



Suite 412
400 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
202/737-3220

The following are excerpted quotes from an interview with Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-MD), taped June 20, 1986 and aired on July 4, 1986 as part of C-SPAN's Independence Day programming at 9:30 am ET, 6:00 pm ET, 9:30 pm ET, and July 5 at 3:00 am ET.

On television coverage of the Senate:

"The Rules Committee affects Senate life in a very direct way. One of the recent innovations of the Rules Committee was the approving of the television in the Senate and that was, again, a long and arduous process. It didn't just happen, we had to persuade people over a period of time. Finally we got the votes in the Rules Committee, took a resolution to the floor of the Senate and won it there. It was, I think, a major change on Senate life because we have suddenly expanded the visitors gallery from a few hundred to millions. I think this will make the Senate more vital. I think in just the few weeks it's been in operation it's made the Senate a more vital part of the American political scene.

"I think it's worked and I think the public has accepted it. We've had interesting responses from all over the United States. It's done exactly what I hoped it would do as we held hearing in the Rules Committee, which is to bring the American people into contact with the complexity of Senate decisions. I think if people understand the way congressional decisions are made then it is much easier for them to accept those decisions, at least to understand them. Maybe they don't agree with them, but at least to understand the rationale with which they were made."

"...If it [television] does change it [the Senate] in any way, I think it will improve it. I think it will sharpen people up. Presiding officers will be more crisp. I think members who speak will tend to be a little more concise. They'll think in advance of speaking. And that's not all bad."

On being a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

"It's an important committee to the country. There have been moments in history where the Foreign Relations Committee really determined the course of national action. I think when Sen. Fullbright was chairman and held the public hearings on the Vietnam War, there isn't any question that he altered the course of American history. That's a dramatic example, but in lesser ways the committee is engaged in that kind of activity. That was before I was a member of the committee, but we have similar experiences,

perhaps less dramatic, all the time. Maybe the impact on national policy may not be as profound or immediate, but what we do constantly pushes policy a degree here, a degree there. So it's an opportunity to influence events."

On the most difficult decisions as a member of the Foreign Relations Committee:

"They are all tough. There are no easy ones. Of course some of the toughest ones are in the realm of personal decisions. By that I mean deciding whether or not to confirm an individual for public office. One of the things that makes the Senate unique is the fact that it shares the power of appointment with the President of the United States. In most governments, almost all governments, the executive simply appoints members of the cabinet, members of the court, members of the diplomatic corps, members of the executive cadre of government. In the United States the president doesn't have the power to make those appointments. All the president can do is make the nomination and the other half of the appointing process belongs to the Senate, which has to confirm. I have found over the years, whether it's justices of the Supreme Court, or ambassadors or whatever, sometimes cabinet members, that it was those that were among the most painful decisions you have to make. Because you not only have a public issue to decide, but you know that it's going to impact on the nominee and on his or her family in a personal way. Those are the ones you can very often lose sleep over."

On the nominations of Justice William H. Rehnquist for chief justice and Judge Antonin Scalia as associate justice:

"I think there's going to be a very careful examination. These are positions of ultimate importance in American political life. The Senate will make a very careful analysis of exactly what they have done. There's an interesting twist that is not always available, because in both cases these nominees have been on the bench and have made a number of judicial decisions. So that inevitably these decisions will be read and reviewed and weighed. There is a slightly unhealthy aspect to this, because I believe in the independence of judges and I don't believe that judges should be, under normal circumstances, held accountable for their judicial decisions. But it's most inevitable in this case that the Senate judgement of the qualifications to become members of -- chief justice and associate justice -- of the Supreme Court will be influenced by their judicial decisions. So there is an unusual quality to this particular situation and I don't say that that's a problem for them, but I think it is a circumstance that will be considered."

On the Republican Party:

"I personally believe it has a responsibility to American history to be the great advocate of civil rights, the great advocate of free enterprise, of opportunity, of potential. I think it has the responsibility not only to history but to the future for fiscal responsibility. I think in at least 2 of these 3 areas we need to get back to our historic moorings. In the civil rights field I think the Brad Reynolds case is illustative. Brad Reynolds was undoubtedly discharging his duties as he saw them and in accordance with the direction he was being given. I think that just simply illustrates that we have pulled back from a vigorous advocacy of civil rights and, to some extent civil liberties. I think this is the wrong direction for the Republican Party to go and I want to see us get back into that historic past that has been our important past. We carried through on from President Lincoln to President Ford without exception.

"In the field of fiscal responsibility, I must say I'm puzzled. I could think of all the speeches I've heard from Republicans, every kind of Republican -- Nelson Rockefeller, Barry Goldwater -- from every part of the Republican Party, preaching the doctrine of fiscal responsibility. And yet in five years we've doubled the national debt from 1 trillion dollars to 2 trillion dollars. It concerns me because that someday is going to be a problem. And I think it will be a problem for the reasons Republicans have historically said it would be a problem. We simply cannot cope with that kind of a debt without distorting the economy, without ultimately bringing on disastrous consequences. Of course the answer to that that people give is -- well, so what, it's wonderful, we're having a boom, the economy is great. Well why wouldn't it be great. We're pumping 200 million dollars of federal money into the economy every year. It ought to be wonderful. It would be a serious question -- why isn't it wonderful? That's just the oldest kind of New Dealism. That's like the old Democratic theory of spend, spend - elect, elect, which used to be the Republican war cry."

On how he would classify himself in terms of liberal/conservative:

"Progressive Republican, but I don't really quibble. If you're talking about liberality of mind. If you're talking about a comprehensive liberal view of life, -- I'm a liberal. I think liberal thinking. Not in terms of political ideologies, but liberal in terms of keeping an open mind is an important attribute of any human being whether it's a Republican or a Democrat or anything else."

On why he is retiring:

"I've been in the Congress -- will have been in the Congress 26 years by the time I leave. That's a quarter of a century. That's one-eighth of the entire history of the Republic. That's a long time. I think it's a good time to step down. I think from my point of view, it's a time in my life which gives some opportunity to do some things

which I'm anxious to do and yet to have been here long enough to have accomplished a number of things here. So it's kind of a divide."

On his plans after January of 1987:

"My plans are a little fluid at this point. I'm highly honored by Johns Hopkins University by being asked to be a visiting professor there and that will take some part of my time. I hope to still practice as a lawyer -- go back and pick up that thread. And I've got lots of weeds on my farm that need cutting."

###