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Excerpted quotes from an interview with Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) conducted December 10, 1986. C-SPAN's Brian Lamb is the host.

On the House of Representatives under Jim Wright's leadership:

"[Rep.] Jim Wright [D-TX] has a tremendous opportunity, as chairman of the incoming 100th Congress, to be an historic figure who re-establishes bipartisanship or he has the opportunity to give into the left wing of his party and be at least as partisan as [Rep. Thomas P.] Tip O'Neill [D-MA] was. I don't think anybody can tell you which Jim Wright we'll see. On the drug bill, for example, he was very bipartisan -- he gave us a chance to pass a genuinely tough anti-cocaine and heroin bill that I think was very successful. He worked with Republicans, frankly, more than he worked with the left wing of his party.

"Other indicators are that he'll be as tough a partisan as you'd expect from a man who's been in the [U.S.] House [of Representatives] for a long time and who knows the game very well. So, I am one of those observers looking on -- I guess a participating observer -- with great curiosity to see how Jim Wright defines himself in this coming year."

On Jim Wright's leadership of the House of Representatives versus Tip O'Neil's:

"Wright is a good professional. He's a good public speaker. I think he's a more active adversary. He's younger. He's more modern. He's going to be tough for the Republicans to cope with for a while -- I think to figure out where this guy is coming from and what he's doing.

"He's like a first-class NFL quarterback who knows his game and is at the peak of his form. It will be interesting to watch, I think, when he thinks it will be useful to be bipartisan, he will; when it's useful to be very partisan, he will. And he's going to have all the weapons -- he can run, he can pass, he can kick. I expect us to see a very much more dynamic House Democratic Party under his leadership. Much more risk taking. Much more aggressive, but not necessarily in the narrow sense, much more partisan.

"...The NFL analogy is not inexact psychologically. Wright's a guy who's going to clobber you if he can. He's going to play tough football on the House floor and in committees and in maneuvering. It's going to be, I think, a very interesting, dynamic relationship."

On President Ronald Reagan:

"There's no question in the culture at large [that] the most powerful person is the President of the United States -- whoever the President is. When the President is Ronald Reagan, he's more powerful than most presidents because he is able to use the dominant medium very effectively -- television. He is able to understand the rhythm of public communications, partly because of his background in movies and because he embodies the values of most Americans. I think that's an important thing to remember. Ronald Reagan is not a great communicator. That's a myth. Ronald Reagan is a great reminder of what you believed before you watched him say it. Every time Ronald Reagan attempts to tell the American people something they don't believe before they tune in, they don't believe it and he disintegrates. He is not a great communicator. He is not a great salesman. He is a great rearticulator of our deepest beliefs. I think in that sense he personifies for most of us the simple virtues which we have always identified in a Norman Rockwell kind of way -- the best of America. When he is living out that role he is, I think, in the same league with FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt], with Theodore Roosevelt, or with [Abraham] Lincoln in terms of a man who comes to be the father of the nation."

On the Conservative Opportunity Society: [COS]:

"We [the COS] think we are faced with this fundamental problem that current solutions are two or three magnitudes smaller than our problems, that we need a new wave of proposed solutions that the country can identify with and get excited about and that the country can decide fits the average person's values -- fits their sense of reality and will help them in their own lives. I think you will see us in January, February, and March offering some proposals that are very dramatic and very exciting and then going to the country, both through speeches on the [House of Representatives] floor and through speeches in the country. Trying to build a grassroots movement that insists, in both parties, that the candidates for president in 1988 come up with solutions that are real and not just with band-aids."

On the 1988 Presidential Election:

"If the country is unlucky, an adequately competent, pleasant person who will fail miserably in Ronald Reagan's shadow [will be elected]. If the country is lucky, a visionary with a compelling personality, who convinces the country that there is a way out of the deficit and the international trade competition and the problems of containing the Soviet empire, and that with real leadership and real commitment we can make a difference."

On running for president:

"It would take an enormous crisis and it's extraordinarily implausible. I think my job is to be a person of ideas who learns and teaches."

On running for the U.S. Senate:

"No. I love the House. I want to stay on the House side. I love representing a half million people. I love running every two years. It forces you, it disciplines you to go back home. The Founding Fathers wanted one branch [of government] to be permanently scared and I like belonging to the branch that is permanently scared. It's good to be reminded that real ideas and real breakthroughs, real values come from the people, they don't come from Washington."

On what professions he'd like to try if he wasn't a congressman:

"One of my problems is I like everything. [When] I started out in life I wanted to be a zoo director and my first love is animals. My second desire was paleontology -- to collect dinosaurs...There are just a thousand jobs. I'm on the aviation subcommittee. I represent the Atlanta airport. I love flying in the jumpseat of a jet airplane...I guess I'd love to be a pilot. I'm one of those guys that you name it, if I haven't done it, I'd love to try it."

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