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# MEET THE PRESS

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*Produced by* LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

*Guest* SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY (D., N.Y.)

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*Panel:*

DOUGLAS KIKER, *NBC News*  
ROBERT NOVAK, *Chicago Sun-Times*  
CLAUDE SITTON, *New York Times*  
LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK, *Permanent Panel Member*

*Moderator:*

EDWIN NEWMAN

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## MEET THE PRESS

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**MR. NEWMAN:** Our guest today on MEET THE PRESS is Senator Robert F. Kennedy of New York. We will have the first question now from Lawrence E. Spivak, permanent member of the MEET THE PRESS panel.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Senator Kennedy, I am sure you will agree that two of the most serious problems this country faces today are the war in Vietnam and the rioting in our city streets. Have our leaders shown you that they have solutions for either of those problems?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think there are many ideas and thoughts, suggestions, that have been made in dealing with both of these areas, but obviously there is a great deal more that needs to be done as far as the future is concerned. Otherwise, we wouldn't be facing the present difficulties.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Have any of the solutions that have been presented by the administration any special meaning to you. Do you think any of them will succeed?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I have some disagreements as far as Vietnam is concerned, and I have had some ideas as to how I think the struggle can be terminated without any guarantees, certainly. I think there is much more that needs to be done as far as the ghettos and as far as the unemployed and as far as the riots and the violence that is taking place in our cities today.

**MR. SPIVAK:** You recently warned the Democratic party that it is in a critical moment in its history. What did you mean by that—why did you warn them?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think that really we have to look ahead to the future and what kind of a country we want to build for the 1970's and the . . . 1980's, that we can't look back just to what we have done over the period of the last six years during the administration of President Roosevelt or President Truman or President Kennedy or even what President Johnson has done, all of which have been extremely important. But I don't think we can run just on that record. We have different problems. There are different difficulties that this country is facing, far more difficult than any we have faced in the past, and I think we have to find new solutions to them. I think there have been some suggestions that have been made that are worthwhile.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Is it fair to say then that you are dissatisfied with the efforts that are being made to meet new problems?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I am dissatisfied with our society; I suppose I am dissatisfied with our country. I am dissatisfied with the fact that perhaps I don't do enough personally. I think I just am dissatisfied with the progress that this country is making and that our society is making.

I don't think that we should turn to violence: I don't think we should turn to war as the answers to—solutions to problems. So I am dissatisfied. I think you have to be dissatisfied.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Senator, James Reston, in today's New York Times, says that the American people have lost faith in their leaders. Do you think they have?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I don't think that they have lost faith in their leaders. I think that the people are terribly disturbed across this country as to what direction our country is moving in, whether the affluence that we have gained in the last five or six years is sufficient and whether we are making the kind of progress that they would hope to make, that we should make, and whether the answers or suggestions that have been offered by any of us at the governmental level are satisfactory. And whether they, as individuals, mean anything; whether they mean anything in relationship to government; whether their voices are ever going to mean anything or whether business has gotten so large, labor organizations so large that they care nothing for the individual. And even our universities and our educational system. So I think there is general dissatisfaction in our country, but not just with our political leaders.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Senator, do you yourself today have faith in our leadership? Would you answer that directly?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I expect that means—in what leadership. I have great admiration for President Johnson if that is who you are talking about, but I don't think that any of us at the

national level or at the state level have done enough in the political field. I think it is quite clear or we wouldn't be facing the difficulties we are facing today.

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(Announcement)

**MR. SITTON:** Senator, in a speech in San Francisco on Friday night I believe you said in essence that the nation should reject the counsel of those who are willing to spend billions for the freedom of others while denying similar amounts to our own people. Has this been true of this Administration's policy, Senator?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think that now we are taking another step as far as Vietnam is concerned which will be costly, not only as far as the manpower of this country is concerned, but also financially, and I think the same effort, the same kind of commitment must be made for our own people who still suffer a great deal, many of our fellow citizens who still suffer a great deal from unemployment, from lack of education, from lack of opportunity and lack of ability to live out their lives in dignity and support and bring up a family.

**MR. SITTON:** Would you say our domestic situation then perhaps is getting so serious that we should at least consider disengagement in Vietnam?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** No, I would be opposed to pulling out unilaterally from Vietnam, but I think we have to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to preserve the freedom and preserve the lives in the real sense of our own people within the United States, and I think that is a question of priorities. I think we have to do things in Vietnam. I recognize that. But I think also it is more essential that we do what is necessary here for our own people, preserve the liberty of our own people, and I don't think it is satisfactory at the moment here in our country where the unemployment rate despite all the programs that have been in existence, the unemployment rate of those who live in the ghetto is going up, not down. As the Labor Department said, the conditions in the ghetto amongst our minorities, amongst our Negroes, our Puerto Ricans, our Mexican-Americans is worse now than it has ever been.

That unemployment rate amongst that group is much greater than it was in the country as a whole during the depression of the 1930's. I don't think that is satisfactory. Here we are a country with a gross national product of \$700 billion a year, and these people, despite our speeches and despite the pronouncements and despite the passage of programs, and the pious protestations, almost hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens are living far worse lives than they have lived, and their lives have gotten worse. Their housing has gotten worse over the period of the last

six years. The unemployment rate, the ability to get jobs is getting worse. The educational system is worse. So I don't think that that is satisfactory, and I think that we can do something about it. I think we have the imagination here in the United States. I think we have the plans, the ideas and the programs, and I think we should do something about it.

**MR. NOVAK:** Senator, the wire service reports of your speech in San Francisco on Friday night quoted you as departing from your text to advocate diverting funds from Vietnam to domestic use against poverty and the conditions in the slums. Just which funds now going into Vietnam would you divert?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I didn't say that.

**MR. NOVAK:** That is a misquotation?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I never saw that—I saw the wire service; I didn't see it reported. I just answered Mr. Sitton's statement.

**MR. NOVAK:** Would you reduce the spending in Vietnam?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I put it in—a question of priority. I would do what we have to do here. I think what we have done, as far as Vietnam is concerned, it is an open-end commitment, where the costs can continue to go up, and here we have limited the costs in our own country.

Could I just say what I think we should do in the United States is have an educational program, work with the local communities, have an educational program that is satisfactory. I think we have to find jobs—

**MR. NOVAK:** I understand what you want to have here, sir, but I am asking what you are advocating in Vietnam? Would you reduce the amount of troops there? Would you give them less ammunition? How would you reduce the costs in Vietnam?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** If we have to have the present costs, then I would spend more money on our domestic programs.

**MR. NOVAK:** So you would not—I am sorry.

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** If I could answer the question: I think what we have to do here, if it is going to be a question of one or the other—and I hope it would not come to that—then I would put the priority here in our own country.

**MR. NOVAK:** President Johnson has said we could have both.

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** That is correct.

**MR. NOVAK:** Do you think that is possible?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think it is getting more difficult to

have both. Now, we can have some of Vietnam and we can also meet and do what we have to do here.

Can I just say that for the life of those within our own United States—I mean I understand about the people of Vietnam, but we are talking now about sending 45,000 more troops to Vietnam. That is going to cost \$2.5 billion. We spend more in a month in Vietnam than we do on the poverty program. I think there is more that we need to do within our local communities, our smaller cities and our larger cities here in the United States. I don't think it is satisfactory, for instance, for a child growing up in the ghetto to have only three chances in ten of finishing high school, and when he finishes high school the chances are fifty-fifty that he will have the equivalent of an eighth grade education. I don't think it is satisfactory that only half the people who live in the ghetto have full-time jobs or jobs that make more than \$60 a week. I think we can do better now.

I would hope that we could also meet our commitment in Vietnam, but I would only favor doing more in Vietnam when the people of South Vietnam do more. I would like to answer this question completely because I think it does go to the heart of what the future of the country is going to be.

I would like to see the people of South Vietnam do more. I am distressed that our casualties continue to go up and theirs continue to go down. Our casualties are higher than theirs. This is different than it was a year ago. I think they should be doing some of the fighting; I think they should be carrying the war. I think they should make the efforts for political, economic and social reform within South Vietnam.

As President Kennedy said in 1963, we can help them win it, but we can't win it for them, and I think that they should carry the burden of the fighting and we should help them, but I should like to see the South Vietnamese regiments, the South Vietnamese divisions up by the DMZ carrying the fight to the North Vietnamese.

**MR. KIKER:** Will you support President Johnson's call for an increase in taxes?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I am going to examine it closely. I have some reservations about it. One of my reservations is that I think it poses a particularly heavy burden on the lower income and the middle income people, particularly the salaried individuals and those who receive incomes of that kind.

Secondly, it is going to cause an increase of unemployment in the United States of some kind. That unemployment rate will fall particularly on the Negroes, the Puerto Ricans and the Mexican-Americans, those who are having a particularly difficult time at the moment. That causes me great concern, and I would like to see how we are going to protect against that.

The third reservation I have—in a recent year there were approximately 2,000 people who made more than \$500,000 a year. Some of those people paid absolutely no taxes at all. One of the wealthiest men in the United States, with a net worth of well over a billion dollars, paid \$685 worth of taxes several years ago. I think those people who make more than \$500,000 and through various gimmicks are able to avoid paying any taxes should be brought into the tax structure. The average person who makes over \$500,000 pays only about 27 per cent of it in taxes. I think those taxes should be raised before the lower income and the middle income people are taxed.

**MR. KIKER:** The programs that you have suggested as a cure for the rioting and the urban ills that plaque us today would cost an awful lot of money. Would you support a tax increase for a massive increase in this sort of federal aid?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** Yes, I'd like to have the tax increase focused in the areas that I have described.

Secondly, let me say that I don't think it is just a question of federal funds and federal spending. I don't think that is the answer for the problems of the ghettos in the future. I think we have to bring the private enterprise system in in an active way, and I have made some suggestions of legislation which will do that and which will accomplish it. I don't think it is just the federal government coming into the ghetto and spending large sums of money. I think we should make it attractive through credits, depreciation, in various tax ways, for the private enterprise system to make investments in the ghetto, to make investments in housing, to make investments in the construction of businesses which will employ people. I think that that in the last analysis is the answer, and that is not expensive for the federal government.

**MR. KIKER:** And yet we are told if the poverty program were to be brought to a vote today that passage would be difficult, if not impossible.

Is Congress, or for that matter, the nation itself, really in a mood to support these proposals?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think it is very questionable, but I think really there is a lack of understanding. I think the white population in the United States looks back over the period of the last five or six years and thinks: we have passed a civil rights program, we have put a Negro in the Cabinet, we have put a Negro on the Supreme Court, we have passed poverty programs, we have passed educational programs; they think, 'Why isn't the Negro satisfied? Why isn't the Puerto Rican satisfied? Why isn't the Mexican-American satisfied? Why aren't they satisfied with their lots? But for those who live in the ghettos and have the problems with rats, have the problems with unemployment, have



the problems with their housing and the problems with their educational system—last year, or several years ago, for instance, in the City of New York—we have a fifth of all of our students in the City of New York who are Puerto Rican extraction. Some 220,000 students. Last year 34 Puerto Rican students went to college. As far as their having the ability to escape the kind of lives that they have at the moment, it is very, very difficult. So I think that we have to make the kind of effort that is necessary in those areas of our country.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Senator, your state of New York, I believe, has spent billions of dollars to help the Negro in the last decade. Yet the picture you painted the other day and the picture you paint here indicates that it is a pretty sorry one.

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** Yes.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Why is this so? Are we not spending enough money? Do we not have ideas enough? Are we not doing the right thing? Why are we doing such a miserable job?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** First, I think it is the fact that this has grown up over such a long period of time and that we are paying the price for it now.

Secondly, I think that there have been more speeches and pronouncements than there have been actual activities or actions.

Third, I don't think that we have shown the imagination that we should show in the development of some of these programs.

I think that we determined that the programs of the 1930's and the welfare program, if we just continued those, if we were going to put more money in those, then it would be satisfactory and the Negro was going to be happy, and particularly because also, as I said, they saw a Negro coming into the Cabinet, they saw other manifestations of Negro progress. But the fact is that they didn't want that, and they want something more than hand-outs. That's an unsatisfactory life.

The fact is, as I said, the situation gets worse because the housing gets worse, the educational system gets worse.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Senator, the heart of this whole thing is the question of money. Recently you questioned Mayor Lindsay of New York, and I believe he said that New York City would need \$50 billion in a period of ten years, and I think you said that was fantastic. Now, where is this money coming from? Who is going to give—is the federal government going to give? Is private industry really going to give you that much?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** First, I think the federal government has to do more—

**MR. SPIVAK:** Let's be specific. How much more are you willing

to have the federal government spend if needed: 10 billion, 20 billion, 50 billion?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I don't think that we could even use that amount immediately, but I would think that immediately we certainly could use two to three to four billion dollars. I would put a good deal of that effort in the field of employment.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Additional money, to what the President is now seeking to get?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** That is correct.

**MR. SPIVAK:** And you would get it how?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** Let me just say that I spoke a year ago when I testified before the Ribicoff Committee that what we needed was a Marshall Plan for the cities. Vice President Humphrey said a few days ago that we needed this kind of a Marshall Plan for the cities. I think we should accept that.

Now I would hope that the Administration would come forward therefore with a plan for what we are going to do with the cities, and I think part of that, certainly, is going to be finding employment for the unemployed at the moment.

Secondly, as I say, I think we don't have to continue just the programs we have had in the past which haven't been entirely successful by any means. As you point out, for the State of New York they haven't been successful. I think that we can develop a partnership between the private enterprise system and government to make it attractive for the private enterprise system to become actively involved in the ghetto. We will have to have an insurance program certainly, but we can—we made it possible for the private enterprise system to build ships, to build supersonic airplanes, to build grain bins, to build military establishments, by giving them tax credits and the writeoffs and tax depreciation. Let's do the same thing for the ghetto so that they find it is in their interests to make an investment in the ghetto, to train people. The Operation Bootstrap did such a tremendous job down in Puerto Rico. Why can't we do that same thing in Watts, New York, Chicago, Waterloo, Iowa, any of these areas which face this tremendous problem? And the cities themselves, Mr. Spivak, cannot find the answers themselves. They are going to have to have some help from the federal government and as I say, if we can do this in Vietnam, if we can spend \$24 billion for the freedom and the liberty of the people of Vietnam, certainly we can spend a small percentage of that for the liberty and the freedom and the future of our own people in the United States.

That is what concerns me, and I don't think we have any alternative. I think that is what we have to do in this country or otherwise we are not going to stand for anything. That is what

we have to do here in the United States. We have the programs, we have the imagination, we have the initiative. Let's get on with it. I think the people have to understand what the alternatives are. I think it has to be explained by the President. But I think once they understand that, that they will support these kinds of programs.

**MR. SITTON:** Senator, what exactly do you mean by "Marshall Plan"? This has never been spelled out. Do you mean children's allowances, a guaranteed income, perhaps?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** First I think, which is an important part of developing any plan, that the plan has to be worked out at the local community, with the city. I don't think it is the federal government coming in and saying, "This is the program that would make sense for you," but I would let the local community work out a program or plan, just as we did for the Marshall Plan in fact in Europe. They worked out a plan and we then came in and said, "We will finance it. We will put some money into it. We will invest into it," and I think that is what we should do.

We should have the local community work out a program in the field of education, in the field of jobs, in the field of housing, and when that program has been examined by the United States, we should help finance it. An integral part of all of that has to be the use of the private enterprise system, and also I think that the universities and colleges should play a far greater role than they have in the past.

It seems to me that if we bring all of these groups together that we can have some success—

**MR. SITTON:** What evidence do you have that private enterprise is really interested in the program?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** Before I offered my legislation, which would give them as I say tax credits, special tax depreciation and some writeoffs, I talked and consulted with some of the large businessmen in the United States. They indicated that under these arrangements, these circumstances they would make these kinds of investments in the ghetto. Maybe people won't want to accept the proposals, the specific proposals that I have made, but let the Administration then come up with an alternative.

I think, if I may say so, Mr. Sitton, what we need really is that—we have had these problems, we have known since John McCone made the study in Watts, the Ribicoff Committee hearings and a number of other studies that have been made, that this problem existed in the United States. Maybe this Commission is going to accomplish some good and make its report in March, but I don't think we can wait until March—the Commission that has been appointed by the President—I don't think we can wait until March. We know what the problem is. We know at

least some of the things that need to be done. There are plenty of ideas that make some sense. Let's put into operation those ideas and get on with the job. Then maybe it can be supplemented by the Commission's findings in March.

**MR. NOVAK:** Turning to politics, Senator Kennedy, next year your name, under new laws, will be listed on the Presidential primary ballots in Wisconsin, Nebraska and Oregon, unless you sign an affidavit disclaiming any interest in the Presidency to get them off.

Will you sign that disclaimer?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** Yes, I will.

**MR. NOVAK:** Can you envision any set of circumstances where you wouldn't sign this disclaimer?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** No. Not at the moment at least.

**MR. NOVAK:** Have you gotten in touch with any of the people who are still very aggressively and vigorously pushing the "Draft Kennedy-Fulbright ticket? Have you gotten in touch with them to ask them to cut it out?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** Yes, I have.

**MR. NOVAK:** What was their reply?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I have written them a number of letters and asked them to discontinue. They just indicated, as they have publicly, they are going ahead with it anyway. I have asked them to discontinue it. I have said that I am not interested, that I am not going to run, and it is just a source of embarrassment.

**MR. NEWMAN:** About two minutes left, gentlemen.

**MR. KIKER:** Senator Kennedy, everyone agrees that the riots this summer are going to have a tremendous impact on the next national election. You have a reputation as being a pretty good politician. Could you tell us in your opinion, what impact the riots will have on both the Presidential election and the Congressional elections in '68?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think it will have an impact. I think a good deal is going to depend on what we do now over the period of the next 12 months, whether we show some leadership, whether we try to deal with them in a satisfactory way—that we are opposed to violence. I think we have to make that quite clear, that we are not going to tolerate violence and the lawlessness but that at the same time we are going to take some steps to try to deal with the sources and the causes of the riots and the violence and I think to explain that, to come forward with the programs so the American people understand it, and to give

some leadership in the Executive Branch of the government and in Congress. I think whichever party does that is going to receive support next year.

**MR. KIKER:** Which will be the larger issue, Vietnam or big city riots?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think they are going to be very closely related, and I think it is going to be a question of priorities.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Senator, in San Francisco last Friday you said that by riots "We must make it unequivocally clear by word and deed that this wanton killing and burning cannot and will not be tolerated."

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** That is right.

**MR. SPIVAK:** You have had experience in this field. How would you stop a riot from becoming a Detroit before it gets under way?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** First, I think that you have to move in rapidly where a riot or disorder breaks out. I think you have to move in with the right kind of forces.

When we had our difficulty down there—

**MR. SPIVAK:** The federal government?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** Whatever it might be. You would hope that it should be the local forces, but I think that they should have training, that they should know what they are going to do and how to deal with the problem. I think if you are going to use the National Guard that they should be trained. When we sent our marshalls down and had the difficulty in Oxford, Mississippi, 26 of them were wounded by bullets, another 80 or 90 were wounded in other ways and yet not one of them ever fired a gun. I am not saying that firing is not going to be necessary, under these circumstances, but we should know what we are doing, we should limit the firepower and we should use the kind of forces that have some experience.

**MR. SITTON:** Senator, one quick question. You said those who lead others to burn and kill must feel the full force of the law. What would you do about Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown?

**SENATOR KENNEDY:** I think they are perhaps different questions. First, if they have violated the state law, they should be prosecuted. If they have violated any federal law, for instance, the Smith Act, as a possibility, then they should be prosecuted for that.

**MR. NEWMAN:** I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is up. Thank you, Senator Kennedy, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.

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