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Larry King Live

Tip O'Neill on the State of the Union

LARRY KING Host

Guest:
THOMAS P. O'NEILL, Former Speaker of the House

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Tip O'Neill on the State of the Union

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to Larry King Live. Tonight: Mr. Speaker — Tip O'Neill. The Boston Irishman who made a career as the man of the House sets his legendary political sights on the current scene. Now, here's Larry King.

LARRY KING: Good evening. We're back in Washington after last night's town forum in Pittsburgh and a week in Los Angeles. We hope you enjoyed all that programming. We're back in the friendly confines of our studios in America's capital city, the District of Columbia.

A quick note: Tomorrow night we're going to do a major story and program dealing with breast implants, and Wednesday night Cybill Shepherd will be with us.

Sometimes it's hard to believe anyone else could call the House to order. Tip O'Neill no longer makes the trains run on time on Capitol Hill, but he's such an icon — such a symbol of Government for the people — it's as if he still rumbles through those halls. Like Congress itself, the man is hearty, rumpled, entertaining, passionate, and never above a good rhubarb. When President Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom two months ago, he called Tip O'Neill a tough partisan. Far more important, he is a true patriot. He'll be with us for the full hour tonight. We'll be taking your phone calls, if you want to talk with one of the legendary figures in American political history — the Honorable Tip O'Neill.

And on this very auspicious occasion, the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. — I know you knew him.

THOMAS P. O'NEILL, Former Speaker of the House: I remember I was there for the great speech that he made and I'll never forget it, either, because it was a tremendously hot summer's day. And Jim O'Hara from Detroit and Jim Roosevelt, who were members of Congress, got a bus, and about 25 of us went down and we sat right to the left of him as you look up. He came over and shook hands with all of us. I've heard a million speeches in my life and "I Have a Dream" — That was the greatest that I've ever heard. That was a beautiful, beautiful speech.

KING: Were you involved in making his birthday a national holiday?

Mr. O'NEILL: Very, very much so. I was Speaker of the House when that was made and Coretta came in to see me. Now, the question on how we were going to get it made—

KING: By the way, by asking "very involved," sometimes a Speaker can be very involved in something and sometimes he can—

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, I was very involved in this one. The question was— There was no question we could pass the bill. It was how you get the rule onto the floor. If you get the rule to the floor with an open rule, then they could attach all types of amendments around it and it would kill it. If you brought it in with a closed rule that no amendments could be offered to it, which the Rules Committee did at her behest and my behest— It passed and became the legal holiday.

KING: Are you surprised that Arizona as a state still doesn't celebrate it?

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes, I really am, to be perfectly truthful. It's kind of small on their part. I don't think that there's—I don't think it's racial. I think it's stubbornness right now more than anything else. But as a factor for the state, it must be costing them millions of dollars. It's stupid.

KING: Did you watch last night's town meeting?

Mr. O'NEILL: I loved it. I absolutely loved it. I've got to tell you, it brought back memories of me of 40 years ago. Forty years ago, I was speaker of the house in Massachusetts. The telephone rang, I'm in my office, and it's General MacArthur calling from Japan — and I couldn't believe it. Members of the Japanese Diet were in Massachusetts to study democracy and they went to the Boston city council. One of the members of the council, his son had been killed, and he ordered the Japanese Diet members out of the chamber. And they carried a big headline in Japan how they were rebuffed in Boston.

MacArthur called me. He said, "Will you take them into the legislature?" He said, "Would you tell them about town meetings?" So we took them for a week and every day we taught them how you operate a government and how you operate a legislature and how parliamentary procedure worked, and every night we took them to town meetings.

Well, some of them were open town meetings and some of them were those town meetings that members from each precinct—but I had a week with them and I saw town meetings. And it brought me back. There's nothing like the good old town meeting. It originated in Massachusetts. And you did a great job last night.

KING: Thank you.

Mr. O'NEILL: That was a beautiful program.

KING: They get up and sing it out, too.

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes, that was great.

KING: We've got a lot of issues to discuss, but one I wanted to mention to you—

Mr. O'NEILL: Sure.

KING: —because Tip was mentioning to me before we began that he watched Governor and Mrs. Connally and Frank Mankiewicz last week discuss *JFK* and the events of November 22nd, 1963.

And I know that you hold the seat—The seat you held in Congress was the seat that John Fitzgerald Kennedy held. You know him since he was a boy. What do you think happened that day?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, two weeks before he went—

KING: By the way, did you see the movie?

Mr. O'NEILL: No, I haven't seen the movie and, really, I have no desire to see the movie. About two weeks before he went down to Texas I was visiting him and we were talking about the program, how things were going in the House. Things weren't going good in the House, as a matter of fact. He in this conversation said to me, "You know, my nominee—the nominee will be Goldwater and he'd bring us into war." I said, "Jack, what are we in now, Mr. President?" He said, "No, no, I'm going to bring the troops home as soon as the election is over."

KING: He definitely said that?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, no question about it. I put it in my book and, as a matter of fact, there were those people that questioned it. Now they have records where he wrote to the U.N. and they have found records that he intended to do that.

KING: Did you fear his going to Texas?

Mr. O'NEILL: I feared him going to Texas. I said, "It's ridiculous." He said, "I've got to straighten out the party down there." He said, "There's a difference between—" oh, I can't think of the old senator's name—

KING: Yarborough.

Mr. O'NEILL: Yarborough, who was a good friend—

KING: Governor Connally denied that. He said he was there—

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, that's what Jack said to me. The President said to me, "There's problems between Connally and Yarborough," and he said, "I've got

to straighten them out." Well, anyway, I remember the day. Of course, everybody remembers the day and where they were. I was in my office in Boston and Cathy O'Brien, one of the other congressman's secretaries, came running in. She had a word for me. She said, "I heard the President was shot. I can't believe it." I called the *Boston Globe*. I said, "Let me speak to Bob Healy," and the girl said, "Is this you, Tip?" I said, "Yes." She started to cry. She says, "He's dead. He's been shot." And so I'll never forget it.

I always believed the Warren report. I talked to Jerry Ford about it. I talked to Hale Boggs about it. There was no question. One day I said to Hale—I remember reading a piece in the paper they had found a stray bullet. He said, "That's probably so," but he said, "There's no question." He says, "The authenticity of the Warren report is absolutely correct."

Well, a couple of years later, Kenny O'Donnell ran for governor. I was with Eddie McCormick and he—Eddie McCormick defeated him for the nomination quite easily and he had the debt of \$50,000 or \$60,000. Well, I was a fundraiser and I was a leading figure in the party in Boston and Massachusetts in those days. Some of my friends came to me and they said, "Poor Kenny. He owes \$60,000. Can you help him out of the mess?" So we ran a fundraiser, got him off his \$60,000—straightened it out.

That night we went to Jimmy's for supper. Kenny O'Donnell and his wife, Dave Powers and his wife, my Millie, Leo Deal and his wife, and Joe Maloney and his wife. And in the conversation we started to talk about what happened down there in Dallas and Kenny said, "I was in the sixth car with Dave."

KING: He was.

Mr. O'NEILL: And he said, "I'll always remember." He said, "There was a bullet came over the fence. A bullet came over the fence." And Dave said, "I'm absolutely in agreement with you." I said, "You didn't say that in the Warren report." I said, "You didn't say that in the Warren report." I said, "You denied it. You said there was only one bullet." He said, "The FBI came to us. They asked us to tell that story. They didn't want to disrupt the family." I said—

KING: Now wait a minute. If that's true then—

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, no, wait a minute. No, let me tell you the rest of the story. So Dave said, "Absolutely, a bullet came over the fence. The FBI said to us, 'No, you heard echoes. There was only one bullet. And don't upset the family.'" So he said, "I went in and testified." I said, "I never would have testified that way in a million years. I'd have told them what I thought I saw, or what I thought I heard."

Anyway, it gets back—I'm writing the book again and I call Dave on the telephone. I said, "Dave, I'm going to put in my book on the chapter on Kennedy our conversation with Kenny and you. How do you feel about it?" He said, "Tip, I say the same thing today I said that night. That's in opposition to what I said to the FBI. No question I heard a bullet shot over the—"

KING: Then why don't you want to—

Mr. O'NEILL: So from that time on, I always believed that there was a conspiracy and I always believed that there was somebody else—

KING: Then why don't you want to see the movie?

Mr. O'NEILL:—and, as a matter of fact, Congressman Stokes did a pretty good job.

KING: You appointed that committee, right?

Mr. O'NEILL: I did. I appointed it.

KING: Stokes headed it.

Mr. O'NEILL: That's right.

KING: Stokes now has said, "Let's release all the materials." Do you agree

with that?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, I'm for that. I'm for that.

KING: All right. Why don't you go see the movie?

Mr. O'NEILL: I just—You know, every time I see on television the President getting hit I get sick. I had a love and an affection for the man and I—

KING: So you can't go emotionally?

Mr. O'NEILL: I just can't—I just, really, I can't go emotionally.

KING: You believe there was a plot?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, there's no question that he didn't do it by himself in my opinion.

KING: We'll get a break and come back and talk politics with Tip O'Neill, and then take your phone calls. He's with us for the full hour. This is Larry King Live. Don't go away.

(Commercial break)

KING: This is Larry King Live in Washington. Our guest for the full hour is Tip O'Neill. In a little while, we'll be going to your phone calls.

OK, a new poll, CBS poll, out today said Bush's approval rating—President Bush's approval rating—is at 45 percent; an unnamed Democrat would beat him, but named Democrats still lose. How do you assess the presidential picture today?

Mr. O'NEILL: I'd say since they started polling back in the 40's I've been an avid poller myself. I go to Chicago. I go to Denver. I ask the taxicab driver; I ask the waiter; I ask the elevator operator; I ask—

KING: The O'Neill poll.

Mr. O'NEILL: The O'Neill poll. I'm in Boston the other day. I said to a taxicab driver, "What do you hear?" See, you don't want to ask him his opinion. You want to know what he hears. He said, "If the election were tomorrow," he said, "Bush couldn't win."

KING: Couldn't win?

Mr. O'NEILL: Couldn't win. And he said—

KING: Against anybody?

Mr. O'NEILL:—he said, "Everybody that gets into my cab—whether they come from Chicago, Indianapolis, no matter where they come from—I always ask them." He said, "It's a conversation piece." He said, "The President couldn't win." Well, that's one cab driver and I've asked probably—

KING: But that is not what you would have heard a year ago.

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, my golly, after all, you've got to think that just a year ago this time at the end of the Persian Gulf he was 78 percent. We couldn't get anybody even thinking of running against him.

KING: Do you think he's beatable?

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes, he's beatable, and he's beatable—

KING: Not by any candidate, though?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, he could be beaten by any candidate if it were immediately. He's got to straighten things out. I used to call it the "belly issue." People call it the "pocketbook issue." It's the same thing: How's everything going? You know, there's no confidence in the American people today. You need a new refrigerator? You're not going to buy a new refrigerator. "The fellow next door lost his job. We can't afford it. We've got to hold on." A new car—

KING: Why aren't they? It's befuddling a lot of people. Why aren't they buying the refrigerator?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, because—

KING: They don't have faith?

Mr. O'NEILL: Because they haven't got any faith. They've lost confidence.

KING: And what did that?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, it's a combination of things that did it, as I analyze it. The President did a magnificent job on foreign affairs on the Persian Gulf. I remember I was in the hospital and he called me. It was six days before the war. And I said, "I want you to know, Mr. President, as a Democrat I'm with you. I think you're doing the right thing." I said, "I just think it's great the way you put the United Nations together — all of them." I said, "I'm a firm believer in the United Nations. They've put out so many squalls around the world. They've fed the hunger. They've done so much good and they don't get credit for it." And I said, "If you don't go in after putting the United Nations on the line the way you have, it's the end of the United Nations—"

KING: No, but what—

Mr. O'NEILL: "—and I just think it's wrong."

KING: The question was what went wrong with the way we—

Mr. O'NEILL: What went wrong was everybody was jubilant. Everybody was happy. He closed the gates and he—or he opened the gates and he allowed them to escape. A year later now, Saddam is in as good shape as he was before we went there. He has no problems.

KING: Well, he's gotten a pretty beat-up country.

Mr. O'NEILL: He's got—it's easier to straighten out a beat-up country than it is to straighten the economy of a nation. And they're thinking, "Well, you know, here we are with Hussein — Hussein, Saddam — whom we didn't go after, and at the same time we should have been doing something in the USSR with the 12 countries over there. We were paying attention for a period of time when we should have been looking at Russia, and we should have been looking at the economy at home."

The man appears to the public that he has no concern and no care of what is happening domestically. Now, he's a beautiful guy — let me tell you that — and he's got an awful lot of friends out there, but right now the economy is so bad and he's got so many problems—He's got to make sure that that Russian situation is straightened out; that it just doesn't fall apart over there. And only America, as the leader, is the one that can keep on top of that.

KING: You know New Hampshire.

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes, I know New Hampshire, sure.

KING: I know. What will Buchanan do there? How will he do?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, I just think, the way it's going, that Pat's going to get somewhere between 30 and 40 percent.

KING: Would that be regarded as—

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, yes, that— Well, it'll be a slap in the face to the President.

KING: If he gets over 30?

Mr. O'NEILL: If he gets over 30, yes. It'll be a slap in the face for—

KING: Who's going to win the Democratic?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, the newspapers, of course, want Clinton. Now, I've talked to people that have been up there — Boston writers and Boston pollsters—

KING: What do you hear?

Mr. O'NEILL: —and friends, and they say, "Watch out for the Tsongas vote up there." Tsongas lives in Lowell and, of course, if you're from California you don't realize that it's a border town.

KING: But that would be a surprise—

Mr. O'NEILL: In Lowell, Tsongas is quite a power up there. To most of the people in Iowa or Alaska, they don't realize that Lowell is the next town and the Lowell Sun — that he's been the darling of the Lowell Sun through his political career; that the people in southern New Hampshire read it and he's

an institution up there. I'll be surprised if he doesn't run nip-and-tuck with Clinton.

KING: Were you sad that Cuomo did not get in?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, absolutely. I was a Cuomo man all the way. Would have been the greatest thing that could have happened to the nation. You would have had a man who could really talk the philosophy of our Government, who is a true Democrat, who handles the microphone, who handles the media. It would have been a beautiful thing for the nation.

KING: We'll be right back with former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill — more questions, a lot of phone calls. Don't go away.

President GEORGE BUSH. (*Dover, New Hampshire; January 15, 1992*)
If I'd have listened to the leader of the United States Senate, George Mitchell, Saddam Hussein would be in Saudi Arabia and you'd be paying 20 bucks a gallon for gasoline. Now, try that one on for size! (*Applause*)
I'm getting sick and tired — I am — every single night hearing one of these carrying little liberal Democrats jumping all over my you-know-what — and I can't wait for this campaign! (*Applause*)

(*Commercial break*)

KING: Our guest — former Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill. In a little while, we'll be going to your phone calls.

What do you think of Governor Clinton?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, the only time I ever met Clinton, I was chairman of the '80 convention and the day after the convention you have a kickoff dinner, and he was the principal speaker. He was governor at that particular time, and he was an amazing speaker. That's the only time I ever met him. He got defeated two years later and then, of course, he came back.

I recall him as an eloquent orator. He's not a Tip O'Neill Democrat, if you want to know the truth, you know, because I'm the old-fashioned type. I'm a Tom Harkin man, to be perfectly truthful, and—

KING: You'd like Harkin—

Mr. O'NEILL: I like Harkin. As I analyze Harkin — and I'm talking with the people from New Hampshire — he's not going to do as well as he should have done up there. When Cuomo made his announcement he took a 10-day vacation. He should have moved right into New Hampshire and he should have got that vote that Cuomo was going to get.

KING: Is Clinton going to be the nominee?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, the newspapers want him. He's a front-runner right now.

KING: Well, you keep saying that. Why do you think that is?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, I don't understand it, but he is— Apparently, he's got quite a bit of money and there's no question that Kerrey is coming along, but if you would ask me—

KING: Right now—

Mr. O'NEILL: —you know, I'd have to say Clinton. But it's an off-the-cuff guess.

KING: The story on Vice President Quayle in the *Washington Post*, which everyone was expecting to be an attack, turned out to be rather favorable.

Mr. O'NEILL: (*Laughs*) It sure did.

KING: By two tough writers. Has Quayle moved up in your estimation?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well—

KING: Come on—

Mr. O'NEILL: —he's a hell of a golfer. If you saw him in the Hope yesterday — He can really hit a golf ball.

KING: Maybe the best that ever served—

Mr. O'NEILL: He's a very personable fellow and I think he's grown through

the years. Should I say, as ne presidential timbre? Not in the eyes of the American people, he's not presidential timbre. Would he ever be President? You can't tell that, but I would say that he's got a long tough road ahead of him.

KING: The Supreme Court is going to decide maybe tomorrow whether to hear the Pennsylvania law which could bring *Roe versus Wade* back into the court. They're expected to throw *Roe versus Wade* out. Is that going to be a big issue?

Mr. O'NEILL: It's always a 3-percent issue.

KING: Meaning?

Mr. O'NEILL: Meaning that no matter where you go—Isolated issues of that type are what we look at in the state. That's a 3-percent issue. A 3-percent issue can reelect you or it can defeat you. It defeated John Culver [ap?] in Iowa. It defeated the fellow that took his place afterwards, because it turned out to be about a 5-percent issue there. In an election for the presidency of the United States that's really close, it's a factor. But there are other issues, too, that are 3-percent issues along the line.

KING: Congressional limitations—The public seems to favor it.

Mr. O'NEILL: No question about it—the worst thing that we could absolutely do. You wouldn't elect a president of a company, you wouldn't put a man on the board and knock him off in eight years. Just when they're learning the ropes, when they're learning what the nation's all about, when they're learning the problems that come before their committee, you're going to remove them?

I have been 50 years in public life—seen this country in so many storms—and I'm telling you, when there's a storm out there I want an old oak, not a young sapling that'll wane in the breeze. I think it's the worst thing, but 30 years ago we went through the same thing.

KING: How many recessions have you lived through?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, the nation's been through 40 recessions, you know.

KING: As a nation.

Mr. O'NEILL: As a nation, and, well, of course I was in the great recession and we had a recession under Eisenhower. We had a recession under Jack Kennedy. I probably lived through six or seven.

KING: This one's lasting longer, though, isn't it?

Mr. O'NEILL: No, nothing like the '30 recession—

KING: Oh, of course, but that was the Depression.

Mr. O'NEILL: That was the Depression. Yes, this is a—And how are you going to turn it around? You're going to turn it around only when there's confidence in the American people.

KING: How is your health?

Mr. O'NEILL: My health is pretty good. I've got a bit of a dry mouth. I took radiation all summer.

KING: For cancer?

Mr. O'NEILL: For cancer.

KING: Did it lick it?

Mr. O'NEILL: And the doctor told me only the other day—yes, Friday—he said, "You're not going to die of cancer." Makes me feel pretty good. *[laughs]*

KING: Yes. How old are you now, Tip?

Mr. O'NEILL: I'll be 80 my next birthday in December.

KING: Do you miss the hunt?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, say, I'm enjoying myself, you know. I do a little writing, do a little advertising—

KING: I've seen.

Mr. O'NEILL:—did a program for the *Christian Science Monitor*, do some writing. I'll be at Washington and Lee University March 6th and the University of Pittsburgh March 16th—probably make 10 or 12 speeches in the course of the year. I'm enjoying myself. I keep my mind active. That's the most important thing.

KING: You probably also have, frankly, more money than you've ever had in your life.

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, no question about that. It's unbelievable.

KING: Isn't that a little strange, to have it at 80?

Mr. O'NEILL: *[laughs]* My wife was quite upset with me when she saw the last ad I did, to be perfectly truthful. I said, "Honey, you weren't upset when you put the check in the bank." *[laughs]* Millie, my wife—Millie will be very much upset when I get home for having mentioned that.

KING: You don't feel you're lowering yourself doing commercials?

Mr. O'NEILL: I've got a new career out there. No, it's a new career.

KING: Hey! It's American!
Mr. O'NEILL: Absolutely. I've done about 10 of them and I've enjoyed them.

KING: Let's take some calls for Tip O'Neil.

Rye, New York, hello.

1st CALLER: *[Rye, New York]* Mr. O'Neil, I've admired you for a long time. I miss you. You're a colorful man, but you sound like a man of integrity. I wish you well in your retirement.

Mr. O'NEILL: Thank you.

1st CALLER: I want to ask you a question. The Democrats have been out now for two Presidents. They were defeated by men who really did not have a great history of lawmaking or—

KING: What's the question?

1st CALLER: The question is the Democrats have lost the labor vote, they've lost the South, they've lost the religious right. What are you going to have to do to get that back, to get back in the White House?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, you know, everything you've said is absolutely true. That's an amazing thing. People say to me, "What's happened to the Democrats?" and I say, well, of course, we have 268 members in the House, a big plurality. We've got 57 senators, or 58 senators—big plurality. Twenty-eight of the governors—a big plurality. We control—I think it's 32 of the legislatures—

KING: You just don't win the presidency.

Mr. O'NEILL: But we still don't win the presidency. When I was Speaker of the House—and I would say every speaker along, and whether you're the President of the Senate or Speaker of the House—you're more interested—and the Democrats have always been more interested—in seeing that they control the Congress, seeing that they control the Senate.

KING: Let me get a break. We'll pick right up on that. Our guest is the Speaker of the House—the former, the always Speaker—Tip O'Neil. Speaker Foley would agree immediately. Don't go away.

[Commercial break]

KING: Our guest, the Honorable Tip O'Neil—the winner of a freedom award from President Bush—the former Speaker of the House.

And we go back to the calls. Charleston, West Virginia, hello.

2nd CALLER: *[Charleston, West Virginia]* Mr. O'Neil, it's a pleasure speaking with you. Do you think that Mr. Bush will begin a new war with Iraq for political reasons?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, no, I don't believe that at all. As a matter of fact, I think

he made a mistake in Iraq — and I was with him all the way. I just don't think he should have closed the doors. I think he should have trapped the army and broken the spirit of Iraq. Saddam today is the leader of the nation and I don't think anybody is going to take him out from within, which everybody seems to be hoping for.

KING: You think he stopped the war too soon?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, I think he stopped the war too soon, sure. I think they would have surrendered en masse, had he not given them the out to escape.

KING: To Gambrells, Maryland — Hello.

3rd CALLER: [Gambrells, Maryland] Hello. Let's have some more town meetings there, Larry.

KING: Thank you.

3rd CALLER: Mr. Speaker, you weren't the only member of Capitol Hill that Kennedy said he was going to withdraw from Vietnam. How do you answer the historians who say now that there is no historical evidence that he was withdrawing and that it was a gimmick or a public relations ploy?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, that's very interesting. Most of them have turned around on that subject. I recall when my book first came out four years ago there was quite a do about it and they said, "Well, we don't find any evidence of Tip O'Neill — Why would he in a conversation with Tip bring up something of that nature and talk about that?" but we had been talking about the Goldwater campaign and he had already made an agreement with Goldwater that they would debate around the nation. And he said to me, "You know, Tip," he says, "no question," he says, "he'll have us in war and—"

KING: Turned out he won and—

Mr. O'NEILL: Well—

KING: What was that old joke? They said, if you voted for Goldwater we'd be in war. We voted for Goldwater and we went to war.

Mr. O'NEILL: That's right. We voted— We didn't vote for Goldwater. We went to war. [Laughs]

KING: He was going to debate Goldwater around the country?

Mr. O'NEILL: Around the country. They had already agreed on it.

KING: That's a great idea—

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes.

KING: Boy, wouldn't that be nice, to see that again?

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes, it would have been.

KING: To have all future—

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, you know, Goldwater and Jack Kennedy, and Goldwater and most of the people on the Hill— He was a very friendly sort of a fellow.

KING: Yes.

Mr. O'NEILL: He got along with everybody, you know—

KING: But I mean, to see the—

Mr. O'NEILL: There was no animosity because of political philosophy.

KING: Wouldn't it be nice if we had had debates?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, it would be great.

KING: Yes. Winterville, hello.

4th CALLER: [Winterville, Georgia] Mr. O'Neill?

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes.

4th CALLER: How would you suggest that ordinary voters go about regaining control of Congress from special interest groups?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, you know, you have something there, as a matter of fact. I don't like the PAC's. I just think that they go too far. I would limit the amount of money that you would be able to collect from a PAC. I think

it's a wrong when a man in Congress or a woman in Congress can raise anything over a half a million, \$600,000. If you're going to run for public office, you know, it's all right to have the issues and it's all right to have the organization, but if you haven't got the money don't bother to run—

KING: Did you get a lot of PAC money?

Mr. O'NEILL: —and who is going to run against a fellow that has a million dollars or \$600,000 or \$800,000? I think we ought to restrict— When we wrote the original act in 1976, it was a good act. But as you will recall the Heinz-Green Senate fight, Heinz spent \$9 million of his own money and Green went to court with it, but the Supreme Court — going all the way to the Supreme Court — the Supreme Court ruled that a man could spend as much money of his own as he wanted to, and so we made the limitation which we originally had on the original bill. You could spend "X" amount of money plus the number of votes that was cast in your district. It made it moot. And so it opened it up now and you can just spend as much money as you want. But somewhere along the line we ought to be able to straighten that out.

KING: Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, for Tip O'Neill. Hello.

5th CALLER: [Palm Beach Gardens, Florida] Hello, Tip. This is George Gilligan from Palm Beach Gardens. I'm retired and I just wanted to say that you give the term "politician" — like Harry Truman — class. Also, I want to tell you that—

Mr. O'NEILL: [Laughs] Good ol' Harry! I loved him.

5th CALLER: —I think you have beautiful gray hair.

Mr. O'NEILL: Thank you.

5th CALLER: Now, what do you think of George Bush's trip to Japan? What do you think of his handling of the event?

KING: OK, Tip?

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, I think it was a complete disaster — to go over there with a tin cup and our hat in our hand and kowtow to them. It was just the wrong thing to do and whoever talked him into it — politically I think it was a mistake that he made.

KING: Wrong to take the executives, too?

Mr. O'NEILL: Very interestingly, years ago I visited Australia. The Prime Minister of Australia said to me, "You're the ranking office-holder, legislative office-holder, ever to visit Australia." And he said, "You know, you know nothing," he says, "about the Pacific. The Mediterranean was the ocean of the past," he says, "the Atlantic is the ocean of today, and the Pacific is the ocean of tomorrow." We've been your ally through the years. You know nothing," he said, "about Australia. You know nothing about Japan." He said, "You know very little about China." He said, "You don't realize," he said, "that the Japanese," he said, "go to school," he said, "ten hours a day; that they have 240 days a year; they go 40 or 60 more than you do — how hard they work, how industrious they are." And he said, "You don't appreciate—" and the truth of the matter is, I guess we didn't appreciate.

KING: We're going to have a State of the Union message a week from Tuesday. You'll see it, naturally, on CNN. During that message, by the way, we used to watch you all the time. You'd sit behind President Reagan—

Mr. O'NEILL: Beside Bush. [Laughs]

KING: Beside Mr. Bush— applaud. You'd applaud, even when you didn't agree, right? What's the pro forma regulation on that? Are you supposed to clap?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, sure.

KING: The Speaker must clap?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, sure. As a matter of fact, at 6:00 at night the speeches are already— are in the hands of the members of Congress.

KING: Everyone there knows what he's going to say?
Mr. O'NEILL: You'll see some of them follow him. But some places they will have on the Republican side "The leadership applauds," "Applause."
KING: The leadership will write that down?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, the leadership will tip it off.
KING: This is good. Take us into the inside here.

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, sure, absolutely — many and many and many and many and many a time. I remember one day when Reagan was speaking and we had read the speech before, and I forget what the cue line was. And I said, "When the cue line arises," I said, "I'm going to stand and I want every Democrat to stand." And we gave him one heck of a hand and he looked at it in absolute amazement. [laughs] And the Republicans — The nation gets kind of a kick out of it.

KING: So this is a bit of a show?
Mr. O'NEILL: Sure, it's a show.

KING: Are you expecting a big moment for George Bush next Tuesday?
Mr. O'NEILL: Well, it's going to have to be —

KING: Will he turn this around?
Mr. O'NEILL: It's going to have to be the thing for him that's going to bail him out. I think he's been too relaxed and waiting too long to come out with some type of a program that the American people are waiting for. You've got to change the country's feeling. There's a negative feeling. There's no consumer buying. And you've got to show leadership. Now, I don't know what kind of a program he's got. I mean, is he going to come out with a hit-and-miss? He just can't keep going the route that he's going —

KING: Are we going to have —
Mr. O'NEILL: —of vetoing everything that the House sends up to him.

KING: Do you think we'll have some form of national health insurance?
Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, it's going to be a hard program. It's going to be debated.

There's no question that if he —

KING: Is he going to propose one?
Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, he will propose one, but I don't think that the American public will buy the one that he would buy.

As a matter of fact, if I were President of the United States the first thing I would say in there is that I want to — "We have made an agreement that we're not going to break — to bust the budget. I'm asking you right now to appropriate \$40 billion to send back to the cities and the states to stimulate the economy and move America." And then I would say, "We will get that down the road some way on a tax, or some way by cutting," or I would say, "Right now, I say to you we'll cut 15 percent of the military budget, which is around \$300 billion, and you get 40 or 60 billion dollars —"
KING: That's a classic liberal proposal.

Mr. O'NEILL: A classic liberal — that's what I am — a classic liberal proposal —

KING: So why shouldn't he make it?
Mr. O'NEILL: Well, let me tell you something. In the 60's, through '68, the businessmen of America never did better as they did under the Democratic Presidents. That was the history of that.

KING: Probably the best under the Kennedy Administration, right? You know, when they turned it around in '63 —

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, they did well under — Well, it was a bit of a recession in there —

KING: But in '63 —
Mr. O'NEILL: —and then he came in with that tax bill, you know, giving

money back, which stimulated the economy.

KING: We'll be right back with Tip O'Neill and more of your phone calls on Larry King Live. Tomorrow night, a major discussion on breast implants; Cybill Shepherd on Wednesday. Don't go away.
[Commercial break]

KING: This is Larry King, with Tip O'Neill.

Are we also going to see a tax cut from the President — a proposal of a tax cut for the middle class?
Mr. O'NEILL: Well, I would probably say he'd go for the capital gains tax.

As a matter of fact —
KING: Would you go for that?

Mr. O'NEILL: —I'm for the capital gains tax. I have my own tax program. I've talked to Dan Rostenkowski. I've talked to Tom Foley. I talked with George Bush about it one day. Maybe — I don't think any of them ever remember me talking to them about it, but I believe in a capital gains tax for about three years —

KING: A cut.
Mr. O'NEILL: A cut. I believe that business — We took business from 70 percent and brought them down to 32 percent, and what do they do? They just are looking at the quarterly profits. They merged and things like that. It's just — It's just sad. But I would increase business. I would increase — put a tax on the wealthy of America and I'd put a reduction on middle-class America. But I'd give them a capital gains. I think that the other two taxes would even —

KING: You'd increase taxes on who? People over \$200,000 a year?
Mr. O'NEILL: No, I'd increase them over \$100,000 a year. But I think that would balance out the loss that you'll take of capital gains.

KING: Montreal, hello.
6th CALLER: [Montreal, Quebec, Canada] Good evening, gentlemen. Larry, thanks for an ACE award-winning evening last night. Enjoyed it immensely.

KING: Thank you.
6th CALLER: Mr. Speaker —
Mr. O'NEILL: Yes.

6th CALLER: —I'm a Democrat and, with all due respect to Mr. Bush, next Tuesday isn't it going to be somewhat difficult to try to allocate monies — be it education, health, or what-have-you — when you're working with a \$4 trillion deficit and the cupboard is bare? So I mean, how much manipulating can you do in order to —
KING: Yes, I think it's \$3 trillion — but we don't have the money, is what he's saying.

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, of course we don't have the money. I understand that. But we have the money for S&L, don't we? We have the money for S&L, why can't we bring out something and say, hey, we're going to raise it? We're going to raise it by future cuts. You've got problems out there of education. You've got problems out there of job training. You've got problems out there of the economy. And how are you going to do it? You're going to — The main thing that you're going to do over a period of years is you're going to cut the military budget a couple of hundred million. You cut \$40 million this year and then after you get that figure down there you give them the increase of the inflation, but you don't go wild, and over a period of five or six years you'd be saving a couple of hundred million.

KING: When you cut the military budget, people get out of work — right? — people who were —

Mr. O'NEILL: Why, certainly, I understand that. But they'll generate new

jobs along the line. You'll stimulate some progress in the country.

KING: Do you favor some work programs to redo the highways?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, no question. We've got to restructure. The bridges of America are an absolute disgrace. When I was Speaker of the House I remember Jim Howard coming out and saying 106,000 — 106,000 — bridges were in jeopardy. Just imagine how many jobs that would be, alone. And our original bill was — what? Our road bill — It's got to be 40 or 50 years old. We need restructuring.

KING: The longer we wait, the worse it is.

Mr. O'NEILL: The infrastructure of the country — Look what happened down here in Washington the other day — that pipe was so old and so rusted. You need new water systems, you need new sewer systems, and it's going to cost more money if you don't do them now.

KING: Chicago, hello.

7th CALLER: *[Chicago, Illinois]* Good evening, gentlemen.

KING: Hi.

7th CALLER: Tip, you're a credit to the Irish race. We love you here in Chicago.

Mr. O'NEILL: Thank you.

7th CALLER: You tell a great story about Henry Ford's visit back to Ireland.

Mr. O'NEILL: Right.

7th CALLER: Would you tell America that story about his first trip back there when he made all the money to the hospital?

Mr. O'NEILL: What about it, Larry? *[Laughs]*

KING: All right, we'll do that. We'll take a break and come back and hear the Henry Ford Ireland story from "the Tipper." Don't go away.

[Commercial break]

KING: Our guest — Tip O'Neill.

OK, the Henry Ford story.

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, in 1956, I was appointed by Sam Rayburn to go to Ireland to the dedication of the statue of John Barry *[sp?]*. Now if you went to a parochial school like I did, you know that John Barry is the father of the American Navy. If you went to a public school, you probably believe that John Paul Jones was the father of the American Navy.

KING: Yes.

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, we went over — Millie and I — and we landed in Dublin and it was about five days before the dedication. The State Department said, "What would you like to do?" I said, "I'd like to go down around Cork City, where my grand-people had come from, and see if I can locate some relatives or something." And so we drove down and we stopped, of course, to kiss the blarney stone. And the driver — We saw the bells of Shannon and rang the bells of Shannon.

And the driver was taking us around the countryside and he stopped the car and he said, "That's our local hospital." Well, I said, "What's so interesting about that? Every community has a hospital." He says: In 1929, Henry Ford came to Ireland. His first visit, he's in a hotel — knock at the door, a group of men, and they said, "Mr. Ford, we want to welcome you to Cork City — the home of your mother and father — your first visit. We're building a hospital and we thought perhaps, in memory of your mother and dad, you'd like to make a donation," and very graciously Ford sat down and he wrote out a check for \$5,000 and he gave it to them.

The following day the *Cork Courier* came out — blazing headline that said, "Henry Ford donates \$50,000 to hospital." That afternoon — knock at the door, the same group of men. They came in. They said, "Mr. Ford, we're

grateful for the \$5,000. We're sorry about the mistake that the newspaper made, but tomorrow they'll make a correction," and Ford said, "Give me my check back." So they gave him his check and he tore it up and he said, "What does it cost to build a hospital?" and they said, "Fifty thousand dollars," and he sat down and he wrote a check out for \$50,000." He says, "Here, have this in memory of my mother and father, on one condition — and those Irishmen didn't care what the condition was. He says, "Over the portals of the hospital I want the inscription that I have in mind." "What is it, Mr. Ford?" "And the inscription reads: I came among you and you took me in." *[Laughs]*

KING: *[Laughs]* That is great.

Mr. O'NEILL: So when I get a nice warm welcome somewhere, I tell them the Henry Ford story and say, "I'm very grateful. I came among you and you took me in."

KING: That is a great, great —

Mr. O'NEILL: That was a good — The driver told me that story and that was in 1956 I first heard that story.

KING: Do you ever talk to President Reagan?

Mr. O'NEILL: Once in a while. You know, not too long ago I was in the hospital — had pneumonia — and the telephone rang and it's the President. He said, "Tip — I said, 'Who's this?' He says, 'This is the President.'" I said, "How are you, Ron? Nice to talk to you." "Fine. Well," he said, "I'm here with Nancy and she just saw in the paper that you were in the hospital and she said to give you a call," and he said, "I put it through the White House switchboard," and he says they got me and he says, "We're going out horse-back riding." And I got along and said "Hello" to Nancy. And I probably have talked to them about three times.

You know, one of the questions when I'm on the speaking tour: "How did you and Reagan get along?" I say, "After 6:00, we'd get along beautifully." Our philosophies were so different — but we never let that bother us.

KING: No.

Mr. O'NEILL: And he's a great storyteller and I enjoyed his company.

KING: We'll be back with our remaining moments with a man we always enjoy — the pleasure of his company — Tip O'Neill. Don't go away.

[Commercial break]

8th CALLER: *[Philadelphia, Pennsylvania]* Hello, Mr. Speaker.

With the long history of brokered conventions in the Democrat Party, I was wondering if you were ever approached, either privately or publicly, to appear on the Harold Stern show?

KING: Do you have any idea who that is?

Mr. O'NEILL: No.

KING: No? I don't either, sir. Sorry, we can't help you.

Winchester, Massachusetts, hello.

9th CALLER: *[Winchester, Massachusetts]* Hi, Tip. How are you tonight? Hello?

Mr. O'NEILL: Hello.

9th CALLER: Yes, Tip?

Mr. O'NEILL: Yes?

9th CALLER: How do you think the Red Sox are going to do this year?

KING: The Red Sox!

Mr. O'NEILL: Well, they're going all the way this year. We just got Viola and Clements is in good shape. I saw him hitting the golf ball in the Hope yesterday. No question.

KING: No question?

Mr. O'NEILL: No. As a matter of fact, I'll be 80 years old and I saw my first

ball game in 1920 and they've been disappointing me all through the years. This is our year.

KING: This is the year?
Mr. O'NEILL: This is the year.

KING: Super Bowl, Tip — Who wins it?

Mr. O'NEILL: Oh, Washington wins it. You know, I saw the last game the Boston Redskins ever played — 1934, '35, something like that —

KING: They were the Boston Redskins — right.

Mr. O'NEILL: — and the final game of the year was very interesting. The bleacher seats were 50 cents and the other seats — the grandstand seats — were a dollar and a half. And Marshall went up in the price of the bleacher seats to \$1.00 and the other seats to \$2.50 —

KING: George Marshall.

Mr. O'NEILL: — and 8,000 people crashed in and refused to pay. Now, this is in the height of the Depression, of course. And he took the club out and he played for the championship the following week in Brooklyn and he drew about 3,000 people, and then he took the Redskins down here around 1935 or something like that. I've followed them all through the years. Gee, they had a great team back in 1934 and '35.

KING: Well, how about this year?

Mr. O'NEILL: This year, I think it's the greatest Redskins team I have ever seen. I just think they're marvelous.

KING: So they will beat Buffalo Sunday?

Mr. O'NEILL: No question in my mind.

KING: Always great seeing you, Tip.

Mr. O'NEILL: Delighted.

KING: Have a great winter.

Mr. O'NEILL: Thank you, Larry.

KING: We'll call on you often — and long life.

Mr. O'NEILL: Thank you.

KING: Tip O'Neill, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives. We hope you enjoyed that as much as we did in having him with us.

We'll be with you on the radio on *The Larry King Show* in one hour. Tomorrow night, a major discussion on breast implants — those for, those against. It'll be lively. On Wednesday night, Cybill Shepherd will join us.

Bernard Shaw is right here in Washington. He's going to anchor the news at the top of the hour with a big special coming at the bottom of the hour.

From Tip and I, Bernie, what's up?

BERNARD SHAW, "WorldNews": Larry, Tip, thanks for joining us.

Coming up on *WorldNews*: There is word President Bush will limit federal regulations to help boost the economy. Remarks by Japan's Prime Minister are generating lots of controversy over exactly what was accomplished in those trade talks with the United States. And in our second half-hour, we'll look at reputed Mob boss John Gotti whose federal racketeering trial begins tomorrow. *WorldNews* begins right after this.

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