

JACK KEMP  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with  
Amb. JOE ROGERS  
April 10, 2012

Interviewer  
Morton Kondracke

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION  
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Morton Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp oral history project interview with Joe Rogers, Jack Kemp's former economic policy assistant. Today is April 10, 2012, we're at the Kemp Foundation headquarters on 19th Street in Washington, D.C., and I'm Morton Kondracke. Thank you for doing this. When you think about Jack Kemp what comes to mind?

Joe Rogers: I think the main thing is his openness to ideas and his, especially in the current presidential election we're having, his inclusionary view of how politics should be run and how economic policy should be run.

Kondracke: Inclusionary meaning?

Rogers: That you needed to get everybody in, as he exemplified in looking at supply-side economics as the rising tide lifting all boats, jobs and enterprise zones, things that reach out to everybody. And not just in the U.S. but from his foreign policy standpoint on the economic side, things that would lift as many people out of poverty as possible, and on the more military side, would bring freedom to as many people as possible.

Kondracke: Where did he get this anti-poverty notion from? He was a middle-class kid himself, granted, he came from Buffalo, but Buffalo was working class, so where did he get his feeling for the poor?

Rogers: I think a lot of it is almost a civil rights issue. Playing professional football as he did, he rubbed shoulders with a lot of people he hadn't rubbed shoulders with before, even in high school

and college. He many times talked about what he learned from these people.

[interruption]

Kondracke: You were talking about his notion about fighting poverty coming from his football background.

Rogers: I think that's true. He often talked about the equality that you had when you got in the huddle, and I think that played a big role in the way he viewed equality in a larger sense.

Kondracke: What are your standout personal experiences with him? Is there something that immediately comes to mind—a conversation, an action on his part, interaction?

Rogers: Boy, there are so many. I have to go back and pick something. I think one of the things that really stands out to me, not many people probably know about this, we had an amendment on the floor of the House for the protection of Taiwan and its membership in the Asian Development Bank, and that was to be added to the authorization for the multilateral development banks—the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and all those institutions. This was not too controversial but very important because it was a real sign to China of where we were going to stand on this issue, and the day that that was coming to the floor of the House was the day that they were trying to settle the Martin Luther King [Jr.] Holiday. And Mrs. [Coretta Scott] King was up and was in the Speaker's office. So Jack was invited over because he had, if my memory's correct, 70 proxies from

the Republican side for the vote. And it was not at all clear how this was going to go. Because if I remember correctly it failed the first time by five votes, and so it was shaky. So Jack was in with the Speaker and Mrs. King, discussing the holiday—excuse me, my allergy is really terrible—while this amendment which was very important to him and to Taiwan was on the floor, and he stayed in the meeting because he thought that was the important thing to be doing. Afterwards they had to push the bill along, but he would make those kinds of choices.

Kondracke: Martin Luther King first, his own amendment second.

Rogers: That's right.

Kondracke: When did you first hear about him? You were working for [William L.] Bill Armstrong, Senator Armstrong, right?

Rogers: No. I was working for [David A.] Dave Stockman. I came to Capitol Hill working for Stockman and was his chief economist. Obviously he was working closely with Jack in those days and so I got to know Jack through that interaction. Jack used to have almost weekly meetings where different people, [Arthur B.] Art Laffer, [Robert] Bob Mundell, etc. would come into the office, and Jack would gather all of the economic policy folks who were of the supply-side persuasion and everybody would meet in Jack's office, usually without the Members that they worked for. It was usually Jack and whoever he had as the guest, and all these staff people. So that's how I got to know Jack originally.

Kondracke: Were you a supply-sider from the get go?

Rogers: Yes.

Kondracke: How did you become a supply-sider?

Rogers: I have a Ph.D. in economics from Duke University and worked with some pretty conservative people at Duke, and background being free-enterprise sort of background, but we didn't know to call it supply-side then. We didn't know to call it supply-side really until Jude [T. Wanniski] got really working on the terminology. I think we regarded it more as free markets.

Kondracke: There were people who were conservative who were not supply-siders.

Rogers: Exactly. Still are. [laughter]

Kondracke: But you were. You believed in tax cuts being the answer to the economic problems that were faced then. So how did you get your job working for Jack Kemp?

Rogers: I had left Dave Stockman's office and gone to work for Bill Armstrong, who you mentioned, the same staff group basically that met in Jack's office. We sort of kept watch on where the important debates were going to be. And Armstrong was going to be in 1980 leading the charge for the budget amendments in the Senate, which would lay the groundwork for Reagan. Pete [V.] Domenici from New Mexico was the ranking member on the Budget Committee, and he

was certainly not a supply-sider. He was—what do they call it, RINO [Republican In Name Only] now?—and very much for raising taxes to pay for the programs the Democrats wanted to pass through. So we were working with that. Oh, I take that back. Henry [L.] Bellmon was the ranking member at that point, and Domenici was the person doing most of the budget amendments. It came down to Armstrong next on the list to be the person really leading the charge. So the staff group sort of allocated me to Bill Armstrong and I went to work for Bill, and we wrote, I guess we had three budget amendments which failed spectacularly on the Senate floor, which we then used in the election to say, “See, unless we take the Senate we can’t make any headway.”

Kondracke: And then?

Rogers: And then after the inauguration of President [Ronald W.] Reagan it was time to write the budget speech for the president, and [Paul] Craig Roberts, who had worked with Jack and [was] one of the main supply-siders, had taken over as the assistant secretary of economic policy at [U.S. Department of the] Treasury, so he asked me to come over to Treasury and assist with writing the speech. So I went over working on that with Craig, and I’m not sure how much Jack knew about what I was doing at that point, but during that process, Jack started calling me and asking if I would come over and work in the Republican Conference which he was taking over and work on the international economic issues primarily. Craig was wanting me to be the deputy assistant secretary at Treasury, but I disliked the process of writing the President’s speech so much that I thought working for Jack looked like a much more civilized thing to do. [laughs]

Kondracke: In those battles over the speech and the Reagan tax cuts and so on, was Jack intimately involved in that byplay that went on between Treasury and the White House?

Rogers: Certainly when it got to actually passing the tax legislation, absolutely. I don't personally know in the writing of the budget speech or the writing of the budget, because I was assisting Craig for those two weeks and then I was back with Armstrong, and I was still with Armstrong when the budget actually came up and the Senate started consideration of the budget. So the Stockman budget books, the originals, and I had Armstrong's original and my copy and one other, I can't remember who that belonged to, those are all at the rare book room at Duke [University] now. I shipped all my stuff to them.

Kondracke: When in 1981 did you actually go to work for Jack?

Rogers: It would have been March or April, I don't remember exactly.

Kondracke: What were the circumstances? He had been asking you while you were on Armstrong's staff to come over and work for him?

Rogers: Yes.

Kondracke: So how did you decide that you were going to go Jack instead of staying with Armstrong?

Rogers: One of the main things was a meeting that took place in the Senate just before the end of the lame duck session in 1980. That's when Domenici had become ranking member because Bellmon had

just sort of walked away from it then, he was retiring. We had a meeting and Domenici basically told Armstrong, "Look, you've been the one who's really led the fight on this. I want you to be the guy who designs the reorganization of the Budget Committee." And Armstrong declined to do it, so I knew then I had to leave. If he was going to decline something like that, we just surrendered. I was going somewhere, and like I say, the opportunity was between going to work for Jack and going to work for Craig, and I went to work for Jack.

Kondracke: So there was not going to be action in the Senate Budget Committee, but there was going to be action in the House.

Rogers: And Jack was going to really fight, and we all knew, having known Domenici, he was not going to lead the charge for supply-side economics, that was just not in the cards.

Kondracke: And what did Jack Kemp tell you that he wanted you to do exactly?

Rogers: What he originally asked me to do was working on the foreign economic policy, mainly the multilateral development banks, the IMF, Ex-Im Bank [Export-Import Bank of the United States], those sorts of issues, was what the original task was going to be. Because at the same time he was taking over the Republican Conference. And also the budget, I was to do the budget, because Jack had sort of an unusual situation because he was on the Appropriations Committee he could not serve on the Budget Committee, but there was a special dispensation made, and some of us were talking about this, we can't

remember the exact rule that we were breaking, but an exception. My memory is that they made Jack a member of the Budget Committee from the leadership and took it out of being personal so that it didn't violate the rule against being on Appropriations and Budget. So he was going to take Budget, so that was sort of my second thing, because he was going to be on the Budget Committee and I'd been so involved in that.

Kondracke: Did you staff him for the House Republican Conference chairman's job as well?

Rogers: Yes. I started out as the deputy executive director, and when Jan Olson [phonetic] left I took over as executive director.

Kondracke: So you basically had three jobs.

Rogers: Yes. And then later became chief of staff, added that as well when [David M.] Dave Smick left. So there was enough to do.  
[laughter]

Kondracke: Right. How did you juggle those jobs?

Rogers: Well, it's just the way you work on the Hill. In almost any office if you're one of the senior people, you're doing all those things. They may not be so specific, but then with Jack, certainly when I took over the Conference, because the Conference had to answer to all the membership, so we published the *Legislative Digest*, which goes out each day, about legislation, so we had to administer that. We had different policy people that were actually in the Conference office and

our main editor for editing everything that we had was housed there. So you just had to keep up.

Kondracke: Where were you housed?

Rogers: I used the office set aside for the Conference chairman.

Kondracke: So you were not in Kemp's own office.

Rogers: No.

Kondracke: And where was your office?

Rogers: I was in the Longworth [House Office] Building. Jack was in the Rayburn [House Office] Building at that point.

Kondracke: What was it like working for Jack Kemp?

Rogers: Vigorous. [laughs] The interplay of ideas never stopped. Jack was inclusionary with staff work as he was with his politics. Administering the office for the part of that that you had was very difficult, because Jack had an absolute open door and one of the difficulties we had that you think you had a decision on it and then the next person who walked in the door got his ear going in the other direction and so you had to do a lot of herding cats to keep people under control. And sometimes people who may not have had the best expertise were the last person in the door.

Kondracke: Do you remember any specifics?

Rogers: I don't think of a particular interest. I'll think about that for later.

Kondracke: Because in strategy he seems to have been very decisive and determined about what he thought. Is that not right? I mean his principles were clear, so how did this—

Rogers: His principles were always very clear, but the details were always generally up in the air until the last minute. Because he was, again, so open to ideas and so wanted to talk to as many people as possible. You probably remember, you never saw him walking around the Congress without a stack of newspapers under this arm that no human being could read during the day, and his desk was even worse. He sucked in ideas and information and people, so it was all in turmoil until the last minute usually. One of the blessing we had was, John [D.] Mueller, who I think you've talked to, he was always the codifier of getting everything written down in the appropriate order.

Kondracke: Because it was speech-driven, or—

Rogers: Because John is that organized.

Kondracke: What was his desk like?

Rogers: Jack's desk?

Kondracke: Jack's desk.

Rogers: Two feet high at least.

Kondracke: What criteria did he use in hiring people?

Rogers: Oh, that was a real difficult thing. Sometimes he'd get a recommendation from someone he trusted, and sometimes that was successful and sometimes not. He would find people who he thought were interesting, and sometimes hire them. Sometimes he had told me or Dave or Jan, whoever was running the show at the time, beforehand, sometimes not, and sometimes they were a fit and sometimes not. So there were a number of issues with that, because we would get people in at junior levels and senior levels who just didn't fit, to do the job that they'd been hired to do. But Jack had thought they were an interesting idea. At the same time, when that was successful, it was terrifically successful, because you had people like [William J.] Bill Schneider [Jr.], Michelle [K.] Van Cleave and John Mueller, and Richard Billmore before that and Craig Roberts, so it had worked well. And what you did is you just sort of managed the crisis of the mistakes to take advantage of the tremendous success.

Kondracke: You don't have to name names if you don't want to, but what's the example of a bad fit?

Rogers: [Robert] Bob Kagan, the foreign policy guy, who has on his website that he was Jack Kemp's foreign policy adviser, which was never true. He was sent to us by Irving Kristol because Kristol thought he was such a brilliant student, but he arrived and did not wish to do the work for Jack. He wanted to write his books. So that was a short-lived partnership.

Kondracke: Was he going to have the Michelle Van Cleave job?

Rogers: No, he was an addition to that.

Kondracke: I see. So was the departing unpleasant?

Rogers: Not for me. He was gone. [laughs] It was pleasant. If I remember correctly he went [to] some job at the State Department.

Kondracke: Did Jack Kemp tend to trust staff?

Rogers: Yes, very much so.

Kondracke: My understanding is that he would hand out papers all the time to various different people and they were supposed to come back to him with advice about something

B: That's right. And he took it. Sometimes he gave the paper to the wrong person and then people would to me and say, "Why do I have this?" But again that just goes back to he was trying to get as many opinions as possible. And the only real issues that we ever had organizationally were when people took that seriously more than they should have. It was something that they were totally unqualified to opine on, and if they took it seriously, we could have friction. But again, the benefits you got from it far outweighed the issues.

Kondracke: Let's go to the Foreign Ops [Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations]. Why did he want to be on the Foreign Ops subcommittee of Appropriations?

Rogers: Originally I don't know, because he was on Foreign Ops when I got there. If I had to make a guess at that I would say that Appropriations was a better place to be as a member than [the House Committee on] Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Affairs never got anything done. They just could not get the legislation passed, so it was sort of a dead end if you went over there. But if you were a ranking member, as he was then, on the subcommittee that actually passed out the money, people had to pay attention to you. We came up with a lot of creative ways to control money.

Kondracke: He had been on Defense Approps [Defense Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations].

Rogers: Yes.

Kondracke: And then did he switch over because he could become ranking member, or—

Rogers: That's my understanding, and [C.W.] Bill Young, who was the ranking member on Foreign Ops, switched to go and be ranking member on Defense, and he was ahead of Jack, so Jack could not have been ranking member on Defense.

Kondracke: What would you say were the biggest issues that you worked on while you were on Foreign Ops, while you were there?

Rogers: I'd say by far the biggest issue, and most important to the country, was El Salvador, which was a continuing battle the entire time and a very difficult situation because there are some very bad people in El Salvador who are on our side, and you had to balance what was going on in Nicaragua, because the whole thing was really about the Soviets in Nicaragua. It wasn't about El Salvador. And the things that the sort of bad right-wing politicians were doing in El Salvador that we had to overcome in order to get support against the Sandinistas.

Kondracke: So what did Jack do?

Rogers: He was the leader in the House through the Appropriations, because you couldn't get anything done through Foreign Affairs, for the promulgation and support of the Reagan Doctrine, and I guess more importantly than that, getting money down there so that things continued going on. With that, very interesting, we were always fighting the State Department lawyers, who were always coming up with reasons why we couldn't do this, that or the other thing to get money in to actually support what the President was trying to accomplish. It was very frustrating.

Kondracke: So he was channeling money to whom in El Salvador?

Rogers: Just the general support for the whole effort.

Kondracke: For the government.

Rogers: Yes. The government and our people.

Kondracke: So who were his opposition besides the State Department?

Rogers: Well, the members of the subcommittee. You'd have to say [David R.] Dave Obey was probably the leader on that. I think he took more of the lead on it than [Clarence D.] Doc Long, who was the chairman. Doc at that time was in very, very bad health and doing very erratic things, and we only found out later when he retired that he had a brain tumor, and so a lot of things came into focus once it was learned that he was really very ill during that time. So I think Obey as much as anybody would have been the opposition. The guy that I guess helped us more than anybody else on the Democratic side was [Matthew F.] Matt McHugh from New York and Julian [C.] Dixon, to a certain extent, because Jack had supported a lot of things that Julian wanted to do, African aid and things. Matt McHugh was just sort of a general good guy. He was one of these guys that was on the other side from you but was a solid person.

Kondracke: So you did get aid to El Salvador?

Rogers: Yes. Part of it came through, [Robert L.] Bob Livingston from Louisiana was very important on this. He worked a lot on that legislation, eventually to thwart the State Department, just devised some introductory language to all the things we were trying to do that simply said, if I remember correctly, "Notwithstanding any provision of law or this joint resolution." So basically what we did with every one of those things we wanted to do we just wiped out all the other statutes. Really upset the State Department.

Kondracke: So the State Department was fighting its own administration.

Rogers: Yes. The State Department lawyers. I mean, you know the State Department. It's very factionalized. So we were fighting them on that, we were fighting A.I.D. [U.S. Agency for International Development] on population planning. It was always something.

Kondracke: And so when Jack was in a fight with the State Department, how did he fight?

Rogers: Very politely.

Kondracke: Specifically.

Rogers: We had endless meetings with the people from the State Department, and he was constantly on the phone with the Secretary and with the various assistant secretaries, etc. Jack was peripatetic in that regard, he was in with everybody all of the time. So it was just a matter of persuasion and in some cases you just had to force through what you could force through.

Kondracke: By legislation?

Rogers: By legislation.

Kondracke: What other signal successes would you say he had?

Rogers: He did a very, very good job of keeping the multilateral development banks at bay, keeping the funding on them from growing, which he was very opposed to allowing to happen. One of the worst programs at the World Bank is the International Development Agency, I.D.A., and that was up for a huge replenishment, huge in those days, numbers have changed to this point. Bill Young had held that up for a while and Jack held it up forever, because that was a World Bank program going in to the poorest nations and not doing anything except making the conditions worse, making these people, they weren't loans per se, this was more grants, but they weren't going to things that were going to cause economic growth, so Jack was very opposed to that and was very successful at stopping it. One of the other things that he did, and I believe this was in 1983, we'll have to go back to check the record, he got passed the first reduction in funding ever for the Ex-Im Bank, which he was again very opposed to for having the government picking winners and losers by passing out cheap loans.

Kondracke: On the World Bank issue, what was it that the World Bank was doing that he was opposed to?

Rogers: One of the main things, and this is IMF as well as the World Bank. They were never wanting to put through supply-side economic policies, and where they wanted to do things to give themselves political cover for free enterprise, they would go and establish some private sector program that they were going to run. And all that was was the World Bank putting money into something picking winners and losers in a foreign country, that we would be opposed to here. So Jack was always just up in arms about the fact that we would be advocating

doing something overseas that if it were happening here we'd fight tooth [and] nail to stop. The International Finance Corporation is a good example of that. The things they were doing he was very opposed to that, and very successful at keeping it limited. Keeping those organizations from setting up private sector lending arms where they pooled their money with private money, but then they go in and tell the countries what to do, which Jack regarded as very damaging to economic growth, and the development of entrepreneurship.

Kondracke: I'm sure that there must have been people who said that he was against foreign aid or that he was against helping poor countries because of that. So did he have alternatives that he was proposing?

Rogers: Oh, very much so, and just remember at that time we were really having the development of international capital markets, so for a lot of countries they really didn't need this. What they needed to do was adopt the correct policies. They didn't need more debt being layered onto their governments. But the World Bank and particularly the IMF were not proposing and not advocating in these countries strong, pro-growth policies. So they were actually proposing to these countries and encouraging them to do things, well, conditioning the loans on things that would actually hinder growth, virtually making sure they could not repay the loans.

Kondracke: Austerity.

Rogers: Austerity. Well, not even so much austerity but where did the programs go, because so many of them were corrupt that they

were passing money out to themselves. There used to be, somebody did the measure, I don't remember who, but when a loan went to Brazil, you could measure the outflows to Swiss bank accounts, and it was almost a one-to-one correspondence, and that was true all over the world. So the money was never coming anywhere close to a needy person.

Kondracke: Were there partisan fights over this?

Rogers: Yes, yes, because there's a huge component within our own government, even within the Reagan Administration, of people who don't understand what these organizations do, and Jack took as his mission, as he did in most things, to educate the people on what was going on and the damage that they were doing. One of the first things that happened that was very negative, as soon as [Donald T.] Don Regan came in as secretary of the Treasury, he commissioned his folks to do a study on the effectiveness of the multilateral development banks, and unfortunately, Don, having been a Marine, thought that a private sector guy, people did what they were asked to do, but the bureaucracy got a hold of this and came back with a document basically saying that these organizations do what we want them to do. Therefore we should keep giving them lots of money. And Jack's response to that was we tell them to do bad things, so we ought to cut the money off, and whereas you, Don Regan might do the right thing, your successor may not, so we're just opening the door to having funding for things we don't believe in and it will be damaging to poor people.

Kondracke: How successful was he in blocking funding?

Rogers: Because of his seat on the Appropriations Committee he was able to block the cash outlays to a great extent. The World Bank and the other multilateral development banks operate a lot on what's called callable capital, so that it's basically loan guarantees. And the organizations then go and sell bonds in the private market against those so-called loan guarantees. Now the thing most people don't understand is the United States since some time in the sixties, maybe early seventies, has never appropriated a nickel for callable capital. Other countries do. It goes through their parliament and the money would be there, but if there was a default on the World Bank or any of the others, and they called the capital, the U.S. could not pay. You would have to go back to Congress to get that money appropriated, and Jack kept trying to explain that to people, that this was just an unfunded liability building up for a bad purpose, and that we needed to be more responsible about this.

Kondracke: Do you remember a particularly signal debate over this, where the issues got clarified?

Rogers: They never got clarified. I'd like to say that there was, but I don't think that ever happened, and we see the same debates basically going on now, except that given what's been going and the way Congress has been spending money, the World Bank and others, they've had their funding going up tremendously, and the IMF's trying now to bring in another trillion dollars, which would make Jack just quake.

Kondracke: Richard Billmire, your successor in that job, suggested that through the [James A. "Jim"] Baker Plan that Jack succeeded in forcing both the administration and the Democrats to accept reforms in the World Bank and the IMF, but have those reforms not stuck?

Rogers: Very short-lived, very short-lived. I think you'll find that they've gone right back to doing what they were doing, and they've come up with this construct of the private sector lending to sort of get around these things and to give themselves sort of a patina of free enterprise that kept the U.S. doing some things, because those things all happen out there and the decision-makers are here, and I'll be sort of selfish on this. I don't think there's anybody with Jack's talent watching over it now, so they're basically being fooled about what's going on out there in the field.

Kondracke: Where did Jack get his information about what the IMF and the World Bank were doing? Did he travel?

Rogers: He traveled a great deal, he talked to a wide range of people, he was forever talking to people like bankers, people like Bob Mundell were very influential with him on those kinds of issues. And he just read voraciously on what's going on in the countries whenever the IMF was coming in. As you mentioned a moment ago they were always bringing in austerity, it was always "We need to increase taxes, we need to do all these things that will hamper growth." And Jack studied very deeply all of those cases, so whenever one of those came up he was much better informed than any of the rest of us on the details of what was going on in those countries. He would spend hours going over that.

Kondracke: Do you remember a specific case?

Rogers: Mexico, I think, was the one that comes most to mind, because he was always extremely concerned about what was happening in Mexico the idea that, as poor as Mexico was at that time, him doing things to push them down farther was very concerning to him.

Kondracke: This was the same philosophy that he applied to the domestic economy, low taxes, free markets, all of that.

Rogers: Exactly.

Kondracke: He was trying to have the United States—

Rogers: No difference whatsoever.

Kondracke: Did the Reagan administration buy what he was—

Rogers: No. You would hear people sound as though they were, but one of the big problems is, never got a hold of the bureaucracy. And one of the mistakes that was made at the time of the transition into the Reagan administration was that a lot of the people working on that, whether it was Jack and the folks he was working with in Congress or the Heritage Foundation, whoever, is that there were a number of positions that the supply-siders didn't target to try to get people into that later were very damaging. For instance the assistant secretary of Treasury for International Development, and the deputy

assistant secretary, that was not paid attention to enough. And so then we had those people, very nice people, and even some who'd worked on the Hill and seemed to be doing the right things, who once they got up there they became careerists. The other position that really we came to regret later, and Jack and I talked about this many times, and it went to a fabulous person. That was Craig Roberts went in to the assistant secretary of Economic Policy, and [John E.] Buck Chapoton went in to the assistant secretary of Tax Policy, but Buck's a lawyer and didn't understand supply-side economics. And that was a real error because then you didn't have somebody who was one of the Kemp people actually sitting on top of tax policy. And it was thought that because Norman [B.] Ture had taken the job as the undersecretary, and with Craig as the assistant secretary for Economic Policy, it would be okay, and it wasn't.

Kondracke: We'll get to that in a minute, but that's how come taxes got raised, after—

Rogers: It's not how come taxes got raised, but what would have happened there, the big fight was always on what today we call dynamic scoring. We didn't call it that back then. But you couldn't get the Treasury changing their models to adjust for the growth impact of the tax cuts, and even though Craig and [Stephen J.] Steve Entin and [Manuel H.] Manley Johnson were sitting on the economic policy side, they couldn't control what went on on [the] tax policy side. Had you had somebody like that, if we'd gotten Steve Entin in as the assistant secretary of Tax Policy, you wouldn't have had that problem. Because that left you with Craig's office in Treasury wanting to do the right thing and obviously Jack and his allies in the Congress, but you were

fighting the tax policy people in the Treasury, you were fighting the Joint Economic Committee, and you were fighting the Joint Tax Committee.

Kondracke: All of whom were doing the estimates.

Rogers: All of whom were doing the estimates, and OMB [Office of Management and Budget] at that time, and of course the worst of all, Alice [M.] Rivlin at the Congressional Budget Office [CBO], the most partisan body in town, so—the so-called non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. [laughs] I got my job with Stockman as the result of the single Republican who worked there, as an economist, who knew Stockman and knew he was looking for somebody, and he was the only guy.

Kondracke: This was on OMB, I mean CBO?

Rogers: CBO.

Kondracke: Let's go back, we'll get back to the tax issue. What about USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development]? How did Jack regard that agency?

Rogers: How polite do we need to be? [laughter] Not well, not well, because USAID was the organization who most directly was doing things in the name of the United States that he didn't want done.

Kondracke: Namely.

Rogers: Namely, advocacy of economic policy, their population policy activities, which were right in line at that point with the UN [United Nations], their advocacy against what was going on in the Congress and the President's own stated policies on those issues, and it was just a constant fight to try to keep them reined in. One thing, you'll like this from the political side. There was a rebar [reinforcing bar], a steel rebar mill in Buffalo, and it went bankrupt, and this was in, I think, late 1982 or early 1983, I can't remember which, and this thing was going bankrupt, closing down, hundreds of people losing their jobs, and AID was making a loan for a rebar mill for export in Egypt.

Kondracke: A competitor.

Rogers: A competitor, and so we had a private sector company in the U.S. going under, which maybe they should have gone under, I don't know the details of that. But the U.S. government was funding a government operation in Egypt to compete with that, which just seemed on the face of it not the right thing to do. But the fact that AID basically was out there in the field pushing all these things, which the President was saying in his speeches and his comments that he was opposed to, clearly Jack was opposed to it, yet every day he was fighting with them to try to put a stop to it. And he was also opposed, you may appreciate this one, they started at that time, it's very similar to what happened in the World Bank and other places, a private-sector part of AID, I can't remember at the moment what it was called, and Elise [R.W.] du Pont was the head of it. Jack kept that headed off for almost a year, but it got into the budget, and the political pressure just became so severe, and the champion of that in the subcommittee was [Marvin H.] Mickey Edwards from Oklahoma, because Ms. du Pont

had gotten to him on that subject. It was a big frustration to Jack that that thing went through, but we held it up, or he held it up, for nine months or more, maybe even longer. My memory is tough on those issues. But again it was the issue for him, the philosophical issue, they're going to go out there and promote things in a foreign country that we wouldn't allow at home.

Kondracke: Namely picking winners and losers.

Rogers: Picking winners and losers.

Kondracke: He fought the China one-child policy?

Rogers: Yes.

Kondracke: And how did he do that?

Rogers: Not specifically China one-child policy, because there's nothing you could do about that, that's Chinese domestic politics. But that became the Kemp-Kasten Amendment, which when he got evidence that, and it started in Nigeria, not in China. That's kind of a popular misconception. There were women in Nigeria being forcibly sterilized and forcibly aborted, and the UNFPA, UN Fund for Population Assistance, was at that time saying that all these people had signed consent agreements. And we had some people go look, and those weren't even distributed in Nigeria. They were in the UNFPA office, but out in the field, no, they did not exist. This was being done forcibly and without many times, most times, the knowledge of the women. The same thing was going on in China except probably with

much more violence, because it was part of their one-child policy. So Jack was not about to abide that sort of thing, so he prepared what became the Kemp-Kasten Amendment. Went through the Foreign Operations subcommittee unanimously in 1984 and then got passed into law in 1985. But the interesting thing on that is that the things that were going on were so egregious that nobody spoke up. All of the liberals, Dave Obey and the rest on the subcommittee just left it alone. Now the language is in there—you and I were discussing before we started about it—"the discretion of the President." That was not in the original language. That was something that was inserted, I believe at the request of someone on [Robert W.] Bob Kasten [Jr.]'s subcommittee. He had the Foreign Ops subcommittee on the Senate Appropriations. I believe that one that came from one of his people, which we had no objection to that.

Kondracke: In making his case for supply-side world policy, did he ever get through to the public that this was a viable alternative to foreign aid as a dispensation, as a purpose? I mean, the notion people argue constantly that the United States needs to spend more of GDP [Gross National Product] on foreign aid, as though that's a good thing, always and everywhere a good thing. Kemp is arguing against foreign aid, but did he make the case that foreign aid should be different? And did it ever get through?

Rogers: He always made the case for humanitarian aid, but his view on what the real issue was and where the big money is, let's say, was that you needed to adjust that and approach that with policy, not with money. Maybe if you needed something to support education, he wouldn't get all fussed about that, but where you were talking about

developing all these industrial policies and using the leverage of the money that you had to do that, his view was that the policy side should take care of that and that international capital markets were performing well enough, even for India and China, and remember China didn't have the opening up until 1987, so they just weren't willing to listen, yet they wanted the money to do whatever they wanted with it. India was still running a socialist economy, and there was no reason to be giving them money because you knew exactly what was going to happen to it. So Jack's view was if they changed their policy, the private markets would bring the money in, so we don't need to be in the money business, we need to be in the policy business.

Kondracke: On the subcommittee, who were his allies and who were his adversaries?

Rogers: The Republicans on the subcommittee were all his allies. There was never a big issue on that, except with two issues, the private sector office at AID and one that I think gave him a little bit of heartburn but it was so minor that it really didn't matter and that was the Peace Corps.

Kondracke: He was against the Peace Corps?

Rogers: He wasn't against it but he didn't think it was the best thing in the world, that it had that much of an impact.

Kondracke: Did he try to defund it?

Rogers: No, no. That was a big deal for [Charles J.] Jerry Lewis, because Jerry Lewis had been in the Peace Corps, so Jerry was the big champion of the Peace Corps on the Republican side. But other than that there were never really huge policy differences. There may have been after I left, because it was after that that we got into Iran-Contra and some of those things, so I don't know what was taking place then, but the others really lined up behind Jack on that. Obviously on the Democratic side, other than Doc Long who we've already discussed—he was having issues then—Dave Obey was probably the philosophically most rigorous opponent. Matt McHugh, again, you could always talk to him and Julian Dixon the same way.

Kondracke: Was [Charles N.] Charlie Wilson on the committee then?

Rogers: Charlie was there, but Charlie was really focused on the military side. In Foreign Ops you have all of the military assistance that goes out, IMEP [International Military Education Program] and all these other programs and then the multilateral development banks and those issues, so Charlie was almost totally over here. I can't remember him ever speaking out on the other issues at all.

Kondracke: That wasn't your field because that was Michelle Van Cleave.

Rogers: That was Michelle Van Cleave.

Kondracke: So how much traveling did Jack do?

Rogers: He did a great deal. He and I went to Central America twice while I was working with him. He traveled extensively. I made a couple of trips to Israel. Michelle and John and I think Richard Billmire made a trip through Europe and to Russia with him, which I think was quite a trip. When I was ambassador to the Asian Development Bank he made a big trip through Asia, and I accompanied him on all of that trip except to Taiwan, where I was not allowed to go.

Kondracke: What would he do when he was on a trip like that?

Rogers: He would meet with all of the senior government officials, and he would meet with just dozens and dozens of private sector people. Almost always he would give an address to the local equivalent of the Chamber of Commerce. He'd always meet with the American Chamber chapter, wherever he was, but he made a point of addressing the local industry groups. You asked a while ago about how were his views received. In the U.S. people don't think about this very much, and you mentioned people trying to get more as a percentage of GDP. That goes back to a UN resolution. Point seven percent (0.7 percent) is the target. U.S. is, I believe, still at .2 even though we're the largest donor by far, but that doesn't mean very much. And if you go out and talk to the average American, they don't even know what you're talking about. These things get a little more currency in some countries. Netherlands, for instance, it's actually an issue of national debate. But in the U.S. no one really talks about it. But if you go out to the foreign countries, and Jack gave an address to the Chamber equivalent in Panama, in 1984. It was just wildly successful, just unbelievably successful. They loved him.

Kondracke: What did he say?

Rogers: Oh, he gave sort of a standard supply-side stump speech, and if they could have elected him president of Panama they would have. He was on the way to go to El Salvador for the election in El Salvador.

Kondracke: Did you go with him on the election to El Salvador?

Rogers: Yes.

Kondracke: And what happened?

Rogers: It was very interesting. We spent time out in the fields with, it was Jack and [Jacqueline] Jackie [Tillman], Jeane [J.] Kirkpatrick's assistant, his last name, I apologize, escapes me. And Jack and I and a bodyguard that they sent with Jack, and we drove up, and all these small towns all over the place, watching the election. We were there as election observers. I never really understood what an election observer does. I don't know how much impact it has. But it was very interesting. Jack was engaging through Jackie a local lady, and the lines were just impossibly long in these towns, and he started asking her, "Who are you going to vote for?" And she looked at him through the translator and she didn't want to answer. So he asked her again, and this went on for 15-20 minutes, and you know Jack, he's getting jovial and everything. And finally this lady says, "I'm voting for democracy for my country." So that was her answer. That was classic.

Kondracke: What did Jack say?

Rogers: Oh he was silent for one of the few times.

Kondracke: How did Jack navigate the fact that people in the Salvadoran government were human rights violators of the worst order? He was in favor of giving military and economic aid, I guess, to the government and yet they were engaged in death squad activities.

Rogers: Well, some of them were, but not all of them were. Not all of them were, and what you had to do in that situation, and I may be putting words in his mouth now, but the larger threat was the Soviet Union and Cuba operating in Nicaragua and other places. There were big operations in Mexico at that time which didn't get much press. So the number one objective was to stop them, and if you had to deal with El Salvador to do that then you just had to work with the devil you had and do as much as you could to clean up their operation while doing what you needed to do to protect the United States.

Kondracke: What was his attitude toward South Africa?

Rogers: I was not involved too with that, but he was violently anti-apartheid and obviously supported all the anti-apartheid movement. He had a lot of trouble personally with the conservative element in the Republican Party and in the country who didn't take that kind of view of South Africa, and I think he had a lot of difficulty with a lot of his colleagues over that. People who were much more supportive of South Africa, and were of the opinion that if we just let this go,

eventually it will be okay. And Jack just didn't think it was ever going to be okay.

Kondracke: So did he oppose constructive engagement? That was the Reagan administration's term for it.

Rogers: He didn't oppose it outright, but I think he was much more anti-apartheid than what others would have been.

Kondracke: Are there any other aspects of his activities on Foreign Ops that we haven't covered that you think deserve—

Rogers: We might come back to something.

Kondracke: Okay. Did he ever try to export the idea of enterprise zones?

Rogers: Not too much, because you had whole countries that had an economic profile worse than any enterprise zone we were talking about in the United States. If you're talking about Bangladesh, or Pakistan, any of those countries in those days, India for that matter and any rural place in China, if they could live in a place that Jack would have established an enterprise zone in the United States they'd have thought they'd become wealthy. So the concept was not really something that was transferable.

Kondracke: Was it during the period that you were there that he was having these debates with [William W.] Bill Bradley over Third World debt and international finance?

Rogers: A lot of that came just as I was leaving. Those were the conferences organized by Dave Smick and Richard [H.] Medley on behalf of Jack and Bill Bradley. Dave was much more involved with organizing all of that, and by the time Dave left we were really into the 1984 election cycle and a lot of those sorts of things went by the boards. They were still active but John Mueller had taken over more of that.

Kondracke: Let's switch to your role with the GOP Conference. What exactly did you do and what did he do as the chairman of the Conference? Does chairman of the Conference do anything more than just chair the Conference meetings?

Rogers: Oh, yes, yes, yes, very much so. The structure is, when you don't have a speaker, you have the Republican leader, the Whip and the Conference chairman. The Conference chairman has several roles. The information flow, through the *Legislative Digest* and other things, but also sort of keeping the members in a widely ranging ideology, trying to keep them together, not necessarily that you're trying to impose discipline on them, which has always been the difference Republicans have tried to draw between what they call the Democratic Caucus and the Republican Conference, they always make a big difference of that. But the chairman's, one of his major jobs is keeping different factions from a) disrupting the overall flow of business, but also from getting at each other to the point where it's damaging to where you don't have an appropriate policy mix, and that you can't get to the point where even though you're not demanding

people to do a certain thing, that you appear to be moving in unison and moving legislation.

Kondracke: So what's the difference between that role and the Whip's role?

Rogers: The Whip is really more concentrated on the votes, so when something's going to the vote, counting head by head and getting up there to cast the vote. It's a much more congenial thing as Conference chairman.

Kondracke: It's a consensus-building.

Rogers: Yes, which of course Jack was ideally suited for.

Kondracke: How did he do it? Do you remember any specific issues that were difficult?

Rogers: Some of the issues that were difficult: all of the social issues were difficult, the Martin Luther King holiday was very difficult for him. We talked about it before, he managed to corral 70 proxies and get that one under control and that was very much a job of diplomacy, of getting the extremely conservative Republicans who just didn't want anything to do with it, on board for that. I think the best example of that was that at one stage [Newton L.] Newt Gingrich had a bee in his bonnet about, what's the gentleman's name? Can we stop for a minute?

[pause]

Rogers: We had a liberal Republican who had not voted with the President on the budget, and Newt and some of the followers of Newt in those days decided that this gentleman should be tossed out of the Republican Conference, and Jack did a masterful job of keeping this a) quiet so that it didn't become a big public issue, but b) getting all the members together to go over this. And in the end Newt asked for a meeting of the Conference on the issue, and you could not deny that. If a member asked for something on an issue like that you were bound to have it. And it was very interesting. Jack said some extremely unusual things to keep this reined in. He called a members-only meeting of the Conference, and usually there were 100 staff people hanging around these things, but Jack had the whole place cleared so that this was just done *mano a mano*. So Newt got up and gave his speech on why this gentleman should be thrown out of the Conference and Jack said some calming words, and then the gentleman in question got up and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I understand the view of my colleagues, but I just want everybody to remember that I defeated Bella [S.] Abzug." And because of Jack's diplomatic skill in doing this that was the last we ever heard of any issue like that. It never came up again. [S.] William Green was the—

Kondracke: Did it ever make it into the press?

Rogers: No, not to my knowledge. I never saw anything about it.

Kondracke: What year was that?

Rogers: That would have been 1983 or 1984, probably '84.

Kondracke: Any other signal incidents?

Rogers: No, and one of the things was that Jack was very good at keeping them from happening. That was one of the things that, for instance during all the debates on El Salvador, he worked it out with [James C.] Jim Wright [Jr.], who was that time majority leader, and Wright made the agreement what would happen on the votes on that is that Wright would get up and give one of his stem-winding speeches against it and then because Jack and others had made such good arguments for it, he'd deliver the votes.

Kondracke: He'd make a stem-winding speech against it—

Rogers: Against it, but didn't have those people. Jim Wright was good at that sort of thing.

Kondracke: Any others?

Rogers: Let me think.

Kondracke: What was Jack's attitude toward your old boss Dave Stockman when Dave Stockman went into the administration and then turned against supply-side economics?

Rogers: Shocked, shocked, betrayed. And you have to remember, it was not immediate. We got through the first budget debate before Dave started to turn the corner. My memory fails a bit. Through the budget debate we were okay. When we got into actually doing the tax

legislation, that's when Dave started to get a little wavery, and then after the first tax bill had gotten passed in '81, that's when he really went off the cliff.

Kondracke: Arguing for tax increases.

Rogers: Yes. And he got just maniacal about the deficit. And as you know, Jack was never that way about the deficit, because his view was that obviously we shouldn't be spending money on things we shouldn't be spending money on but that the issue for the deficit was growth, and the issue clearly we had in 1981 was that coming out of the Carter administration we hadn't had any growth. And you needed to grow your way out of this through applying supply-side economics, so for people to be wildly focused on the debt and deficit was something that he tried to talk them out of. And one of the things that he used as a construct all the time was that we could have a \$100 million budget and fund it all by deficit, and you'd be upset, or \$100 billion, you'd be upset. But if we had a two trillion dollars and there was only five dollars of debt, you'd be happy. The people just didn't get the argument that you can't worry about all this spending, you've got to grow out of it.

Kondracke: What was his interaction with Stockman like?

Rogers: When they were together it was very heated once that had taken place.

Kondracke: Were you witness to any of that?

Rogers: A few times, a few times they would get into tremendous arguments over the whole thing. Dave got really vitriolic about the whole thing and obviously eventually left the administration, but Jack was always pretty good at keeping his cool and trying to stay on the policy argument, but Dave had completely lost it, that the supply-side arguments and the tax cuts were going to stimulate that growth. And what Dave never really got a handle on was the issue of monetary policy, and Jack was always much more centered on monetary policy really than any other person in the House, and clearly on the Republican side, and Dave just was not doing that. And it just turned out that Jack was talking on deaf ears about the monetary policy and Dave was just beyond it.

Kondracke: Before I forget it, did Jack ever try to put his attitudes on the gold standard into effect in any way through the Foreign Ops [sub]committee? In other words, try to work to get an international gold standard reestablished?

Rogers: No. He didn't really have the jurisdiction. That's the Banking Committee, so there really wasn't a way. When there would be debates, and we're talking about the IMF, one of his classic speeches on the IMF was that the IMF was set up to support the gold standard under Bretton Woods, and the purpose of the IMF was when countries got in very temporary trouble on the gold standard was to supply short-term liquidity until they rebalanced. In support of the gold standard, once the gold standard went away there's no reason to have the IMF. So that's as close as you could get within the jurisdiction of the subcommittee to that issue.

Kondracke: So it was largely rhetorical or instructive.

Rogers: Well, it was instructive in terms of the gold standard and it was what he used to keep more funding for the IMF at bay so that they wouldn't have more resources to go out and do things he didn't agree with.

Kondracke: Back to the Conference issue, when you say vitriolic conversations with Stockman, how did it go? Was it largely policy, or was it personal?

Rogers: It was largely policy but Dave was really on the wavelength of "Jack, you just don't understand what you're talking about."

Kondracke: Kemp's point I guess was that the reason that early Reaganomics led to a recession was that Paul [A.] Volcker [Jr.] was crunching down on the money supply, and Stockman never got that?

Rogers: That's right. That's right, and I think Stockman was damaged, personally hurt by the charges that he'd come up with rosy scenario, as it was called, and that he was coming up with economic forecasts that just made no sense, and I think he felt hurt by that, when in fact the argument was very clearly that if you looked at the economic assumptions behind what had come out of OMB and what had come out of Treasury, nobody anticipated what Volker did, so once that happened you had to start over. And if your view was that you needed the tax cuts and the supply-side features of economic policy to grow out from under that, you just had to deal with the monetary policy you were given, because you didn't have any control over it.

Kondracke: What was Kemp's attitude toward Volker?

Rogers: He was very concerned about the austerity, the fact that it was slamming on the brakes to pull the inflation out that quickly. Obviously his high ground view was that if you were on the gold standard you wouldn't be having this, you'd be maintaining the stability of the dollar, you'd be maintaining inflation at zero inflation or as close as you could get, and you wouldn't be having these issues. But given that you had the system you had, you needed to give the fiscal policy time to pull on this before you clamped down on the monetary policy, so not very flattering.

Kondracke: Well he did call for Volker not to be reappointed, but was he critical the whole way of the extent to which Volker was limiting money supply?

Rogers: Yes. One of the issues there, again, is that's something totally out of your control. Like you said a moment ago, it's largely rhetorical.

Kondracke: And how did he get along with Jim Baker and [Richard D.] Dick Darman and David [R.] Gergen and the others in the White House staff who were sometimes opposed to the President's own policy on the issue of taxes?

Rogers: It was heated.

Kondracke: Were there exchanges? Were there meetings that you attended?

Rogers: I was never present at a meeting where they had a heated exchange.

Kondracke: You were with Stockman.

Rogers: Yes, yes, but not with Baker. I'm sure they took place. Jack's attitude was always you have to talk about policies, you never talk about people. Probably the only thing that could get you fired in his office was an ad hominem attack. That was just absolutely not allowed.

Kondracke: How did he establish that rule? What did he say to you?

Rogers: Oh, he'd cut you off at the knees if you even opened it up in private conversation with him.

Kondracke: Such as?

Rogers: Oh, if you were in a conversation with him on a policy issue and you'd gotten over worked up about the person that you're dealing with in an agency or something, and you said anything, "We just can't deal with this guy." "Nope, only the policy issues." He wouldn't tolerate it.

Kondracke: How about [Robert J.] Bob Dole?

Rogers: [laughs] We didn't have much interaction with Dole.

Kondracke: He never stooped to ad hominem when it came to Bob Dole?

Rogers: I never heard it, I never heard it.

Kondracke: But Bob Dole and he were on totally different wave lengths when it came to—

Rogers: Totally different wave lengths. But I'll tell you a good one on Bob Dole if you don't mind. When I was working for Bill Armstrong, there was a vote up in the Senate to raise the pay of the Senators, and I was sitting in one of the couches in the back of the chamber. Bob Dole had a wicked sense of humor, he was pacing the back of the chamber chanting, "Vote no but take the dough." [laughter]

Kondracke: How influential on Jack was Jude Wanniski?

Rogers: He was very influential, particularly in a rhetorical sense. I'd say that Art Laffer and Craig Roberts were much more influential on substance, and Bob Mundell. But Jude had a real knack for turning the phrases, and his book, *The Way the World Works*, really put in a sense that someone not trained as an economist could really understand these issues. And Jude was a character, as you know, but he was always promoting the other people, so when you were having a conversation with Jude, Jude would be talking about it, and if there was something Jack was questioning him about, he'd say "We need to get Craig in here," or "We need to get a meeting with Bob Mundell."

Jude was very much always advocating bringing in people who really understood the issues from the hardcore substance, while Jude was giving sort of the words to it, helping Jack with the turns of phrase, to be able to go out to his colleagues and to the public and explain these sometimes rather arcane economic policy issues.

Kondracke: And yet, as I understand it, there were conflicts among those people, Craig Roberts and Wanniski.

Rogers: Oh, sure, because everybody wanted to be the main adviser.

Kondracke: So it was jealousy, or sibling rivalry?

Rogers: Sibling rivalry, let's call it sibling rivalry.

Kondracke: Okay. Now, as soon as the ERTA [Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981] bill gets passed in 1981 there is all this debate about raising taxes, which led to the TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982] bill and some other tax increases which the administration wanted, and Jack as a member of the leadership and is opposing those. Now how did that go down among other Republicans in the Conference?

Rogers: It depended upon who they were. You had the so-called Old Bulls who didn't like it. They'd been in the minority so long, they didn't know how to exert leadership even on their own behalf. And when Jim Baker and the group in the White House were able to get organized to actually get the President moving toward tax increases, that gave more weight or more cover, let's say, to the Old Bulls. So at

that point Jack was really fighting an uphill battle on keeping those people in line with what had happened with ERTA.

Kondracke: The Old Bulls being Bob Michel?

Rogers: Yes. That whole group of that sort.

Kondracke: What did [C.] Trent Lott do? He was the number two guy and he was on Jack's side.

Rogers: He was on Jack's side, but again he was the Whip and he had kind of a different role to play, but whenever Trent was one on one with people he was definitely on Jack's side. I don't think there was ever any question about that.

Kondracke: The Old Bulls include committee chairmen?

Rogers: Oh, most of the committee chairmen. It's almost the definition of the Old Bulls. Well, the committee ranking members, because we didn't have—

Kondracke: Yes, ranking members.

Rogers: You had a lot of the Midwestern Republicans, there weren't too many supply-side guys except the very youngest at that stage.

Kondracke: Did he get a lot of criticism in the Caucus?

Rogers: Yes he did.

Kondracke: How was it expressed?

Rogers: Privately, in the meetings people would get up and speak and talk about the issue of the deficit, because the deficit was what these guys had been raised on and that was their big concern. And I guess that goes back to the charge most often leveled against Bob Dole being the tax collector for the welfare state. But there are a lot of people in that boat, and certainly people on the Appropriations Committee, they'd been used to passing out the goodies for the folks back home, and they didn't want anything done that would endanger that, and they saw the growing deficits endangering that. So if the President was willing to go along with some tax increases, they weren't economic thinkers. Jack was the economic thinker and his challenge was to explain to them how what they were wanting to do was going to damage the growth. The deficits were going to get bigger and the issue they had was going to get worse not better, and sometimes that was successful and sometimes not, but he never tired of doing it. His energy was unbelievable.

Kondracke: Because he just kept at it and at it?

Rogers: All day every day.

Kondracke: There were allegations in the press that came from people in the White House that he was doing this to set himself up for president, to be Reagan's successor, and that it was political. How did he take that criticism?

Rogers: He didn't like that criticism because that was just not him. He just didn't do things that way. When people levied those kinds of charges, what they had to do was explain away how he'd always been for this stuff when there was no chance whatsoever for Jack Kemp to be president. So you can't reconcile their argument with what his history is.

Kondracke: Was there any thought in the days that you were working for him that someday he was going to run for president?

Rogers: It was talked about. It was talked about. I personally was somewhat surprised when he did, because he hadn't run for senator because he didn't want to run against [Jacob K.] Javits. He didn't want to run for governor, so at the time I left I didn't really think that he'd make a run for president, but he did.

Kondracke: So there was no sense in the office of a buildup toward a presidential run?

Rogers: No, absolutely not. Others may have sensed that, I can't speak for them, but I never got that and I spent 24 hours a day with this guy and I never saw it.

Kondracke: Do you have any notion of what his relationship with Reagan was like, even though he was off the reservation sometimes?

Rogers: The president, or Don [Regan]

Kondracke: The president.

Rogers: Very good, very good. I think that if I had to give an opinion it would be where Jack saw President Reagan not continuing down the path that Jack thought was the correct path, he attributed more of that to the people in the White House. The President had advisers and sometimes he listened to them.

Kondracke: You were briefly his chief of staff. How long was that for?

Rogers: Well Michelle and I were discussing that last night. It seemed like a long time to me. She says it's not that long. All of 1984 and I can't remember when that began. It may have been in late '83.

Kondracke: Now as I understand it you succeeded Dave Smick and then you were followed by [J. David] Dave Hoppe.

Rogers: That's right.

Kondracke: So my understanding was that, Smick has said that he thought that Kemp's policy of giving the same job to three or four different people was kind of a function of some sort of insecurity, that he wanted to keep everybody off balance. Did you detect any such thing in Jack?

Rogers: No, not at all. He'd have no reason to keep them off balance. When it's a congressional office there's one boss. This is not a collegial operation. It may be with his other colleagues but inside the office it's not. No, he wanted to get more opinions.

Kondracke: And was the office collegial otherwise?

Rogers: Yes, it really was. We had some folks in there that in my opinion shouldn't have been in there, that I couldn't get Jack to do anything about, who caused trouble from time to time. But again as I said before, it was the benefit of the others that were such outstanding people.

Kondracke: How many such people were there that you thought shouldn't be there?

Rogers: At one time, probably only three at any one time. I did my best to keep them weeded out when I had an opportunity to do that, and Jack was pretty good about that. He knew when there was a problem. In general it was quite collegial and everybody did their job. You look at the way the office was organized, and Sharon Zelaska ran the administration of everything. What that meant was nobody else had to worry about that, it was just done. And we got more mail than anybody other than the Speaker in the House of Representatives. We had one person who managed that mail, and in the time that I was chief of staff, I never had to stick my toe in that water, it just got taken care of. And when she needed other staff people to give responses to letters or whatever it was, she was a responsible enough person to do that and we had a whole staff of people like that who knew what they were doing. And we had a policy, since we had the *Legislative Digest* and I think we had, we had Terry Hauser, she was the editor, and then we had I believe 12 writers on that and we started promoting them up to the legislative staff as vacancies became available, which really helped us, because we had some very talented

people there and that meant we could get very talented people to work on the *Legislative Digest*, which was so far behind the scenes, nobody knew about it. Jack wouldn't see those people unless every month or so I'd drag him over there to walk through the office just for morale purposes, but he didn't have time to be doing that but it meant there was a constant flow of people, and he decided early on that we just needed to come up with that mechanism for getting more expertise. He was great around the office. He made a big point of mingling with everybody, if you will, and since everybody got their say in anything, and again this policy of giving everything to two or three people, it meant everybody felt like they were a part of what was going on. Nobody was an outsider. And that was all just Jack's personality.

Kondracke: The 1984 Convention, you staffed him at that convention along with Michelle. He was the chairman of the defense subcommittee, but the focus of it was on economic policy, right, at the convention?

Rogers: Well, it was sort of two-fold. He had that side, but we had worked heavily on the economic side, and Bob Kasten from Wisconsin was actually the chairman of the economic subcommittee for the platform. But Jack had worked very closely with Bob on that, and the first draft of the economic section of the platform actually came out of our office.

Kondracke: You wrote it?

Rogers: Mostly.

Kondracke: Now Dave Hoppe has said that the issue of the platform was a comma, so tell us the story of the comma.

Rogers: I think Dave and I may have different stories on this. The issue was an issue on the tax policy, and there was a lot of disagreement on that. We wanted to have a way to make that disagreement just fade, and keep the language in the platform. My absolute recommendation, my recollection, which may be wrong, is the way we solved this was we decided to insert the comma, and then we leaked to the press that there was a controversy about whether this comma should be in there or not. And the language meant the same thing whether the comma was there or not.

Kondracke: The language went "We oppose tax increases which diminish economic growth," or words to that effect. The comma seemed to imply that all tax increases reduce economic growth, whereas if you take the comma out, it only refers to those tax increases which inhibit economic growth.

Rogers: Right, but if you speak to an English professor they'll tell you there's no difference. So it was just a way to keep the language and it worked. Somebody came up, it may have been Dave Hoppe but I'm not sure who came up with this, passed out buttons to everybody with just a comma on them. I think I still have mine somewhere.

Kondracke: But there were people clearly in the White House who were urging tax increases repeatedly.

Rogers: Yes,

Kondracke: And there were other people in the Party led by Jack Kemp who were against any tax increases.

Rogers: Right.

Kondracke: So didn't this comma have importance?

Rogers: No, because it was only what you said later. It got in the document, and then if you were of the opinion that all tax increases inhibit economic growth, you can say that. It's right in the platform.

Kondracke: But it was a concocted controversy to have the Party declare against tax increases.

Rogers: Yes, and to keep the press arguing about commas.

Kondracke: And it succeeded?

Rogers: It succeeded.

Kondracke: And it's come down in legend.

Rogers: I was very surprised when it showed up on the comments Michelle said. Some of these things I thought I was the only person who remembered.

Kondracke: 1988, were you involved in the campaign?

Rogers: No.

Kondracke: But you were involved in somehow retiring the debt, were you?

Rogers: No.

Kondracke: Were you involved in his foundation or his PAC [Political Action Committee]?

Rogers: Well, while I was chief of staff, I was overseeing all of that, but at the time that they had the debt issues, no, I was gone.

Kondracke: And what about the '96 campaign?

Rogers: No, I was not involved in it. I offered to go and travel with Jack, but there were issues, I never knew exactly where they came from, I think the Dole campaign. That never worked out.

Kondracke: Is there anything that you remember that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to add? Any memories or observations?

Rogers: Oh, here's something that you'll find amusing and when you talk to Joanne [Kemp] she'll remember this with fondness. In 1985, Jack made a trip through Asia, and George [P.] Shultz asked me to travel with him, except to Taiwan, where I was not allowed to go. But they came and stayed at our residence in the Philippines, and Ferdinand [E.E.] Marcos put on a state dinner for Jack. We, you know,

were making preparations for the dinner, and very interesting as it turned out, first of all Joanne wore a lovely suit with a yellow jacket, which was the color of the Cora Aquino opposition in the Philippines, and none of us picked up on it. And so we go to Malacañan Palace, and Jack and Joanne and my wife and I are sitting there with Ferdinand and Imelda [R. Marcos], and at this time he was very, very sick. His skin had become translucent. It looked like there was an inch deep of clear jello. Very, very sick. So the first thing that happens is I notice is Jack's not there, and I thought, "Oh, gosh." So I ask somebody, "Have you seen Congressman Kemp?" And he says, "Yes, he's in the auditorium with Mrs. Marcos." And as soon as anybody's eye was turned, she had him in the auditorium, and she was offering to finance a presidential campaign if he would help support Ferdinand. And of course we nixed that in a hurry. That evening when the TV coverage of the dinner was on national television, Joanne's jacket had turned green, it had been totally colorized. And Jack, in sort of his typical style, there was a colonel in the Philippine army, [Gregorio B.] Gringo Hanasan [II], who's now a senator in the Philippines, and he was one of the big movers and shakers in the People Power Revolution. And while Jack was there we were having dinner in the Manila Hotel, and the Manila Hotel is next to the old Army Navy Club. And Jack actually met with Gringo in the bushes, out behind the Manila Hotel, you know, right out of a spy movie. And interesting, later after Cora Aquino had gotten into office, Gringo had launched a coup against her, which failed, but he's still a senator.

Kondracke: What was Jack's stance on the Marcos regime?

Rogers: Oh, it was horrible, it was absolutely corrupt, he was a big advocate of getting rid of them, but you had to do it in a way that didn't disrupt the country, because one of the problems was there was nothing to replace it, and as we've learned subsequently, he was absolutely right. As Cora Aquino was in no position to take over, who knows what would have happened had her husband lived. Jack's view was that you need to get him out of there but you needed to do it in a way that stabilized the country. But the situation became untenable at the end.

Kondracke: So when the crisis came he was in favor of Marcos' departure.

Rogers: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

Kondracke: Summing up, what do you think were Jack's outstanding personal strengths?

Rogers: His most outstanding personal strength to me was that he really stood by what he believed in, and he bolstered that by studying hard, and just the energy level that he had, both the intellectual energy level to make sure he knew what he was talking about, and the personal interaction energy level to just keep out there proselytizing all the time, and he never met with anybody that he wasn't doing that.

Kondracke: Do you regard it as an act of courage on his part that he opposed the administration when he thought he needed to?

Rogers: Yes. I think not near-enough people do that.

Kondracke: And did he suffer for it at all?

Rogers: He did. I think he suffered for it in two ways. I think it cost him being the vice presidential candidate for [George H.W.] Bush I, because there's absolutely no explaining the decision they made to go with who they went with. I think it cost him dearly in '88, because the party regulars lined up against him, because they weren't in the Congress, they weren't in a way that he could really corral them the way he once did and he couldn't continue making intellectual arguments. And of course you had the power of the presidency going against you at that stage. So I think that hurt him, and certainly no question in my mind it hurt him when Bob Dole needed something. Because he had nothing. And Jack was a tremendous asset, but Dole's people just wouldn't take any risk whatsoever of Jack being off the leash, so he had close to no impact on that election because they just wouldn't let him go out and do what he could do for them.

Kondracke: Well, don't the Dole people feel that he did too much of his own thing, that he sold his own case instead of selling theirs? Classically, this is 1996, vice presidents are supposed to be attack dogs, you know, for the candidate. And Jack was incapable of attacking, right?

Rogers: Yes, and they never should have expected that. They had nothing to present. They had a great guy who's a tremendous patriot, with no policy whatsoever, and they brought in a policy guy. As you say, there's no reason they should have expected him to be an attack dog because it's just not in his nature, and they didn't make use of

what they had. Because if you go back to the Reagan, the first Reagan campaign, Reagan didn't have a lot. And then when Kemp and Stockman stepped in with economic policy, that's when the Reagan candidacy really took off. And the Dole people should have realized that, and basically copied what happened in that instance, except that they had Jack there campaigning for them and they just wouldn't take advantage of it. It's politics, so if they had done that, Jack probably would have upstaged Dole at every turn, but if you wanted to win, the result wasn't too good.

Kondracke: So if Jack Kemp had any weaknesses, what would you say they were?

Rogers: A political weakness was probably he was never willing to pin people to the wall. And that just may be my personality versus his, but there would be instances where somebody had done something just egregious, and he had them dead to rights, but he'd never ever go for the knockout blow. He just didn't believe that was the correct thing to do.

Kondracke: Can you think of an instance?

Rogers: Yes, there was an instance in, I think it was 1984, and [M.] Peter McPherson was the director of AID, and he had been telling some half-truths at best to the President about population policy and what AID was doing, and Jack and Henry [J.] Hyde and [Christopher H.] Chris Smith—

Kondracke: This is abortion issues?

Rogers: Yes. I can't remember who else. I know it was Jack, Henry Hyde and Chris Smith. There was one other person I just can't remember. Got a meeting with Baker in Baker's conference room at the White House. And Baker came in, I was there, and Baker came in and they were unloading on Baker about what McPherson had done, and McPherson comes in, and he had been a Baker guy back in the Ford administration, so these guys go way back. And it was sort of funny, he saw, the way that people were seated he could see Henry Hyde and Chris Smith but he couldn't see Jack, so he turns the corner and he sees Jack and he just goes, "What?" And he knew he was done, he'd been caught. And we had this meeting, they had the meeting, I was just sitting there, and Baker takes McPherson to the woodshed just a teeny tiny bit, and that's all that was ever heard of it.

Kondracke: Did policy ever get changed?

Rogers: No. And that was a time that I thought they should have taken it to the President and put an end to this.

Kondracke: So the United States was supporting agencies that were engaged in abortions?

Rogers: Yes. It's the same issues you're having today with Planned Parenthood. It's exactly the same thing.

Kondracke: Other people have suggested indiscipline or impatience.

Rogers: He was very impatient. Indiscipline, I'm not sure all politicians don't suffer from that. In that regard the biggest problem he had was—I alluded to it a while ago—the last person who he'd talked to was very influential, so very often what the staff had to do, everybody, and whatever their responsibility was, was talk him back to the position. Because sometimes, unless it was taxes and gold standard and the base stuff, he might start to waiver out from a well-thought-out position, and he kind of needed to be guided back, because he'd get with somebody that was very influential person, they might be an academic, might be another politician, might be a financier, what have you, who he respected and he'd listened to their ideas, but the issue with Jack was when he did that, in my opinion, he was trying that out on you. He'd heard it from them, and he wanted to see how you'd react when he tried it out on you. And I always took it as much more that way than just total indiscipline. From a political standpoint, a terrible problem he had, and I don't blame him whatsoever, he hated raising money, he just hated it. To get him to get on the telephone and call people to raise money was almost impossible because he felt like the policies and the ideas should be speaking and that's what should do it, and it was personally just anathema to him.

Kondracke: So how do you think Jack Kemp should be remembered in history? Final question.

Rogers: I think the biggest thing, two areas. On economic policy, as a guy who set the table for debates that we're still having, and really changed the national conversation, because now when we have these debates, even President Obama's talking about what are the growth

policies. We didn't hear that before. The tax debate is always about what are we doing to promote growth, what are we doing to promote entrepreneurship. You didn't have that before. So on the economic side I think he was the catalyst that changed that debate. On the foreign policy and defense side I think you had something very similar in that he was able to bring together not only the force for democracy and the issue of freedom for other people, but to tie that in with their economic wellbeing in a way that we really hadn't had before. So he brought those things together in a way that we're discussing now. Maybe we're doing it right, maybe we're doing it wrong, but when you look at nation-building, much of which I personally don't agree with, but it's looking at least they're going to be free, but what's going to happen to them? I think a lot of that, not that he originated, necessarily any of those ideas, but he synthesized them to where they became the national debate.

Kondracke: Ambassador Rogers, thank you so much.

Rogers: My pleasure. Thank you.

[end of interview]