

NEWS FROM:

# C-SPAN AMERICA'S NETWORK

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C-SPAN TO AIR EXCLUSIVE O'NEILL INTERVIEW  
30 - Minute Program Reveals Personal Views of Retiring Speaker

WASHINGTON, D.C. Sept. 12, 1986 -- Retiring House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. has already announced that he's hired a writer to help publish his memoirs. Cable television viewers, however, won't have to wait until next spring to hear the Speaker's reflections on his longtime career in national politics. This weekend, C-SPAN airs an exclusive, uncut interview with Mr. O'Neill which reveals a personal portrait of one of the nation's best-known politicians.

The half-hour C-SPAN interview is slated for Sunday, September 14 at 7:00 pm and 11:00 pm ET as part of C-SPAN's Campaign '86 spotlight on Massachusetts politics. The interview and five days of special programming that focuses on the Bay State's politics will be carried to 25.5 million homes via 2,300 C-SPAN affiliates.

During the C-SPAN interview, Mr. O'Neill emerges as a man who is certain that his strongly-held convictions have shaped the nation. He discusses his early roots in Boston and the effects of his Irish heritage on his political philosophies. And, he candidly retells of the early days of the Reagan Administration, when Mr. Reagan's programs were so popular that people inside the Democratic party called for O'Neill to step down from his leadership post.

"I was overwhelmed for about six months..." The Speaker told C-SPAN, "...I was a voice crying in the wilderness; I was an old hat." Mr. O'Neill discusses how he held fast amidst the criticism, telling members of his own party, "We shouldn't run away from the things we should be most proud of -- that we developed America."

Mr. O'Neill, who has represented Massachusetts 8th Congressional District for 34 years, also talks about his political mentors -- Former House Speaker John McCormack and former Gov. Paul Dever, both Massachusetts politicians. In addition, he gives his views on Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and the future of the Democratic party.

Finally, the man America calls "Tip" tells C-SPAN that while he'll miss the comraderie and strategizing of House politics, he's also looking forward to his days of retirement ahead. "'I never asked you to retire,'" O'Neill describes his wife Millie as admonishing him. "'Don't come home for lunch!'"

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# C-SPAN AMERICA'S NETWORK

an exclusive C-SPAN interview  
air date: Sunday, September 14 at 7:30 pm and 11:00 pm EST  
taped: August 13, 1986  
length: 30 mins

*The following are lengthy excerpts from a half-hour videotaped interview with retiring House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. (D-MA), produced by the C-SPAN cable network. The interview will air as part of a special "Campaign '86" look at Massachusetts politics.*

## ON HIS POLITICAL MENTORS:

"...Well, I basically was a Paul Dever man...He was my guiding patron. I admired him, his ability to talk, his talent, his knowledge, his love of the people which he represented. And I was fortunate enough to be speaker of the Massachusetts legislature while he was governor and we put our baby New Deal program to work in Massachusetts... Clearly, I always liked his style."

"...Since I arrived in Washington, the biggest factor and the greatest break I ever got was that there was a father and son relationship between John McCormack and myself... He would go to fundraisers and he'd say, 'Tom, I want you to go along with me tonight.' Well, I got to be a constant companion and they'd say, 'who's the big Irishman from Boston with McCormack?' 'That's Tip O'Neill. He was speaker of the House in Massachusetts and Mr. McCormack has taken him under his wing. You can watch him -- he'll be moving around here.' And he opened a tremendous amount of doors. I met an awful lot of prominent people..."

## ON BOSTON:

"I'm a parochial Bostonian...It's a city in which a wave of immigrants...came in and they bettered their life. There's no question my philosophy has been molded by what I've seen. What I've seen through life is the ultimate achievement of what a person wants -- a good job, a family, a home, the warmth of a house, sustenance to keep the family happy, time together -- the American way of life. That's been the dream of every group that's ever come through Boston and that's been basically my philosophy."

"Outside of the Trinity Church, there's a statue of, I think his name is Wendall Phillips, an abolitionist. I always look at that statue because I remember walking by with Jack Kennedy and we looked up and it said, 'born in Boston, lived in Boston, died in Boston,' and Jack turned to me and said, 'You can't get any more parochial than that, can you?'"

## ON LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES:

"We basically in my section of the country have been liberal, or let me say progressive, because of the fact that it helped provide a better life for them. They look at the government and say, 'the government tries to help you. The government is not an enemy of the people.' The Southerners, I believe, their stock is older. You don't find as many cosmopolitans--every nationality. My district alone, we figure today it has 25% Irish, 25% Italian, 15% black and well, let's see, 50 nationalities would make up the remainder. So that gives you an idea how cosmopolitan it is...and the Irish



have a tendency to register and vote. They'll vote about 85%. They love politics and they like controversy, and they like debates and consequently they vote. So, you get a big vote and for the most part they're progressives, or liberals.

In the South, I don't think you have this cosmopolitan(effect). I think that you've had people basically living on the land. I think you have people who haven't had the mixture that we have and they're basically more conservative...But I believe in our party, we came together because of need, because of necessity, because of the farm plight, because of poverty around America. It was that element that brought the Democratic party together and it's taken a long time before it's broken apart. Every once in a while, you think it's going to break and it reseals itself."

*ON JIMMY CARTER:*

"...Jimmy Carter, I loved. Of all the presidents I have known -- and I've served with the last eight -- Jimmy Carter was the most able and talented and brilliant. He had a lot of defects. He had a bad staff around him. They were parochial and they went national. They came to Washington with a chip on their shoulders and he had too many balls in the air. But he was an extremely bright man. Everything happened to him -- oil went from \$13 a barrel to \$35. Inflation went wild. Unemployment, affected by the energy rates more than anything else, was responsible for the dismal feeling the American public had. And then the Iranian situation...that was what the election was all about -- the popularity of Carter..."

*ON RONALD REAGAN'S ELECTION:*

"I have a theory on that -- the theory is that until the day of debate between Carter and Reagan, they were even...About those statements he makes. You know -- soft statements like 'I'd get rid of social security and make it volunteer.' It would fall over and collapse overnight! One hundred and five times he gave speeches about the woman who had 110 welfare checks. No such woman ever existed! He was notified by the FBI. He was notified by the GSA. He was notified by HUD. He was notified by everybody. As a matter of fact, Joe Califano wrote him five personal letters, but he used it merrily along. He always used that because the wealthy people liked it. He loved to talk about the big fat lady who had the food stamps -- the ills of food stamps. Never realizing, of course, that Nixon's more responsible for food stamps than any other human being. But after that night, he showed pretty well(in the polls) and within 48 hours, the President collapsed."

*ON HIS BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT AS SPEAKER:*

"The biggest disappointment had to be in 1981, when I was getting clobbered by the Reagan Administration...As soon as that election was over, the press of America said 'there's been an election on the fiscal responsibility of America. Should we change from the last 50 years? America is calling for a change.' Well the American press has been mean to everybody -- to Johnson, to Nixon, to Ford, to Carter. (Now) they're going to have a change of birth, a change of heart. They're going to give this guy a honeymoon. They're going to say that America needs a fiscal change. All of a sudden I'm getting 55,000 letters a day -- 'Reagan's right. We have to cut this back, we have to cut that back.' And I'm even getting 10,000 (of those letters) from my own district."



## DISAPPOINTMENT (cont.):

"The power of the Speaker is whether legislation gets on the floor or not. So, I made a commitment I'd put Reagan's program on the floor and I'd put his tax bill on the floor. I thought they were devastating. No question as they are now hurting the economy...I never believed that Reagan got elected on the basis of America wanting a fiscal change, but I was overwhelmed for about six months. I was a voice crying in the wilderness. I was an old hat. I was a square. Members of my own party said I should quit -- 'we need new leadership, we need new ideas.' And I said we shouldn't run away from the things we should be most proud of -- that we developed America. That we brought the poverty level down from 50% to 10%. That we educated people. That we truly believed that everybody should have a home. We're the ones that developed middle America -- the Congress of the United States, the presidents all. But, for the most part, those are the basics of my party. So the toughest days I went through were the first six months after Reagan."

*ON HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT AS SPEAKER:*

"Oh, I don't know. That's hard to say. I think I've played a tremendous part in the basics of the Democratic party and philosophy...In 1981, after President Reagan was in, there was an ill feeling, almost a hatred towards the have-nots of America. Whether you were old, or whether you were black, or whether you were an infant, no matter if you were a have-not, they seemed to say, 'Hey, I've got mine. I have no obligation.' That's not an American way of thinking."

The early days of the Gramm-Latta bill were bad. An awful lot of people were hurt; an awful lot of people were denied the opportunity of education. I screeched and hollered and fought every way that I could of holding, and holding, and holding a pattern until the people of America said they were going too far -- 'it's wrong, this country has been good to me; that's not the American way of life.' And we stopped it! I think the basic policy of the Democratic Party in America is you love all America and you try to help America. If you made it yourself, you want the other guy to make it along the line, too."

*ON HIS SCHEDULE AND PREPARATION AS A LEADER:*

"...(the media) used to say, when things were going bad, 'we want you to come down on Saturday morning or Sunday morning and do one of our shows.' I said, 'Listen, I work five days a week. I travel more than any man in America for fundraisers for Democrats, going all around the country. I want my Sundays for myself. I want them for church. I want them for golf...' So, every week, everybody used to ask me, and they'd say, 'Oh, you know O'Neill. He's very reluctant to go on television. He thinks that because he's big and he's heavy that he doesn't look good.' That never bothered me. As a matter of fact, they used to say, 'O'Neill's the type of fellow who doesn't do his homework, legislative-wise, and he's afraid to answer questions.' I don't know the depth of every piece of legislation that goes around here, but the important stuff, I understand it. I have the greatest staff and I have a briefing on the legislation every morning. There's one thing I do know -- that the fellow sitting opposite me -- I know more about the legislation than he does and I know more about the legislation because it doesn't go to the floor unless I say it gets to the floor. They had that feeling about me, but I hope I'm like the old elm -- steady and strong and stern and wise. I've seen a lot of storms come along and I know how to act them."



*ON BEING THE SUBJECT OF CARICATURES:*

"When I was doing bad out there and ...rather the party was going bad and I was being clobbered by the editorialist and I was being clobbered by the cartoonist -- you know, look ... I've got a bulbous nose, grey hair and I'm big. I'm a perfect caricature. There's no question about it, I mean I've got loads of them down in my office. I get a kick out of them. I laugh at them..."

*ON WHAT HE'LL MISS ABOUT BEING SPEAKER:*

"I'm going to miss the comraderie. I'm going to miss the strategy. I'm going to miss the meetings with the leadership. You know, people don't believe that -- the strategy. People don't believe that: 'Hey, you know with O'Neill it's hit or miss. The programs come; there's no planning or anything like that.' There's a tremendous amount of planning that goes on in the back rooms. A tremendous amount of planning."

*ON BACK ROOM POLITICS:*

"There's no question about it, I am a back room operator. I sit here and in the course of the day, I hear confession. I hear the problems of every committee. The chairmen come in -- he's feuding with some members of his committee. I listen to all the problems. Dan Rostenkowski was just in before we came here. We talked about the tax reform bill. We talked about the debt ceiling. 'How do you think we ought to handle this? How do you think we ought to handle that?' I have all the chairmen in from Peter Rodino with regards to immigration to Claude Pepper with regards to rules. Fifty years -- I've seen it all happen. Some things have been good. Some things have been bad...There isn't anything that comes in here that hasn't happened around here once before."

*ON HIS ABILITY WITH TELEVISION:*

"I've never had any qualms about television. My staff gets upset because I'm candid. Often things I say at a press conference, you know: 'Let's hold that in advance.' I like to tell it where it is. We've got a little bit of a controversy here this week. I got into talking about the tax bill (and tell them about some of the internal strategizing of the caucus). I'm merely telling them what's happening in discussion. I thought it's nice to keep them news-wise. Well, they immediately run the story 'House Democratic Caucus in Disarray.' Nothing like that happened. Danny (Rostenkowski) is going to run the bill and we're going to respond to it. But often times I get extremely candid when I get to talking to people..."

*ON BEING CALLED A 'TEDDY BEAR'- LIKE FIGURE:*

"All over America I've heard people say, 'Oh, gee, look at the big teddy bear.' Somebody, somewhere -- I think it was Marie Osmond. They said, 'who would you like to be hugged by?' And she said, 'that big teddy bear Tip O'Neill.' It was in People magazine or something like that. A little thing like that catches on..."



*ON THE NICKNAME 'TIP':*

"...I'm named after an old ballplayer. Every Irish family has a Tip O'Neill in it because in 1888 of a fellow by the name of Edward O'Neill, playing with the St. Louis Browns. That was the only year in baseball that a base on balls counted as a base hit. He'd get up and foul them off...until he got a base on balls. The Irish loved him... Everywhere there's a Tip O'Neill, but he's the original Tip O'Neill. I've been called Tip ever since I was a kid..."

*ON HIS RETIREMENT PLANS:*

"...I'm going to complete a book. I'm in the process of writing a book with Bill Novak, the fellow that consulted in the Iacocca book is consulting with me. It's a lot more difficult than I thought. We have seven out of ten chapters completed. We hope to have it on the market by next Easter. There's two or three companies (who've) asked me if I'd like to be on their board. I've already signed a contract with Harry Walker in New York and already have eight speeches booked for January and February. Boston College wants me to teach out there..."

"I'll be seventy-five years old next year. Millie said to me, 'Listen, I never asked you to retire. Don't come home for lunch! Keep yourself busy!' Millie says I'm spending more time with my grandchildren than I ever spent with my children as they were growing up. That's one of the pitfalls of politics -- you don't get a chance to see your family. And Millie says I'm showing far more affection and love than I ever had the chance to show my kids. So, I'll enjoy my life and I'll keep active and my voice will be active."

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