressional side. We had Ronald Reagan in the White House inspiring us, Jack inspiring us there, and it was this combination of things. And I always remember one thing. Jack would talk about his family constantly, and he told me something that I used a little bit. He said that oftentimes when he was leaving the house to go on a trip or something, he would tell his kids, he would say, "Be a

leader. You're a Kemp." I used to try that with my kids a little bit too. Not telling them they were a Kemp. [laughter] To tell them at a young age that there's something expected of you and that your father has confidence that you can meet that standard. Jack used that with his family, and I think he used that with us as well. And so it was a combination of his life experience and the supply-side economics fit into that experience. It was inspiring. It was you can work hard, you can succeed, everybody succeeds with you. That's the message of a team, and Jack was able to sell it because he believed it. I think there was a little resentment, I would say, with some, because Jack spoke too long at times. I remember at least one time I told him, he said, "How'd I do?" after a speech. I said, "You gave three great speeches." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You had three opportunities to stop and you chose the fourth one." And he would get that hurt look on his face and then he would laugh about it. But I think that was part of it. When you have some people who've been in the permanent minority for so long, don't know what it's like to be in the majority, don't believe in the power of ideas, and here you've got this guy coming in with the power of ideas who talks about it, is not afraid of talking about it and is convinced that you can convince even your most ardent adversary, that's kind of jarring.

Walker: Go back to your question though, Mort, the more serious effort that occurred in 1980 was there was a serious effort to put Jack on the ticket as a vice presidential candidate. That was—

Ryskind: I'm being serious, *Human Events* was a big supporter for that. We were advocating, basically, that Kemp become the vice president and all the rest of it. But the thing that I don't understand,

and maybe somebody can help me out here, is that Jack had a brain trust. He had Irving Kristol, he has all these people who wanted him, and Wanniski and all these people, and they wanted him to run,. They wanted him to run for the Senate against [Jacob K.] Javits and then that fell through, and then they wanted him to be vice president and he sort of, he did go along with that, but for some reason he never wanted to run in New York, and I don't know quite why, but was it the idea that he was afraid, that he didn't want to be opposed to Javits? Maybe he expected Javits to resign. I just don't know the reason for that, because people were pumping him for higher office, at least as early as '78, and I just didn't know whether any of you were aware of that or not.

Lungren: That's assuming the Senate is a higher office than the House of Representatives. [laughter]

Livingston: I think he had a personal attachment to Javits, I can't swear to it, but I think that he just respected the guy and just didn't want to take him on. That's my recollection.

Kondracke: There are a couple of other points of history that I want to ask you about. One was, supposedly in January of 1976, Jude Wanniski calls up, gets an appointment with Jack in the morning, they go all day long and talk about—Jack had been the advocate of the Jobs Creation Act, which was basically a business tax cut thing—and Wanniski supposedly converted Jack to being an individual tax cut sponsor, and Kemp-Roth ultimately came out of that. Did he ever talk about this Wanniski meeting or the conversion?

Barnes: No, Wanniski talked about it. [laughter]

Kondracke: Tell me, because Wanniski's dead, so tell me what you're referring—

Barnes: That's what he told him, and, look, it was a crucial alliance between the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page and Jack Kemp, and Jude Wanniski took full credit for that, but he did deserve some. Of course the key figure there was [Robert L.] Bob Bartley, who was the editorial page editor, but the discovery of Jack Kemp by them was hugely important, and if you listened to Wanniski, and I did, many times, and some of you all probably have too, his role was humongous. Jude's role.

Ryskind: Let me talk a little bit about Wanniski. He was my classmate at UCLA, and when he was there we played poker together and he was a communist. He was a Marxist at the time. It was very interesting to me, and we were always debating whatever it was. I was an anti-communist and he was a communist. And then suddenly to see him at the *Wall Street Journal* lecturing Jack Kemp on free market economics I just sort of thought was ironic from my point of view. But Jack, there was no question. I was on a panel or a radio program with Jude, and Jude was, he was always selling supply-side economics, but I also believe that he did play a major role. I don't think, even though he may have exaggerated, but he was always down there with Jack at lunch. They were always doing something. Every time I called up and people would say when Jack came out with a bad idea they'd say, "Well that was Jude. He just saw him." I think it was for Louis Farrakhan. "That was Jude. He said 'Come out for Louis Farrakhan.'"

So the point is Jude did play a major role in this, I don't want to belittle his role, and I don't think Bartley played, I mean he had on the *Wall Street Journal*, but it was [Arthur B. "Art"] Laffer, [Robert] Mundell, Paul Craig Roberts, those were the people who I think he relied upon for material input, and. of course, John Mueller as well.

Kondracke: Did all of you meet with the Wanniskis and the Laffers and the Mundells and so on? Did Jack have seminars for the Amigos and the Conservative Opportunity Society?

Weber: Well, we had a lot of dinners at Kemp's house. Joanne kept busy feeding all Jack's colleagues. But they were all fascinating. It wasn't just to come out and shoot the bull with Jack. We'd have Irving Kristol, Michael Novak, or Art Laffer or somebody. He was constantly interested in educating us, raising up our consciousness level. A lot of that went on, and Wanniski was a constant presence.

Walker: I remember a time that he took a group of us up to New York along with our spouses and so on. We spent a long weekend in New York, and part of this was having all these people talk to us about just what the state of play was on economics, but we also did foreign policy. Jeane Kirkpatrick was there.

Weber: [Malcolm S.] Steve Forbes [Jr.].

Kondracke: What period would this have been?

Walker: '87 maybe.

Livingston: I'd say earlier.

Walker: '86-87, probably somewhere in that vicinity.

[discussion]

Kondracke: The second point, which a lot of you have referred to as the quote, unquote conversion of Ronald Reagan at this meeting was early 1980, there's a meeting at, I think, the Marriott [Hotel], outside LAX [Los Angeles International Airport], and Jack and Dave Smick and John Mueller and Arthur Laffer and Jude Wanniski were all there along with the California team of Reagan's. Now, [Lewis E.] Lew Lehrman and Dave Smick refer to this going out there as quote, unquote the boarding party. If you ask [Edwin] Ed Meese [III] about this, he says, "Oh, no. Reagan was a supply-sider before there was supply side. He just was instinctively a supply-sider, a low tax person, and that he didn't need any conversion.

Barnes: I know, but he didn't have a bill, he didn't have a program. Obviously he was instinctively a supply-sider and a tax cutter, but Kemp came out with a program for him.

Weber: But he raised taxes when he was governor of California, so—

Ryskind: He had to, to balance the budget and all the rest—

Kondracke: That's why people usually raise taxes.

Ryskind: They had to. You're forced to in a state, you can't just print money the way we can back here. And so that they have to balance the budget. I remember Reagan, I saw him out in California and it seemed to me he was not a supply-sider, he really didn't understand it at the time

Kondracke" This is when?

Ryskind: I can't remember. When he was running, before he was running for president, but I don't remember whether it was—

Weber: Well he wasn't a supply-sider when he ran in '76 against Ford.

Ryskind: That's what I'm saying. He was not. He didn't know anything about it. Kemp was the one who—

Weber: What I heard from I think [Franklyn C.] Lyn Nofziger and others was that Reagan had been through a personal experience in Hollywood where his income went up rather rapidly so his taxes went up rather rapidly, and he had an instinctive aversion to high marginal tax rates, but no comprehensive theory of how that related to economic growth. That's what Jack thought.

Ryskind: That's exactly right.

Lungren: When he was governor what happened in California was we did not have withholding for income tax, and he was adamant against it until he realized that he would run afoul of the California constitution, not able to balance the budget. And he had a famous

press conference where he had said his feet were stuck in concrete against withholding, and he had a famous press conference when he went up and he used his fingernail to go across the microphone and he made a noise, he said "The sound you've just heard is the concrete cracking around my feet." And he came out for it. But what he did was, as he was leaving office he put a proposition on the ballot which would have limited spending as a percentage of, I think, the state domestic product, and then it was a limitation on how much it could up. Well that lost.

Kondracke: It lost?

Lungren: It lost, but then two years later, in 1978, we had Prop 13 [Proposition 13 amendment to California constitution], which cut taxes, limited taxes, on property taxes

Weber: That wasn't really a supply-side, property taxes weren't the problem.

Lungren: Oh no, they were a huge problem in California.

Weber: No, but I said they were not the problem from a supply side point of view.

Lungren: I know, but you have to understand that's the context in which Ronald Reagan was looking at things as we came out of '78 going into '80, so he was looking more on the side of limiting spending, and then the idea of property tax in California, which I think meant that he was ripe for an intervention by Jack Kemp. I was

always supporting him for president in '79. There was nothing contrary that he was saying, but I think when Jack went out there I think Jack convinced himself that Ronald Reagan was the guy for president when Ronald Reagan bought on to supply-side economics, and he came back enthused to support Ronald Reagan, and threw everything behind Ronald Reagan at that point in time.

Ryskind: I think Vin is exactly right on this thing about it. Reagan did not have, I mean I love Ed Meese, but he tended to be protective of Ronald Reagan and said that Reagan knew it all.

Kondracke: Meese does cite what you refer to, economic policy directive number one, or policy decision number one, which is August of 1979.

Ryskind: Right.

Kondracke: Written by Martin Anderson.

Ryskind: That's right, that's what I'm talking about.

Kondracke: Which contains Kemp-Roth as one of its—

Ryskind: Absolutely.

Kondracke: —its items, so then Kemp goes out in the beginning of the next year, in 1980, and the question is was Reagan already converted or did he not quite have it in his mind, or did Reagan convince Kemp

that he was converted or what's your impression of whether this was a necessary conversion or an affirmation?

Walker: I think it's when it became the centerpiece of the campaign. I think that Reagan had bought into the overall Kemp-Roth type of approach perhaps and included that as a piece of what he was doing. But I think probably that meeting assured that it would become a center point of the Reagan campaign as they moved into the early primaries.

Kondracke: During the lead-up to the '81 tax bill, Arthur Laffer wrote a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* saying that tax cuts more than pay for themselves, more than pay for themselves. Did Jack Kemp believe that? Did all of you believe that, as opposed to the economic return being enough that the face amount of the tax cut could be recouped, some of it? The question was did Kemp believe that tax cuts paid for themselves and did you all, and do you?

Lungren: In the context of that time, absolutely.

Livingston: I think that Jack definitely did. I think it was a constant education process which he was not reluctant to engage in with all of his colleagues. A lot of his colleagues didn't believe it. I can remember discussions saying well, it can't really work. But it did work. I'm not sure if I was totally sold at the time, but I'm sold on it now and I wish we had it to do all over again.

Barnes: Revenues did go up

Kondracke: Did they go up by the amount of the—

Livingston: No, because we increased spending. Now I can speak to that because of the appropriations process. We had a Democratic Congress and we cut tax rates and revenues went way up but spending exceeded it. And so the Democrats today always say it didn't work, but it did work, because the revenues were substantially higher than they were projected to be by the budget people way back then.

Weber: Mort, he absolutely believed—I can remember before I was in Congress, after the '70 election I recognized a group of Young Republicans in Minnesota—and Jack came out and spoke to us, and I do remember him proselytizing on exactly this issue. And everybody there was kind of wanting to believe what he believed, but they were pushing him, and I do remember when somebody asked Jack, "Okay, I believe that tax cuts will generate more revenues than they lose, but isn't there a lag between the time you pass a tax cut and the time that growth actually kicks in?" And Jack said adamantly no, there's no lag. It will be immediate and instantaneous. I'm not sure I believed all that, but he really believed.

Ryskind: It seems to me whether it was Jack, *American Renaissance* or whatever, I remember *Human Events* was opposed, I just had come there and we were opposed to the Kennedy tax cuts on the ground that somehow they were going to increase inflation. It was the old way of looking at it. And Arthur [F.] Burns and all these Republicans were opposed to it and so we were opposed to it. But Jack when he talked about it, I guess he got something from Walter [W.] Heller, and

I couldn't imagine Walter Heller, he was Kennedy's chief economic guru, and Heller, I remember Heller as giving the wrong advice to [Konrad H.J.] Adenauer and to [Ludwig W.] Erhard. We used to call him "Wrong Way Heller." So if Heller was for it it couldn't be good, that was the way that we looked at it at *Human Events*. And Jack found out about it, got something from Heller, he said, "Heller was for it for the wrong reasons." That was his point. And then he actually examined the tax cut and he claimed at the time that he got some sort of memo from Heller in which Heller said it had more than paid for itself, that the Kennedy tax cuts more than paid for themselves, and the point is Kemp and the *Wall Street Journal* ran on that, they said "Look, they did pay for themselves." And when he talked about the [Andrew W.] Mellon tax cuts he would say it all the time. So there's no question in my mind, he did believe that the tax cuts would pay for themselves and more than pay for themselves. He writes about it and he talks about the incentives, the people on the lower end, they need to have their brackets knocked down too because they're being pushed into upper brackets and therefore the incentive, that was his view, their incentive was to not work or to loaf or to go on a cruise or something like that. His idea was that even people on the lower end, if they found the incentives, were better off and that they would work more and produce more and they would be more—I know he believed that, I'm absolutely certain.

Walker: He certainly believed the opposite too, because I think probably all of us were involved in the secret cabal the one time when the Reagan people decided to raise taxes, and we went to a meeting down at the base of Capitol Hill and so on where Jack had organized it and we were all going to be against Reagan on this, but we were going

to hold it secret until we had a chance to organize our thoughts on it and so on, so we all marched out of the room and downstairs with the idea that by tomorrow we were going to have a plan into the biggest bank of television cameras I've ever seen in my life, because people had caught up with the secret. Jack's whole point at that moment was if Reagan bought into the higher taxes, that in fact it was going to slow down the economy, revenues would drop and that it would lead to—

Kondracke: This was TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982], this was '82?

Weber: TEFRA 1, TEFRA 2, DEFRA [Deficit Reduction Act of 1984], there were three different. This was the first one, the first TEFRA.

Ryskind: Eighty-two, wasn't it?

Weber: Yes, '82.

Kondracke: So where was this cabal?

Walker: I'm not certain. Bob, was it in the building where you have your offices? It was one of the buildings that was right down at the base of Capitol Hill. We were up on the top story of it. I mean it was a huge group of Members that was together that evening.

Livingston: I remember the meeting, but I don't know where it was.

Kondracke: But you were going to oppose your president.

Walker: Yes, the idea was we were organizing to oppose the president on something, which was a pretty big deal at that juncture, and Jack was organizing us on this, but it was all going to be a secret, until we walked down and saw the bank of television cameras.

Barnes: Reagan was very unhappy with this. If you read, I've recently read Reagan's diaries. You know he kept a diary during his whole presidential term, and believe me, Jack Kemp's name comes up a lot, usually going to Reagan and complaining about something, starting in 1982 is when it began, and there are a number of times later. Kemp was certainly not afraid to take his objection right into the Oval Office.

Weber: Remember that the tax bill, as great a victory as it was, wasn't exactly what Jack wanted. We wanted 30 percent, not 25, and more important than that, we didn't want it phased in over three years. I never heard Jack complain about going from 30 to 25, but I do remember him saying repeatedly, "Phasing it in over three years is a big mistake, but this is the best we're going to do."

Walker: Backloading it was going to prevent the immediate effect from taking place.

Kondracke: What was Jack's role and what role did you all play in actually passing the '81 tax bill? Jack was by that time a member of the leadership, obviously, number three, but what role did you all play in getting it passed? Again, he's not on Ways and Means. Any memories of that?

Weber: Wasn't there.

Walker: Most of us at that point were junior, and we were kind of the storm troopers, I guess, on it who made certain that we held the Republicans together on it. There were people who were looking to backslide on this and were looking to modify it even more than it ended up being modified, and it was basically a lot of the younger members who took that on and said no, we need to have an aggressive bill here.

Barnes: Who recruited the Democrats like Kent Hance and others? Obviously there were a lot of conservative Democrats in the House then that aren't there now.

[discussion]

Lungren: [Richard C.] Dick Shelby. Those guys voted with us on those sorts of things. The other thing that I would think about it that at that time the locus of ideas came out of the Republicans in the House, along with Ronald Reagan. You weren't getting the ideas out of the Senate. And it didn't matter whether it was on defense policy or whether it was on tax cuts, different way of looking at social issues and so forth, that really came out of the House. So Jack was the leader on supply-side economics and some of these other things that we've mentioned, but he gave us an enthusiasm that allowed us to go forward, and yes, I don't know how you would call us, we weren't part of the leadership, but the leadership, frankly had to go along. And more and more enthusiastically as we saw the successes that we had at the polls. Remember, Republicans hadn't had an opportunity to

really take over the agenda for a generation, and we were able to do that even though we were in the minority in the House, because of the power of ideas. It was an exciting time, because Jack was convinced the power of ideas could change things. He convinced us, or we were already convinced of that, and that really moved our party along.

Weber: And enough of the Democrats were looking at the energy that we had and the results of the 1980 election and not at all sure that this wasn't a wave that was going to continue to build, and I think that created an environment in which a lot, I don't know that we converted a whole lot of Democrats

Lungren: Fear's a great motivator.

Weber: Yes, fear is a great motivator.

Kondracke: One other historical item. At the '80 convention there's buzz that Jack might have been vice president. Was any of you part of the demonstrations, part of the claque for that to happen? Okay, it obviously didn't happen. Those of you who were members of the Amigos, that's Connie Mack and Vin, staff was never there, so what was the Amigos, the five Amigos? Newt Gingrich, Trent Lott, Jack Kemp and the two of you. How did the Amigos get going and—

Weber: We got named because Jack wanted to meet at a Mexican restaurant. I'd like to give more ideological content to that name, but that was the reason.

Kondracke: Which Mexican restaurant was it?

Weber: Oh, it was the one on the Senate side. Connie, what was—

Mack: Let's see, it's, I can't remember the name.

Weber: I can't remember either.

Kondracke: So what did you guys do?

Mack: The one meeting I recall of the Amigos was during the Bush years. Now, so he's secretary of HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development], and [Robert M.] Bob Teeter was at this meeting as well, and this is after the Gulf War and it's before Bush is going to give his speech to the country, coming off that great victory. This little group was trying to convince Teeter that he needed to encourage Bush to come out with some bold ideas domestically, that the country needed to hear from the president on domestic issues, and so that was—and I've forgotten now the details we were talking to him about. But Teeter's response was, "We're going to ride this victory in the Gulf War to victory in November."

Weber: Much of our focus also was on cutting capital gains tax. The economy was slowing down, capital gains tax rates had been equalized with income tax rates as probably the only mistake that was part of the 1986 Tax Reform Act. Jack and we were all trying to convince the administration that they needed to have a growth package and the key of it was reducing the capital gains tax, which Jude Wanniski referred to as the "bone in the throat of the American economy." I remember meeting with [Nicholas F.] Nick Brady, who said after we made this

whole pitch to him and talked to him about it and tried to explain it, he said "Ronald Reagan was the son of an alcoholic from Dixon, Illinois. He could run on something like that. But George Bush is the son of a United States Senator. He can never champion a cut in the capital gains tax."

Kondracke: So do the Amigos start early and then you guys continued meeting for years and years later, all the way into Bush? Do you remember when it started?

Mack: It could have started that—

Weber: It might have started over the capital gains issue.

Mack: Yes, and so it started late. I think probably the last meeting of the Cinco Amigos was with Jack after he was chosen to be vice president, and we had dinner with him. I could swear you were there. We had dinner with Jack up in his suite at the convention. And of course it was one of those high five, you know, congratulations, great, this is exciting.

Weber: But it was as much a support, I think Jack just missed regular contact with his Congressional friends and he wanted to get some of us together. Yes, we had some purposes, but it was as much as anything Jack wanted to keep in contact with people on Capitol Hill. I remember one of the meetings when we talked about—I'm sure that you've discussed this with other people, Mort—but the visit of Ariel Sharon when he came to town, and he was housing minister in Israel, and he wanted to meet with Jack, and [James A.] Jim Baker was just

dead set against having anybody meet with Ariel Sharon who was, although he was housing minister he was the most hawkish guy in the Israeli government at that time. And I remember Jack saying he was going to be the only housing secretary with a foreign policy. He met with Sharon and Baker was furious about it, of course.

Kondracke: Tell me what the history is of the Conservative Opportunity Society and how it got started and what it did.

Mack: I'll give you my take on it. I was invited to join this group before it was named that, because I had just become a member of the Congress. The big issue when I came in was [James C.] Jim Wright [Jr.]'s attempt to eliminate the third year of the tax cut. I had put together a letter where 147 or whatever the magic number is of my colleagues, said we will support and protect the third year of the Reagan tax cut. After doing that Newt walked up to me one day a couple of days after and said "Would you like to join a group of guys who want to change the way this place operates and become the majority party?" And I said, "Well, that sounds like a great idea." And so I went to one of these meetings and it seems like Dan Lungren, [Daniel R.] Dan Coats, Henry [J.] Hyde—

Weber: Not Henry Hyde. We met in my office.

[discussion]

Weber: Judd [A.] Greg and Dan Coats were original members but they grew disenchanted with Newt and left.

Mack: What was so fascinating about this group, it kind of goes back to the ideas thing, is that they were talking about the books they were reading about policy, and I was kind of stunned, to tell you the truth. And there used to be trading back and forth, "Here's something you should read." And so it was very much at the beginning, anyway, thinking through, trying to develop new ways, new solutions to problems.

Kondracke: Where was Jack? Was Jack in the Conservative Opportunity Society or not?

Weber: The COS was Gingrich, and the first people that he recruited were Bob and I to join him.

Walker: He basically went around and figured out who some of the activist members were and began the process of recruiting people who had shown a propensity toward activism.

Kondracke: This begins when?

Walker: Eighty-three.

Weber: Well he came up to me, and we have a lame duck session after the 1982 election, and I remember on the last day of the session I didn't really know Newt that well, but I'd listened to him in conferences and I kind of agreed with his political approach. You knew him much better than I did. He came up to me on the floor and he said, "What are you doing for the next 10 years?" That's a typical Gingrich comment. I said, "Gee, I don't know, hanging out with you, I

guess.” And Bob was the other member that we should start, and then the group came together. But I have to say Jack was not a member of COS.

Mack: No, and neither was Trent.

Weber: And neither was Trent. It was a decision on their part not to do that. They were our leaders, they were our inspirations, and particularly in Jack’s case they were our lifeline to the leadership, but they were also very careful. They were not going to get branded as a group of junior member mavericks.

Walker: But they did send their staff to all the meetings. They had senior staff from their operations that came to all of the COS meetings.

Lungren: Remember that all-day meeting we had? Put butcher paper up on the wall and we went through vocabulary? Newt would always tell us that we had to learn from the anti-war folks of the ‘60s how they had captured that moment, because they’d captured the vocabulary. And so we actually went down and figured out, we didn’t have computers and digital monitors then, we had butcher paper, and we were discussing there what words would we use, what words wouldn’t we use. We talked about the Democratic agenda and we talked about ours being the American agenda, and we chose three words, Conservative Opportunity Society, in contradistinction to their ‘liberal welfare state’, and we actually sat down and figured out why those ideas had a meaning and why they had a difference, and then we used those as the basic overarching theme as we looked at the

different issues. And remember we divided up subject matter. I had criminal justice and immigration, you had—

Mack: My role was to kind of manage you guys, make sure that each of you, whatever assignment you had, that you were moving forward with it.

Lungren: We started what we now call the Theme Team. We would figure out what the theme was for the month, or the week. We'd go down and organize one-minutes, no one else was doing it in those days.

Weber: And special orders.

Lungren: And I always remember, after we'd finish a meeting, before I'd get back to my office, there would be a memo from Newt for the 16 things I was supposed to do. It was always that. And Jack and Trent were our extensions, our conduits to the leadership, because frankly we wanted to get something done.

Weber: But I have to say, I don't think Jack was ever entirely comfortable with COS. Some of it he was very excited about because we were enthusiastic about all of his issues, but I don't think he was very enthusiastic about us going after Jim Wright or anything like that. Jack was never a negative person.

Kondracke: I was going to ask you about that. What was Jack's attitude toward that confrontation?

Weber: That was not any part of Jack Kemp's agenda.

Walker: And he thought a lot of what we did on the floor period was confrontational rather than his agenda, and so therefore I wouldn't say that—I agree with Vin—I don't think he was ever entirely comfortable with the approach that we were taking. On the other hand, he was very supportive in terms of assuring that the leadership didn't get in our way to be out doing some of those kinds of things because he saw the value in it.

Lungren: He wasn't entirely comfortable, but he didn't not want to be involved with us.

Kondracke: What was his relationship like with [Thomas P.] Tip O'Neill [Jr.] and Jim Wright and the Democratic leadership? Obviously Newt and you guys were confronting them, trying to embarrass them, etc. etc. etc. Did he cheer you on? Did he quietly cheer you on? Did he get along with them?

Mack: My instincts, and it's instinct more than anything else, is that he maintained a good relationship with Tip and Jim Wright.

Livingston: I think that's right. I was on Appropriations and he was on Appropriations and we were working our appropriations issues. Jack was always a step above, working the higher issues over the traditional appropriations process, and he got some grumbling from the appropriators that sometimes he didn't come to hearings when he should have come to hearings. But he took an active role in the Foreign Ops Appropriations subcommittee, and that's where he really

became a leader in those international issues. Beyond that he really was, as time went on, into his own agenda and not necessarily with the warfare, the civil war on the floor. And I wasn't part of the COS either.

Mack: I suspect that at this point Jack knew too that there were another series of issues coming along with respect to taxes, and if they were going to happen, he had to have these relationships with people on the other side of the aisle. So I don't think he, I think he kept those relationships strong.

Livingston: He was always positive. We talked about his motivation. It was again growth, empowerment, and individual liberty, and that transcended, that seeped into just about every issue that he preached.

Weber: When Newt, when we put together COS, Newt had the conceptual framework, you guys will remember this, of you needed a set of magnet issues, positive things that would attract you, and you needed a set of wedge issues that would divide the Democratic Party or divide you from the Democrats. There's no such thing as a wedge issue in Jack Kemp's vocabulary, at least as I knew him. Everything was a magnet issue. And if he couldn't convince you he'd just keep trying. But the notion that we were going to have divisive issues that might, even if they were dividing the country in our favor, that wasn't really part of Jack Kemp's mentality.

Ryskind: Mort, may I ask a question here? Back to a point about the '86 tax reform, because I just wanted to ask you about that because I know that Jude Wannixsi—he got mad at us and all of this—and I just

wanted to mention tax reform and I called it "a mystery pudding," because we were not very big on it, we were skeptical of it, and one of the major reasons was the rise in the capital gains tax. These supply-siders, everybody told me this is the key to prosperity is capital gains, capital gains. And I said, "You're going to raise it 40 percent? I don't know whether you guys are right or wrong," but I said it just seemed wrong to me. I'd like you to explain what happened there and why you had to do that and why you thought it was worth it even despite the bone in the throat as Wanniski talked about.

Mack: There really were many steps to this thing, and so all of us were in the House when this occurred, and I suspect we all remember. We were, I believe, to the person, opposed to the tax reform bill that came out of the House, and we were very upset with Jack for the role that he played in getting it, and I remember you guys chose me to challenge Jack at the conference.

Lungren: Do you recall Ronald Reagan coming to the conference and convincing us that we should vote for it?

Weber: After it came out of the Senate.

[discussion]

Kondracke: The history on this is that the rule got defeated, thanks to you guys, and then Jack gets the President to come talk to the conference and to write a letter saying that he will veto anything that comes out of the Senate that doesn't contain a \$2500 personal

exemption, and he convinces enough of you, but I don't know about all of you, to vote for the rule and get the bill passed to go to the Senate.

Weber: My recollection is that the capital gains problem that Allan's referring to did not emerge until it went through the Senate, that was Bill Bradley's insistence. The issue when it came out of the House, what was really a business issue, the business community was all up in arms about eliminating all the exemptions and credits and deductions and things like that, and I sat down, I remember talking to Jack and saying "Geez, I'm listening to my business people are arguing against this," and he was trying to explain that the lower marginal rates were worth it. I remember finally in exasperation he said to me, "Vin, you know what I'd like to do? I'd like to lower the rates and keep all the deductions, but we can't do that."

Kondracke: Did he really say that?

Weber: He was half-joking, but what he meant was he was not wildly enthused about closing loopholes, he was wildly enthused about reducing the rate.

Mack: Then again, the emphasis is on marginal, marginal rates, that's what creates growth.

Lungren: But I remember that conference with Ronald Reagan because I remember I got up and I asked the President about capital gains, so it had to be an issue at the time the President came before us.

Weber: That was after it passed the Senate.

Lungren: Well, I can't recall exactly what his answer was, but it wasn't totally satisfactory with what we voted for in the tax package.

Kondracke: I want to flip back to the early eighties. Jack was responsible for making David [A.] Stockman OMB [Office of Management and Budget] director. Then David Stockman starts trying to delay the tax cut schedule and then he comes out with the *Atlantic Monthly* interview declaring that this is all a Trojan horse and trickle-down economics. What was Jack's response to that? How did he feel about his best friend, at least David Stockman called Jack his best friend, doing all that? And how did you guys feel?

Livingston: I was appalled. I thought it was traitorous. But I don't remember talking with Jack about it.

Kondracke: Anybody else?

Walker: I don't remember a conversation with Jack about it either.

Ryskind: I know that he criticized Stockman, I know absolutely that he criticized Stockman. I've seen quotes of him that he was criticizing because of exactly what he was doing, so I know absolutely that he did take issue with him, sharp issue with him.

Kondracke: We're going to break for lunch right quick, but I just want to do one more thing. Who's not coming this afternoon? When Jack opposed TEFRA and the '83 Social Security tax increase and he wants

Paul [A.] Volcker [Jr.] to be not reappointed as Fed [Federal Reserve Board] chairman and so on, and there were these issues. He's leadership and yet he's bucking the administration. There was all kinds of guff coming out of the White House, leaked assaults on Jack for putting his personal ambition ahead of the President and stuff like that. How did he take all that? Do you remember the guff that he was taking? It was in, [Rowland] Evans [Jr.] and Novak had a column saying he was not permitted for months to be in Reagan's presence. You guys were part of the team opposing these things.

Mack: The only thing that I remember in that time wasn't how he reacted to what the White House may have been saying about him, but he was adamantly opposed to the theme of the 1984 election. If I remember correctly it was stay the course, and he was—

Weber: No, that was the '82 election, the off-year election.

Walker: Morning in America was '84.

Weber: And '82 was stay the course.

Mack?: I wasn't here in '84, so that's—

Kondracke: So all of you have repressed or suppressed all that stuff that was coming from the White House.

Mack: I apparently tried to make something up and didn't get away with it.

Kondracke: We will continue a lot of this this afternoon. Just let me do one sum-up here. The world has heard of Eisenhower Republicans and there used to be Rockefeller Republicans and Taft Republicans and Goldwater Republicans and certainly Reagan Republicans. Are there Kemp Republicans, and what lessons does Jack Kemp's career have to teach the Republican Party for today? I'll just let you run down the line, Bob Walker first.

Walker: Sure there are Kemp Republicans, and I think when we discussed early on the expansive nature of Jack's involvement in politics it is about that. It was Jack that demonstrated leadership not only in terms of growth economics, but how that growth then was going to impact wide numbers of people. His foreign policy was an outreach foreign policy about the condition of human rights and human liberties around the world. It's a lot of that underlying theme that's still important in the Republican Party, and I think is being expressed in the presidential campaign this year.

Kondracke: You do? You do?

Walker: Yes. I believe that there is growth economics at the base of most of the discussion in the Republican Party this year. I believe that there's also a belief in a U.S. presence in the world that is a positive presence. And I think that's a legacy that Jack Kemp has.

Weber: I'll just be brief. I sort of go back to what I said in my opening remark. I think the Kemp Republicans exist, and they are people that believe we have got to have something to say to everybody, that we can't be a 51 percent majority nation, that the

Republican Party has to be able to have a message for African-Americans and Hispanics and union members and inner-city folks, and maybe we don't get it all right, maybe not every policy is perfect, but if we are not constantly striving to have a message to communicate to everybody, we're failing.

Mack: That's interesting. That's the same kind of theme that I would say. I clearly, yes there are Kemp Republicans. I would consider myself to be a Kemp Republican, a Reagan Republican, because I do see them in pretty much the same light. I think the Party desperately needs someone like Jack Kemp today. And the word that I would have used would be inclusive. There's got to be a way for Republicans to be more inclusive. We just seem to keep narrowing down our fundamental base. And the other thing about it, Jack had the courage to stand up and challenge things that he disagreed with, both privately and publicly. And we all know it's not an easy thing to stand up and tell people that you think they're wrong.

Kondracke: Including the President.

Mack: Including the President. But Jack had the courage to do that, and I think today we're missing a person who again really wants to bring people into our party, and to be inclusive, find ways to give people opportunity and hope.

Livingston: As somebody who still describes himself as a Kemp Republican, I fully agree with what especially Connie and Vin have just said. Jack led the effort of [Marvin H.] Mickey Edwards and me and [Edwin R.] Ed Bethune [Jr.] and others who had substantial minority

populations, particularly in the African-American area in our districts, and who had gone in and appealed to those votes. He got us all together and took us over to the RNC [Republican National Committee] and demanded that they formulate a core group to go after African-Americans, and they did. Bob Wright [phonetic] came in as the director and with great effect we started doing better, but we've never done sufficiently well. Jack was all-inclusive, he didn't exclude anybody, and if he heard a disparaging remark, a racial remark, a criticism of that sort, he'd come down hard on the offender. But also, Ronald Reagan's 11th commandment was 'Don't speak ill of your fellow Republican.' For crying out loud we've forgotten that in this primary process. And I think both Jack and Ronald Reagan would be offended with some of the rhetoric that's come from all sides among our erstwhile leaders who would run for president this time.

Ryskind: I think Jack had a perfect message for the time and the place, and I still think it's an important part, but I really think that what the Republicans have to do, they need someone, I don't know maybe whoever, to have to deal with these entitlement reforms. And that's one thing Jack was not really very good at, and I felt that he was poor at that, actually. And the thing is they wanted to campaign against [Robert J. "Bob"] Dole because he was trying to stop or freeze the COLAs [Cost of Living Adjustments], and Jack was going to go after him for that when he ran in 1988, and I was very opposed to that and wrote something about that. But the thing is that unless we get control of that, unless we get somebody who can deal with those issues, the country is going to be lost anyway. That's my opinion.

Weber: The person in the Republican Party who is most aggressively pursuing that today is Paul [D.] Ryan, who would be the most adamant in describing himself as a Kemp Republican.

Ryskind: No, I agree with that. But I'm just saying that Jack didn't do it.

[discussion]

Barnes: And look, Paul Ryan is the most important policy thinker among not just Republicans, on Capitol Hill right now. I've talked to him a great deal about this and he talks so enthusiastically about the time when he was just out of college and worked for Jack and Empower America, and he says all these big-name economists were coming through and he could sit in the meetings when Jack would be talking about them and said he learned an enormous amount. And he's also one who seeks friend and allies everywhere among Democrats. Doesn't find many. I think Jack got more.

?: He got [Ronald L. "Ron"] Wyden.

Barnes: Well actually, Wyden got him.

Kondracke: Alice Rivlin too. Go ahead.

Lungren: I was just going to say I just wrote a piece for the *Ripon Forum* saying that the heir to the Jack Kemp legacy is Paul Ryan. He is dealing in a different universe, that is the question of the challenge to America, if we don't control these entitlement programs, but as he

talks about it he talks about a growth policy that has to be a part of it. If you listen to Paul Ryan's language, it is Kempesque in that it is very inclusive, it is inviting, it is not offensive but it is challenging, and Jack challenged us too. Jack was unique. There's not going to be another Jack Kemp, but in terms of his openness and his belief that he can persuade anyone and everyone to his position, Paul Ryan has that same tenacity and intelligence, and frankly we need to deal with that issue right now.

Kondracke: Thank you so much, panel. We'll break for lunch and return. Thank you.

[end of interview]