JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

Vice President RICHARD B. CHENEY

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Interviewer

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JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
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Morton Kondracke: This is a Kemp oral history project interview with former Vice President Dick Cheney. Today is November 30, 2011 and we're doing the interview at the vice president's home in McLean, Virginia. Thank you so much for doing this.

Vice President Dick Cheney: Thank you, Morton.

Kondracke: When did you first hear about Jack Kemp and when did you first meet him?

Cheney: Well, I'd heard of Jack before I really got to know him. I first came to town during the Nixon-Ford years and worked in the first [Richard M.] Nixon term and then for [Gerald R.] Gerry Ford [Jr.]. It was along, as I recall, in the mid-seventies when Jack first came to Congress. You heard about Jack—in part he was sort of a standout in the political community in a sense. Of course he'd played professional football and that made him unique. A lot of guys were more interested in football than they were in politics. But he also had developed and was developing the reputation as the guy who was very interested in policy, and especially in tax policy. When I got to know him, was in 1978 when I ran for Congress for the first time, got elected and came back to Washington. Of course Jack was already a member of the House by then. In 1980, Jack and I ran for the leadership and we elected a new leadership team in 1980: [Robert H.] Bob Michel as the Leader, [C.] Trent Lott as the Whip, Jack was number three as the Conference chairman and I was the Policy chairman, and that was basically the leadership structure for about six years. I sat side by

side with Jack through all those leadership meetings throughout most of the [Ronald W.] Reagan years.

Kondracke: Do you recall your first actual meeting with him, what the circumstances were?

Cheney: I don't. I knew [William A.] Bill Steiger from Wisconsin. Bill was a good friend. I'd worked for Bill briefly before I went to work in the Nixon administration. Of course Bill and [Clifford P.] Cliff Hansen from Wyoming had gotten the Steiger-Hansen Amendment adopted on tax policy in I believe it was about 1977, beginning of the Carter administration. By the time I ran in '78, we got into '79 and '80 and we increasingly got involved in supply-side economics, tax cuts, [Arthur B. "Art"] Laffer Curve and so forth. Jack was deeply involved in all of those kinds of issues and sort of an unofficial leader, if you will. And then became chairman of the Conference and had great influence, if you will. He was also clearly identified as a Reagan man and Reagan supporter. I'd, of course, been a Ford man in '76 when we'd run against each other. I hadn't encountered Jack at that stage. Along in the 1980-81 timeframe Jack was a prominent member of the House, I would say, even though it was early in his career. He didn't have a lot of seniority and wasn't even on the Ways and Means Committee, I don't believe. But he was a strong enough and dynamic enough personality and deeply involved in these issues, that he stood out as a member. There are lots of ways to advance yourself in the House. You can put in your years on the committee and work your way up the seniority system, become an expert in some particular subject based upon the areas you're working in. Jack was different in the sense that he was a standout even though he didn't really have a

claim, for example, to a seat on the tax-writing committee Jack was none-the-less a prominent spokesman and thinker about things relating to the economy and tax policy and so forth.

Kondracke: What are your standout memories of interaction with him over these many years that you've known him?

Cheney: Jack was a dynamo. He had a very high energy level, if I can describe it in those terms. He was heavily involved not only in the policy debates, but he spent a lot of time out on the campaign trail, if you will. He would go out and did a lot of fundraising for other members of the House and other candidates. Jack was a major resource if you could get him to come to your district, partly because everybody knew him so well. He was a standout individual.

[interruption]

If you had a choice, you'd probably like to have President Reagan come to your district if you could. But second only to the president would be Jack, because he had that kind of appeal. A lot of people knew him from his football background and career. There was another area that Jack was deeply interested and involved in and that was the role of minorities in the Republican Party. He had, of course in professional sports, in professional football, a lot of friends for example in the African-American community—the guys he played ball with. Jack probably as much as anybody in our Caucus on the House side in the Republican Party had good ties into the African-American community. Lots of friends, outspoken in his belief in the big tent and support for having a broadly based party. Really a leader, if you will,

to the extent that it was such a thing on the Republican side in the House in those days.

Kondracke: How would you describe your relationship with him? Were you friends, were you close friends?

Cheney: I would describe it as good friends. We knew Jack and Joanne [Kemp] well. We had the opportunity, partly because we were both part of the leadership, and, as I say, sat next to each other for years in all those leadership meetings. We were good friends, I guess is the way I would describe it. I was probably more conservative than Jack, if you looked at my voting record. I had a different style of operation. Jack was a strong, flashy personality. I was more quiet, soft-spoken, did a lot of work behind the scenes. I had a lot of interest in national security, foreign policy, intelligence and so forth, so our views were pretty similar. We had the opportunity over the years to work on a number of issues. We didn't always agree. There were occasions when there'd be disagreements, as there were with everybody. I then benefited in 1987, thereabouts. Jack was running for president and decided to step down from the leadership position so that he could devote full time to his campaign and when he stepped down as Caucus chairman I replaced him, which moved me up the leadership ladder one more notch. Then after the '88 election I ran for and then won the post as the Whip, the number two Republican in the House when Trent Lott went to the Senate. So, we were sort of on that track together, the three of us. Both Jack and Trent for separate reasons moved aside, and that gave me an opportunity to move up.

Kondracke: You mentioned that you both were conservatives but you think you were more than he. What issues do you think you differed on?

Cheney: Well, I think I probably started out more as a conventional conservative when we got into things like spending with respect to—more of a fiscal conservative on policy. Jack sometimes tilted over more in the direction of enterprise zones. I think he was probably less committed than I was on fiscal policy. I'm guessing that that's where, if you looked at our voting records there I would have been more conservative on those kinds of issues than Jack was. Not that Jack was a liberal; he wasn't. But his priority would have been more in terms of economic growth, development and opportunity, and I had a more conventional view of the world. Somebody who's a small government conservative I'd say would be a fair way to describe it. And a strong interest in defense, as I say, and national security issues. Jack was interested in those too, but he spent more time on tax stuff and on the economy.

Kondracke: You know, he described himself as a bleeding heart conservative and a big tent conservative and somebody, as you mentioned, reaching out to blacks and so on. What did his colleagues think about all that stuff about those tendencies on his part? What did you think all of that?

Cheney: Well, I liked it. I was a big fan of Jack's and I thought he added a lot to our party. Not everybody shared that view. Jack was one of those guys who had good ties to the younger members. He'd preceded some of them in terms of arriving here but in a sense Jack

was a star from the day he walked into the House. For most of the members who were already here, a lot of them had to work hard to get to the point where they had influence or where they could wield influence in terms of affecting legislation or being a spokesman on various kinds of issues. Jack just sort of walked in, and laid claim to that kind of role. He didn't ask anybody—he didn't have to ask anybody. Especially a lot of the younger members were intrigued with him. If you look at the group that formed around [Newton L.] Gingrich when Newt came. Newt was a classmate of mine and there was a group of Gingrich, [John V.] Vin Weber, [Robert S.] Bob Walker and so forth. Part of what used to be called the Conservative Opportunity Society. Jack would have found a lot of support in that circuit. Not that he was an active part of the group, he'd sort of moved beyond that. But those younger members, as they came on, Jack was an identifiable personality, somebody that had an impact and was busy in terms the work that needed to go on in the Congress.

Kondracke: Those guys, the Conservative Opportunity Society, they were young Turks, so called. They made one-minute speeches all the time. They railed against the Democrats, they used to rail against their own leadership half the time. Now you describe yourself in the book as a bridge between the leadership and them. Where did Jack fit into this picture?

Cheney: Well, I think probably that would be a good question to ask somebody like Bob Michel and how Bob saw those relationships. I had the impression that Jack was more involved with, sort of, Jack's agenda that probably you wouldn't see Jack running to replace Bob Michel as leader in the House. The day-to-day work of running the

House Republican operation wasn't something that would have appealed to Jack. He wanted to be out there making good, tough policy speeches, campaigning, working hard on those issues that he cared about. But I think of him as less a man of the House than some of the other guys that came in and worked their way up and were part of the institution itself. It's not a negative; it's just a choice that members make in terms of how they're going to pursue their career interest, and Jack could sometimes aggravate his colleagues, or a few of them. He might get involved for example in an issue where he disagreed on some matter of policy, tax policy, for example, and would end up crossways with some of the old guard on issues that involved a particular set of concerns.

Kondracke: Do you remember specific cases?

Cheney: I don't. I'm trying to think of some now.

Kondracke: We've been told in various interviews that there were a lot of older members, especially Ways and Means Committee senior people, who resented his interloping into tax policy. Did you encounter any of that?

Cheney: Yes, I think that was a fair statement. Again, I went back to this notion that Jack had these ideas that he actively and aggressively pursued and became a spokesman for and could probably have generated more TV cameras at a press conference to talk about tax policy than a lot of our colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee who were dealing with it every day. I think on occasion there were sentiments that were expressed, a feeling that Jack had gotten out of

his lane and was over in somebody else's turf. I think that happened occasionally when he was a Cabinet member in the Bush administration.

Kondracke: We'll get to that. [laughs]

Cheney: I always looked on it as just Jack's enthusiasm and commitment to the cause. But it meant that he wasn't as solicitous sometimes as some of the older members' prerogatives because they'd been here a long time doing it. But on the other hand, he wasn't the only one like that. The whole Gingrich operation was in part subject to that. I mean, Newt used to periodically self-destruct and then he'd come see me and say, "O.K. what do I do now? How do we get out of it; how do we fix it?" And then I'd sit down and talk with him and give him some thoughts on who he needed to go stroke to sort of rebuild some of those relationships.

Kondracke: Did you counsel Kemp along a similar line?

Cheney: Not to the extent that Newt—Newt would come and seek my counsel on those kinds of things. Jack was less—Newt was trying to do something with the House. He believed that the speaker of the House of Representatives was a more important post than president of the United States. His aim and objective was to take over the House, to have a Republican majority reestablished. It was very different from what Jack was trying to do. Jack was trying to promote a set of policies that he cared about and believed in very deeply. He could have done it as a senator, he could have done it maybe as a governor someplace, but he happened to be in the House at that time. That

was the opportunity he had, and he used those tools for that purpose, but it wasn't with the idea in mind that he was going to take over the House somehow, which was a different agenda than Newt's.

Kondracke: So, classically there are show horses and work horses. What was Jack?

Cheney: Well, I think Jack was both. He clearly knew how to generate a headline, worked with the press, a colorful public personality, not inclined to sit in the back row and follow the lead of his elders. But he also was a guy who did his homework, knew his stuff substantively. And as I say, he spent a lot of time working for, on behalf of other members in terms of being a big draw from a fundraising standpoint and being willing to put chunks of time against helping his colleagues get reelected.

Kondracke: How smart was he?

Cheney: I'd call Jack street smart. He wasn't an intellectual in sort of a classic case. This is not a guy who sought a Ph.D. in whatever—economics. But he thought about policy more I think in terms of how it affected people and the lives of people. He had a deep interest, I think, in terms of how you can make the nation better by pursuing the tax policies he wanted to pursue but it wasn't through any sort of esoteric insight with respect to the tax policy. He'd work with a guy like Art Laffer or Jude [T.] Wanniski and learn what they had to teach him, but I would describe him both as a show horse and a work horse.

Kondracke: Just to finish out your relationship, socially you and Lynne [A.] Cheney and Jo Ann Kemp and Jack Kemp got together how often and what did you do together?

Cheney: I can remember going to their house for dinner on a number of occasions, having them over….

Kondracke: Ski trips? Super Bowl?

Cheney: Never skied together and I didn't go to the Super Bowl with him. I took Trent Lott skiing once. He'd never seen snow before in his life. And then we'd have Jack and Joanne [Kemp] over to the house when I was vice president occasionally. Lynne [Cheney], for example, gave a seconding speech for Jack when he ran for vice president. I guess that was the '96 Convention. He asked Lynne to speak on his behalf and she did.

Kondracke: O.K. Let's do things chronologically a little bit. In the Nixon days when you were at OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] and then at the Cost of Living Council do you remember whether Jack Kemp was a backbencher? Of course he came to Congress in 1970. Did he register at all in the Nixon administration? I mean, he was opposed to wage and price controls and he didn't like détente and stuff like that. Did anything sink over at the Nixon White House?

Cheney: Well, I'm sure it probably did but I didn't know Jack in those days. I didn't really begin to deal with the Hill that much until the Ford years. My boss was [Donald H.] Don Rumsfeld. We did wage-price controls and so forth but I didn't have any sort of major

responsibilities on the Hill that would get me engaged with Jack. I knew some of the members—developed relationships with some of the members during that period of time, like Bob Michel, for example, but I didn't really know Jack well in those days.

Kondracke: O.K. Let's go to the Ford years then. So you're deputy White House chief of staff then White House chief of staff. What did the Ford White House and Gerry Ford think about Kemp?

Cheney: Well, Ford had a unique kind of relationship with the House generally, partly because most of them thought of him as good old Gerry. I used to be offended occasionally by the fact that they were so familiar, if you will, with the president, almost as though they knew him too well because he'd been their leader. And they thought of him as Gerry. I always cringed a little bit inside when a member of Congress would call him Gerry instead of Mr. President. I always thought that was an important distinction to make and the title went with the job he now had and that it would have been better if they had treated him and referred to him as the president instead of just Gerry. But he had a broad set of relationships with members on both sides of the aisle. I mean, he was a man of the House. He'd been there 25 years. He was close with people like [Thomas P.] Tip O'Neill [Jr.] and George [H.] Mahon. I'm sure he knew Jack; I don't think it was a specially close relationship. It may have been closer than I was aware of but Ford was very well wired with the power structure on the Hill, as well as some of the younger members. You've got to remember Gerry Ford was a young Turk himself when he overthrew the leadership and got himself elected to replace [Charles A.] Charlie Halleck.

Kondracke: Kemp was critical of the anti-inflation program, the WIN [Whip Inflation Now] program. Especially the tax surcharge fight that he was against. [unclear] Do you remember any of that?

Cheney: Well, we tried to stop the speech.

Kondracke: So tell me about that.

Cheney: What had happened was Rumsfeld and I had been invited to come help with the transition, which we did, starting on August 9th of '74—about 10 days or two weeks. And then he went back to Brussels and I went back to my private sector job. We came back in when [Alexander M.] Al Haig [Jr.] left, about a month—mid-September, I'd say, after the pardon. When we got back there were a number of things already started. One of them was an economic summit with a bunch of people, bringing folks in to talk about the economy, what could be done about the economy. One was what became the WIN speech, the Whip Inflation Now speech. That one was driven primarily by the speech by [Robert T.] Bob Hartmann and his folks. It was a big, long speech that had been written for Ford to deliver to a joint session of Congress. We'd only been back a short period of time when Alan Greenspan, who was then the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, came to see me to express grave concern about this speech. So, I took him in to see Rumsfeld and we persuaded Rumsfeld that it was a bad idea and Rumsfeld went in and saw Ford and tried to convince him not to give the speech.

Kondracke: You thought it was a bad idea, why?

Cheney: It was a terrible speech and it was going to be this deal, he was going to wear this Whip Inflation Now button, red with white letters on it. He went and delivered it, but he only delivered about half of it because it was so long. The second half he took and gave to a convention, the Future Farmers of America, in Kansas City a week or two later. That was the first trip I was in charge of when I went back to work for Ford. It was all built around this concept of whip inflation now but the speech became known as the Lick Your Plate clean speech, which was not a term of praise. That's how we referred to it on the staff. I tell the story in my book about the last day Ford was in office, going back into the Oval Office with him, and he took one last look around and then he went back over to the residence to wait for Carter. I was helping pack up, and opened up one of the desk drawers and it was chock full of Whip Inflation Now buttons that he'd ordered up because he was going to pass them out but they never got passed out. We didn't think much of the speech either. It had been cobbled together on relatively short notice. The White House was still disorganized in those days. You still had some of the old guard, some of the new guard, a lot of the people involved, especially in the speech shop weren't really wired with the policy types. There were some rocky moments in those early months and that was one of them.

Kondracke: As time went on Kemp not only was against that part of the policy but he was also against détente. He thought that [Henry A.] Kissinger was sort of, you know….

Cheney: Yes, sort of the Jesse [A.] Helms [Jr.] view of the world.

Kondracke: Yes, so did that register at the Ford White House, I mean, did you regard him as a kind of a burr to the saddle or did you pay any attention to him?

Cheney: I can remember the debates over détente, but Jack, I think at that stage, would have been one voice among many. It didn't stand out as somebody we really had to focus on. Well, Henry Kissinger was the one who was most directly involved, and Ford basically bought into the Kissinger view of the world in those days. I always remember the battle of the convention over the platform plank that Helms had basically crafted. So Helms is sort of the target to the extent we thought of somebody on the other side who was leading the charge against détente. We tended to think of Helms more than Jack. I think Jack was still pretty junior and relatively new.

Kondracke: Now you would go to this famous 1974 dinner, you and Arthur Laffer and Don Rumsfeld, at the Two Continents restaurant. Tell me what you remember about that whole…how did it happen, what happened there, and what impression did it make on you?

Cheney: Well, the Two Continents was a bar over in the old Hotel Washington right across the street from the Treasury building. As I recall, Laffer was there, and I think Jude Wanniski, and then Don and myself.

Kondracke: How did it come about? How did it get arranged?

Cheney: Well, I knew, Laffer and I had been in the same class at Yale. He graduated; I didn't.

Kondracke: You knew him?

Cheney: I knew of him and he knew of me. Wanniski was a guy I'd gotten to know as well too. He was working for the *Wall Street Journal* in those days. I still see Art from time to time. Wanniski and I eventually came to a parting of the ways and Jude got to be difficult, to put it mildly. He eventually he wrote a book, *The Way the World Works*, which I always thought was a bit presumptuous for somebody to use as a title for their book. But, in those days, we were new, we had economic problems, clearly. There'd been an economic summit but part of that was a reflection of the fact that we were faced with economic difficulties. We were worried about the economy and where it was headed and things like inflation and unemployment, recession and so forth. Some of them, I don't remember whether it was Laffer or Wanniski, anyway, contacted us and wanted to go have a beer because they wanted to talk to us about what became the Laffer Curve. All of this was economic theory of the guy from Canada, [Robert] Mundell. What happened at the restaurant was that Art took out a Sharpie, a black magic marker type implement, and had a white linen napkin off the table where we were sitting, and drew what the first time I ever saw, the so-called Laffer Curve. I think that he claimed that that was the first time he'd drawn the Laffer Curve as well too. It basically conveyed the notion that you could raise taxes to the point where you'd get less revenue, not more. That was the first time I'd sat and listened to Art talk about tax policy. I think they were trying to establish a relationship with the new team in town and we had a good conversation. I wish I'd saved the napkin; I didn't. I don't know what happened to the napkin. Probably it went through the

washing machine at the Hotel Washington. But it was an important meeting. When it came time to deal with economic issues, we had just been through wage-price controls in the last half of the Nixon term. Don had been the chairman of the Cost of Living Council. I'd been the head of operations—I had 3,000 IRS [Internal Revenue Service] agents that I supervised as they tried to enforce wage-price controls. We both thought wage-price controls was a terrible idea, something thought up and implemented by Nixon with a lot of urging from John [B.] Connolly, as I recall, and I think Arthur [F.] Burns was for it too. So we were in search of an economic policy. We ended up, I can remember, flying to Vail at Christmas time in '74. We had a meeting out there with the economic types. [William E.] Bill Simon was there, he was then Treasury secretary.

Kondracke: Greenspan?

Cheney: Greenspan would have been there probably. [James T.] Jim Lynn—I don't' know, I'm guessing. I remember the trip because we were supposed to take a planeload of guys and fly them out and meet with the president and then come back. I had swung by and picked up [Kenneth R.] Ken Cole [Jr.] that morning. Ken was still there, a carryover from the Nixon days. As we pulled into Andrews Air Force Base in the White House limousine, there was the airplane taking off. Left us. I was not a happy camper. I found out later that Bill Simon, when he'd gotten on board, he walked up the steps, got on the airplane and started screaming and yelling, "When I'm on this airplane I'm the senior man present and you pick up that door, close it and move this airplane and get the Hell out of here." And [he] forced the crew to take off and leave us behind. We had to order up another

airplane to get out to Vail for the meeting. That's where we put together the package that I think eventually became part of the State of the Union speech that year.

Kondracke: So, after Laffer explains his theories to you, how close to being a supply-sider were you at that stage?

Cheney: Well, it moved me. I thought it made sense. I didn't have a great economic background. I'd had some undergraduate work in economics in college. One of the things I remember from that period was [Robert D.S.] Bob Novak. A sideline, but Bob came out and covered my first campaign for reelection in Wyoming, this is 1980 and I'm running for Congress. He rode with me from Casper up to Gillette, Wyoming, in the car and was grilling me on the gold standard, how important the gold standard was. This was another thing that Jack was always big on. He kept pushing me and pushing me on the gold standard. I hadn't heard anybody—he wanted to know what my constituents were saying and I said, "Bob, I got to tell you, nobody in Wyoming has ever mentioned the gold standard to me in the time I've been their congressman." And he said, "Yeah, yeah, right, O.K." So we get into the Holiday Inn in Gillette, Wyoming, for a big Republican fundraiser that night and the first guy that comes up to me grabs my hand, Novak's standing right next to me, and asks me about the gold standard. It just blew my mind. It was like it had been a plot that had been all planned. Novak was a big advocate, a big supporter of the Kemp view of the world. And he had some influence as well too. Clearly he had a big impact on me. The notion of supply side ultimately became something that I basically support.

Kondracke: So, Ford in the State of the Union address in 1975, did propose some tax cuts.

Cheney: Yes, but also some budget cuts, as I recall. He offset.

Kondracke: Did you influence that or did supply side economics inform that decision, or was that somewhere else?

Cheney: I'm trying to remember, there was one State of the Union speech that was a disaster. I can't remember—'75 or '76. We ended up in effect with competing drafts. Bob Hartmann was doing one draft and we had another draft. Hartmann didn't work well with the policy types, and when he had a draft speech for the president, he wouldn't let anybody look at it until the president had seen it. Then once the president had seen it he wouldn't let anybody change it, which was a hard thing to do if you were working with the policy types. And we ended up with one, this might have been '76 instead of '75, where we literally had two drafts. I had [David R.] Gergen working for me on the side producing one draft, and then we'd take it back down—I'd take it in to the president and he would make changes in the Hartmann draft and give it back to Hartmann as though it were his own work. But he ended up in this terrible position, which we swore we'd never do again, where you're giving the president competing drafts and he ends up having to be the guy who has to referee that whole fight. That was a terrible waste of his time and a bad way to do business.

Kondracke: So on your thinking about supply-side economics, you had contact with Laffer, and supposedly Wanniski kept firing letters at you all the time.

Cheney: He did. I used to get a lot of stuff from Jude.

Kondracke: So did you talk to Kemp about supply side during those days?

Cheney: Well, certainly I would have heard from Jack when I got to the House in '78. I don't recall. He would have been known as a supply-sider and one of the guys leading the charge, more forward-leaning on it than I was. But I don't have any specific recollection.

Kondracke: Because Kemp-Roth was 1976 and then you ran for the House in 1978 and you remember, [William E.] Bill Brock organized the whole Republican Party, especially all the candidates that were running for Congress in 1978, were running on a platform of Kemp-Roth. So, do you remember whether that played into your campaign at all?

Cheney: I don't.

Kondracke: There's a guy named Brian Domitrovic who's sort of written *the* book on supply-side history, and he says that you told Wanniski, "I'm spreading the word about Kemp-Roth, but you guys better know what you're talking about." Indicating that you'd obviously heard about it and that you were campaigning on it but you were still skeptical about it. Have any recollection of all that?

Cheney: No. I don't question that that's probably an accurate quote. Jude could be a pain in the fanny. He was one of these guys who'd just hammer and hammer and hammer and never have much of a sense of humor about it. Laffer could laugh at it a bit. As I say, I still see Art from time to time when he comes through. But I'm trying to think, Steiger-Hansen, was that on cap gains?

Kondracke: Yes.

Cheney: That had a bigger impact in the sense of something that got done. I'd worked for Bill Steiger and had all the respect in the world for Cliff Hansen, and both of them were on the committee—Steiger on the House and Cliff Hansen in the Senate Finance Committee. And of course, Cliff was our home state senator, and that was adopted during the Carter administration. I think in that session of Congress before I ran for the House. It would have been the same timeframe as they were pushing Kemp-Roth.

Kondracke: But you have no recollection particularly of Kemp-Roth and that whole development?

Cheney: Well, it was around. I mean it was an issue that we talked about and that we liked and so forth, and it gave us something to be for.

Kondracke: Let me just get one other aspect of supply side. On the gold standard, why is it that even though it was part of the basis of supply-side economics it never got anywhere with Reagan, never got

anywhere with either of the [George H.W. or George W.] Bushes. What was wrong with the gold standard as an idea that Republicans would push?

Cheney: I don't think a lot of people understood it. I think the practical aspects of trying to return to the gold standard would have been extraordinarily difficult. I think in part, too, it was wrapped up in the minds of a lot of people with wage-price controls just because Nixon announced them all as a package when he took us off the gold standard and used the authority Congress had given him to establish a wage-price freeze. And I think it was hard for members to sort of separate that out and think about it. It didn't have a champion. As much as I was involved in the wage-price controls, I became a very strong opponent of the whole concept, as did just about everybody involved in that program. I always remember the first meeting [George P.] Schultz called when he was confirmed as Treasury secretary after Connolly left, was to get us together over to his office at Treasury and say, "Okay gentlemen, how are we going to get out of these damn controls?" Because he hated them. I had great respect for him, he was right. But I think to some extent it was wrapped up as part of that whole Nixon initiative.

Kondracke: By the time Reagan gets to office and then you're cutting taxes along the lines of Kemp-Roth, did you regard yourself at that point as a supply-sider, your two years into Congress?

Cheney: Yes, I thought by the time 1980-'81 rolls around we're all Reaganites. I'd been for Gerry Ford four years before, but we're all Reaganites, and most of us are supply-siders, or are comfortable with

that designation or with that label. It's a little bit like being called a neo-con in the Bush administration.

Kondracke: You say in the book that you were quoted in 2003 as saying deficits don't matter. Were you quoted correctly?

Cheney: Well, you've got to put it in context. We had a conversation as I recall. I think it was before 2003, because Paul [H.] O'Neill was part of the conversation and he left after two years. But it was O'Neill and myself and Alan Greenspan. I was trying to make the point that what Reagan had done in his first term was to expand defense spending, increase defense spending significantly and cut taxes at the same time, which led at least in the short term to a bigger deficit. And that in that context the deficit didn't matter. Ron Susskind got O'Neill's notes, I think Paul just gave him all the notes he had, and out of that came the quote Cheney saying deficits don't matter.

Kondracke: That is a classically supply side sort of notion, so does that indicate that you really were a supply sider? Did you ever call yourself a supply sider?

Cheney: Yes.

Kondracke: Okay. '81, everybody is for the '81 tax bill, but then Kemp, you're part of leadership, right? '81?

Cheney: I'm the newly elected Policy chairman, right.

Kondracke: So, then '82 comes along.

Cheney: TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982]?

Kondracke: TEFRA. Reagan's going to pull back on some of the '81 tax cuts. You're part of leadership. You and Lott support the president; Kemp does not. He criticizes this as a tax increase. What did you guys think?

Cheney: Well, that was Jack being Jack. It was, I'm trying to recall the sequence. We did TEFRA. We had to go back and in effect tweak what we'd done previously. And we did it at the request of the president, supported the administration. Bob Michel probably was there as well, and Jack would have been the foremost leader in opposition.

Kondracke: But a member of leadership.

Cheney: Still a member of leadership.

Kondracke: So this is off the reservation.

Cheney: Yes and no. The administration got done what it needed to have done. A few years later Trent and I were off the reservation in the '86 tax package, partly because we hated the bill that the Democrats produced out of Ways and Means, and didn't like the idea that the White House is saying vote for it and we'll clean it up when it gets over to the Republican Senate. We didn't like that. I'd met with [James A. "Jim"] Baker. Baker by then is Treasury secretary, and Jim and I had some pretty intense dust-ups over the tax package, tax

reform. But what Trent and I ended up doing was killing the rule. We snuck up on the White House and didn't tell them what we were doing but we got the votes rounded up and killed the rule. They couldn't bring the bill up. And that's when, as I recall, that's about the time Reagan came to the Hill and spoke to the House Republicans in the Caucus, meeting them over there in Rayburn [House Office Building]. He'd been to the funeral down at Fort Campbell [Kentucky] that morning for the guys in the 101st [Army Airborne Division] who'd been killed in the plane crash coming back from the Sinai. He walked into the room and he talked about sacrifice and patriotism and so forth. Just very moving and emotional off the cuff kind of thing that Reagan could do very effectively.

Kondracke: Silent prayer is bigger than you think.

Cheney: And then, said, "Now gentlemen, about that tax bill." That's all he had to say. I don't think he even knew what was in the bill. But guys were jumping up, Henry [J.] Hyde saying, "I'm with you, Mr. President. You can count on me." He turned around 60-70 votes, took it to the floor and passed the rule. And then passed the bill and sent the whole thing…

Kondracke: Do you remember what Kemp's role in all that was?

Cheney: I don't. I don't. What I remember is the collaboration with Trent. Jack at that stage, I guess he's still Conference chair.

Kondracke: Yes.

Cheney: Some place in there where he stepped down. Must have been, ’80….

Kondracke: He presided over that session.

Cheney: Must have been ’87 when he stepped down from the leadership to run for president.

Kondracke: Right. You continued to oppose the rule, didn’t you, the second time around? I mean, you were one of the people who stuck to your guns.

Cheney: Yes, I didn’t [unclear]. As I recall, I’d have to go check.

Kondracke: I’ve read the history on this, and what’s interesting is that in ’82, Kemp is off the reservation vis-a-vis the White House. In ’86, you’re off the reservation and Kemp is on the reservation because he changed his mind in order to keep tax reform moving along.

Cheney: But my recollection is, and Bob Michel would be the one, maybe even he wouldn’t remember [unclear], but there was a moment on the floor when we had a session with the House Republicans. I think it was like a caucus. What I recall saying, and this was at Bob Michel’s behest, that I told a group that I couldn’t switch; I was too far committed. But I thought it perfectly appropriate if others wanted to switch and then approve the tax package. But again, Michel or somebody would have to confirm that.

Kondracke: When he was Conference chair and you were Policy director, what were your respective jobs? How did you work together? What was your job to do and what was his job to do?

Cheney: The Conference chair presided whenever we had a meeting of the House Republican Conference, which we would do periodically. If there was a big vote coming up or when you were having leadership elections, those kinds of things. Jack would be the guy—Conference chair would. My job as Policy chair—we had a Policy Committee made up of several members of the House and there was a formula for it but it was a broad-based group within the House Republican Conference. We would meet just about weekly and have a session where lots of times we'd put out statements on various policies. We'd bring a draft statement to the Committee and then they would vote on whether or not to approve it. Our role was different. When I took over was at the same time Reagan got elected, so we went from a position where we had Democrats downtown and the Policy Committee was sort of engaged in taking shots at the Carter administration, which is how it worked the first two years I was there. But I wasn't the chairman. I became the chairman in '80 when Reagan came to town, and there we were pretty much most of the time if we issued statements at all, making sure they tracked with the administration. And in fact, reinforcing the administration. It mattered less what we did because the administration was, for the most part, going to set policy and we'd follow that.

Kondracke: You were in the minority in those days even though Reagan was in the White House. How was it operating as a minority

under Tip O'Neill and then [James C.] Jim Wright [Jr.] and then [Thomas S.] Tom Foley?

Cheney: I had the misfortune—all the years I was in the House we were always in the minority. I don't think there was anybody in the Caucus at that stage who'd ever served in the majority in the House of Representatives. Maybe Bob Michel for one term, or something like that. But we had a period of time there at the beginning of the Reagan administration, where the combination of the House Republicans, because we'd picked up some seats in '80, together with the Boll Weevil Democrats—there aren't any left now, but in those days there were probably 30-35 Boll Weevil Democrats, people like [William P.] Phil Gramm was a Democrat. Phil worked with us, supported us, sponsored Gramm-Rudman, took a lot of flack from his own caucus so he resigned as a Democrat, went home and ran for re-election as a Republican and won. So there was a decided difference what it was like those first couple of years with Reagan in town and how that evolved over time. Tip O'Neill was a guy I had a lot of respect for, I really liked the Speaker. My wife and I had written a book about speakers of the House called *Kings of the Hill*. I'd sent him a copy of it as just a courtesy, and one day he sent a page to get me and called me up to the chair. He wanted to talk about the book; he'd read the whole thing, liked it very much. The one part he challenged was that he didn't think we were kind enough to [Samuel T.] Sam Rayburn. He loved Sam Rayburn and thought we should have given Rayburn more credit. But it was a different feel. Now Tom Foley was a good friend, but Tom became speaker right about the time I left to go to the Defense Department. So I can remember Jim Wright was a problem. I had personal difficulties with Jim. I can remember going

back, after I became Secretary of Defense, on the day that Speaker Wright went down into the well of the House and announced his resignation and I didn't want to miss that. I was there to watch.

Kondracke: What was your problem with Jim Wright?

Cheney: He had pulled a stunt on the rules, I can't even remember what the issue was, but in effect what he did was had two legislative days in one. That made it possible to accomplish whatever it was trying to accomplish with the rules and it was a very heavy-handed kind of way to run the place. And I was quoted as saying I thought he was a heavy-handed son of a bitch and that ran in the newspapers. Did not endear me to him, but Bob Michel and I—he at one point he had—I want to be careful here what I say. I don't want to accuse him of something I can't back up. But there were questions about Central American policy and so forth where there were major differences and Speaker Wright didn't have the stature that Tip O'Neill had, for example, and, as I say, Tom Foley I considered a personal friend and got on well with him. In a relatively short period of time my relationship with Speaker Wright had gone sour but that was shortly before I left and went to the Defense Department.

Kondracke: How did Kemp relate to the various Democratic leaders?

Cheney: As far as I know he got along fine with O'Neill. I'm trying to remember when Jack left the House.

Kondracke: He left in '88—he did not run for reelection in '88 because he was running for president. And he left the leadership in '87.

Cheney: Well, he might have been there just for the very beginning of Foley's time. But Tom had good relationships with a wide group of people, and I would assume Jack had a pretty good relationship with him. I don't know what his relationship was with Wright.

Kondracke: Besides your being on the leadership together, you had similar jobs or related jobs on foreign policy. You were on Intelligence. He was first on Defense Appropriations and then he was the ranking member on Foreign Operations, and this was during Contra time and all that.

Cheney: Right. Boland Amendment.

Kondracke: So, what do you remember about collaborating with him on Contra issues, or MX [Missile-eXperimental] missiles or SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative]?

Cheney: Well, Jack would have been supportive of a strong national defense. We never served on a committee together. Because I served on Intelligence and I was on the Interior Committee, and Bob Michel had put me on Intelligence. I served there for the last four years that I was in the House. I don't remember Jack being that active on defense issues. The guy in that group who spent a lot of time on those kinds of issues was Newt. I don't recall in terms of working with Jack—I'm sure he probably made policy speeches at that point and so forth—but I didn't think of him as a leader on those issues. Not that he wasn't actively involved, and he would be. When you get on the Appropriations Committee or Armed Services, and

again I tend to think of it in terms of what it was like after I became Secretary of Defense, and of course by then Jack was at HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development]. He was no longer in the House.

Kondracke: He was a big booster of the Contras, and there was a commission, I think.

Cheney: The Kissinger Commission.

Kondracke: Yes, Kemp was on it. He was partially responsible for funding the Contras, but that doesn't ring any bells?

Cheney: No. We were always a big, strong supporter of the Contras too, as a number of us were. And that was a source of major controversy vis-a-vis the Democrats.

Kondracke: I am going to interview David [R.] Obey, by the way, who was the chairman of Foreign Operations when Jack was the ranking member. What do you remember about the fights on the Contras? Because Obey must have been in the thick of it. I don't have chapter and verse. What do you remember about those times, about fights over the Contras?

Cheney: I'm trying to remember. There's the Boland Amendment. Seems to me Speaker O'Neill had a sister who was a Catholic nun. Do you remember any of that?

Kondracke: Yes.

Cheney: And she'd gotten involved with the pro-Sandinista side. And then [Edward P.] Boland himself was very close to the speaker, as I recall. Eddie Bolland?

Kondracke: Yes, Eddie Boland.

Cheney: And it was a source of considerable controversy. I got involved in it especially because I was the ranking Republican on the Iran-Contra Committee. That came up at the tail end of '86 and then through most of '87 we were doing the investigation of sale of arms to the Iranians and then the funneling of the money back to the Contras and so on. When you talk about that period of time my mind tends to focus in on what we did on that committee on the investigation. But it was a knock-down drag-out fight. I don't have any specific recollection of Jack, I'm sure he was involved, but I don't—

Kondracke: One last question about this aspect. Kemp generally supported Reagan on most foreign policy issues but when he started negotiating with [Mikhail S.] Gorbachev and doing an INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] agreement and that sort of thing, Jack again was off the reservation and was criticizing all that and in fact called for Shultz to be fired as he was going into the '88 campaign. Do you remember any of that?

Cheney: I'm not surprised by it but I don't remember any call for Shultz's firing.

Kondracke: In 1988 it's obvious that he's going to run for president. Did you talk to him about his candidacy?

Cheney: I religiously stayed out of all presidential campaigns that cycle. Rumsfeld was running; Kemp was running; George Bush was running; Al Haig was running; [Robert J.] Bob Dole was running, I mean everybody. Howard [H.] Baker [Jr.], I think, was in it as well too. What I was angling for was to advance up the leadership ladder. And I didn't want to get my leadership aspirations tangled up with somebody else's presidential contest. If I went for Rumsfeld, for example, which based on friendship would have been the direction I probably would have gone on, that could get me crossways with members who were Kemp supporters or Bush supporters. I can remember Barber [B.] Conable [Jr.] having Lynne and I down to dinner at the Watergate with the Bushes one night during that period of time. They were trying to recruit me to sign up and I just refused everybody. What I was trying to do was move into the number two slot without opposition, because by then it was pretty clear that Trent was going to run for the Senate and I wanted to be Bob Michel's successor. The best way for me to do that was to get into the Whip's job, and get positioned to the extent that I could do it without opposition was going to help a lot. Because I went up the leadership ladder—I only had a contest once and that was the first time. Other than that nobody ever ran against me. I wanted to continue that track record so I didn't get involved in any of those, for Jack or anybody else.

Kondracke: Kemp's presidential campaign didn't get very far.

Cheney: Neither did Rumsfeld's.

Kondracke: Right. But the question about Kemp is, I mean you've seen five Republican presidents, and, you know, been intimately involved with at least three of them. Do you think that Kemp was presidential material?

Cheney: I think he could have been. I thought he was a good choice when Dole picked him to be his running mate in '96. That was the first hurdle you had to get over was is this guy up to the task of taking over? And I thought Jack was. I thought he had a broad range of interests. He was a dynamic, charismatic kind of a figure, and I think he would have been a good president.

Kondracke: Sound judgment? Temperament?

Cheney: Well, compared to what? [laughs] Yes, I think good temperament. I think it would have been a sobering experience for him. Jack had strong feelings on some issues, as you mentioned during the course of our interview today, times when he, quote, got off the reservation. I don't know that he would have had the patience for it, because it's very, very hard work. All that stuff that suddenly is on your platter as president of the United States. But I would not have objected to or been concerned about a Jack Kemp presidency. I think he probably would have been pretty good.

Kondracke: So, going into the George Bush presidency, you're Defense secretary, he's HUD secretary. I take it that your fields were

so far distant that you didn't really have much to work on together, did you?

Cheney: No, but there was the standing joke on Jack always was, he had his own foreign policy. He had a broad enough range of interests that I didn't really hear from him much on defense. I remember he and Baker, Jim Baker, getting into it over who was running foreign policy.

Kondracke: Talk about that.

Cheney: Well, the recollection I have in my mind, and you need to check this with somebody else, is going into the Oval Office for a meeting, and, I think it was Baker had come in and said something to Jack—Jack was already there—said something to Jack or something to the president or made some comment on Jack and then left. And Jack went jumping over the furniture trying to get at Baker, following him out down the hallway because—you should call Jim on it. That would be an interesting story to tell.

Kondracke: Let me understand the scene. The scene is the Oval Office.

Cheney: The Oval Office, as I recall.

Kondracke: So was the president there?

Cheney: I think so. Baker could tell you. My recollection was I think that's the way it worked. It ended up with Kemp chasing him.

Kondracke: The president's there, the two of them are in the Oval Office and you come walking in?

Cheney: There may have been some others there too.

Kondracke: Okay. And then, what happened? Baker goes out and Jack chases him?

Cheney: Baker made some comment to Jack and then took off and Jack took umbrage at whatever it was Jim said. I can't even remember what the dispute—something that Jack had done, as I recall, that constituted an infringement on the—

Kondracke: Is this over Israel?

Cheney: It's possible. I can't remember what the subject was. But was Jack jumping over the furniture.

Kondracke: It's interesting: jumping over the furniture, just shoving it out of the way, or what?

Cheney: Yes, trying to catch up with Baker.

Kondracke: And then what happened?

Cheney: I don't know. They disappeared down the hallway. You ought to call Jim and ask him about it.

Kondracke: We will.

Cheney: It might have been Israel. Jack had good, strong ties with the Israeli thing. But as I say, the standing joke was Jack had his own foreign policy. Just tolerated a certain amount of that.

Kondracke: So how much did he pipe in on Cabinet meetings on subjects other than HUD?

Cheney: Well, Jack was never one to avoid comment. He'd speak up whenever he thought he had something to contribute.

[interruption]

We had Cabinet meetings occasionally. Most of the time, for example, in the area of Desert Storm and so forth, we were meeting with the National Security group, and that would not include HUD. We had a lot of meetings sometimes, several times a week when we were dealing with those kinds of crises, but it would be that subgroup of the Cabinet. It wouldn't be the full Cabinet.

Kondracke: We're going to get in trouble with your wife so we better move this along. As time goes on, you've said about the '96 campaign that you were pleased that Kemp—

Cheney: Yes, I thought it was a good choice.

Kondracke: Just looking at that campaign, you've obviously run for vice president twice, successfully, how did you think Kemp performed as a vice presidential candidate?

Cheney: I think he performed okay. My recollection is, I remember going up to see Elizabeth [H.] Dole at one point. She had invited me to stop by. And Rumsfeld was helping out. Rumsfeld and Dole were close. They had offices next to each other when they were both junior House members years before. They talked to me about taking on some kind of role in the campaign, which I didn't want to do. My recollection of it was that it was not that well run a campaign, but I didn't think the problem was Jack so much as it was just the whole operation. Clinton was going to be a tough opponent anyway, as he proved to be. They never really got their act together in terms of having a first-rate national campaign organization.

Kondracke: So, final question. How do you think Jack Kemp ought to be remembered in history?

Cheney: I think very favorably. Jack I would describe as one of the leaders of the Republican Party in the latter part of the 20th century. You'd put him on a short list of people who had a big impact on what we did as a party. Probably about as successful as it's possible to be from the House as a party leader. The House doesn't automatically lend itself, just given its sheer size, to the kind of influence and impact that a president can have, that the national chairman can have. But Jack managed over a long period of time, starting back in the '70s up through the '80s to be a prominent player. Very much a supporter of Ronald Reagan's, and sort of the dominant political mood, if you will,

at the time. And I think he had a big impact on tax policy, one of his favorite issues.

Kondracke: Mr. Vice President, thank you so much for doing this.

Cheney: Good. No, no, happy to do it.

[end of interview]